

Conversation with 67 year old black female, Maryland (Transcription)

C 29 page 19 CAL SURVEY OF AMERICAN DIALECTS CASSETTE NUMBER 29 SIDE B
The first excerpt is taken from original tape W 79. Begin 15 A (3)

QUESTIONER: Whenever you're ready to start.

RESPONDENT: Raising tobacco, early in the fall sow a coat crop on the tobacco. The land you're going to work tobacco in.

Q: You sow a cover crop.

R: Cover crop. See we put the rye or wheat, on which you turn down some hay. But usually you had a cover crop on the land.

Q: A "cover drop".

R: And then next we get to tobacco bed. Cleaned that off and putting on (unintelligible) to kill the weeds out in the grass.

Q: Weeds? That's a chemical you put on?

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R: Yes it is. Then round about the end of February or March, we sow the beds with a little seed. We trump it with (unintelligible) or whatever, and then we do, we throw a little seed.

Q: You cover it fertilizer.

R: And then there's the, later we take and put on this cotton.

Q: Cotton? Cotton.

R: Or plastic. Some use cotton and some use plastic. You put that on over the seed to stop it coming up. And the top presses it down.

Q: You top-dress it again. (unintelligible)

R: Most of them, like ours, ours was ten by twelve, twelve by twelve and ten by ten. And lots of people have theirs eight so

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they can reach over there better and the (unintelligible) doesn't keep moving on them.

Q: A little bit narrow.

R: They had them narrow and long. Some have them square, but then others have them narrow and long. And they sprays them for different diseases.

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Q: What kind of diseases? Can get in the plant then?

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R: ... blue mold, wildflowers, ...

Q: Blue mold and wild flowers.

R: Those two get you in the back of the bed. And as the plants grow large enough to plant, they pull off the cover and let the sun toughen them up.

Q: Oh, let the sun toughen them up.

R: So that it won't kill them. See if you got them in the hot sun, they's so (unintelligible).

Q: Yeah, they're so tender. So they pull that cotton off.

R: And preparing the land to plant your tobacco in, they usually have a cover crop on that and you turn that in and ...

Q: You turn that in ... with what?

R: A plow. Plow it in.

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Q: Plow it in.

R: Tie it in. And you give the land, break it down, give the land two or three good (unintelligible)--cross-ways, straight up and down, and regular.

Q: Oh, oh! Crossways?

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R: The top of all that stuff, you can put it on the inside there.

Q: And straight up and down, you mean in several different ways, directions.

R: That's got all that (unintelligible) up you got down in there.

Q: Uh-huh. What do you use to do this with?

R: You have a disc, or whatever. Like a tractor you have in there.

Q: It follows a, it follows the ...

R: Tractor.

Q: Do you ever use horses?

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R: Use to till everybody got tractors.

Q: You used to until everybody got tractors.

R: They was in the forties getting all tractors.

Q: Oh, in the forties you got yours.

R: And then what you, you'd drill in your lye or fertilizer or whatever you were going to use on your tobacco, you drilled it in the land.

Q: You'd drill it in.

R: Before you plant it. Stop getting up them (unintelligible).

Q: They planted flat up there, yes. About those rows, you were telling me about the hill.

R: See we've cut that off. We used to make a hill with our lift'o'light mark it.

Q: Marker. Yeah, mark-it.

R: And my grooves are often get-up hills. But that, see, been taking up time, and everything is for the fastest!

Q: Everything is for the fastest way!

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R: That's when it stopped. So they started drilling in the

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the fertilizer in. And then again you'd top-dress it even after you had planted, beside your, even after you had planted your tobacco. Fertilizer on the (unintelligible).

Q: This is after the little plants are in? Let's go back a minute to the plant bed. I think you said you didn't steam, did you? But some ...

R: Some does steam the beds before they plant their little, before they plant the tobacco seeds.

Q: Why did they do that?

R: I think that is for that, it makes them come faster. But that heat the land and kill the weeds up more.

Q: Kills the weeds.

R: See? That's 'cause the (unintelligible). And you got to have that on there ninety days before you seed. 'Cause other will kill that black seed, too.

Q: Oh, well you don't want to do that.

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R: Now you put it on for ninety days, before you sheet your beans.

Q: How much?

R: About ninety days.

Q: About ninety days before you ...

R: Put the seed in.

Q: So ...

R: They be putting that on September, October, going on into November if you're late, and that, why that make you later in the spring. Seeding your bed.

Q: Now, drying the plants. Out of the plant bed.

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R: Yeah, when they're large enough to plant, then we draw the plant, the largest ones out, and then we plant them. (unintelligible) Yeah, they toughen up. The sun get them out. I didn't say this awhile ago about what, you putting the cover on them.

Q: Putting the cover on--oh, yes!

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R: As soon as the plant get-up, get about the size of a dime, you put this tobacco bean cotton, or plastic on. That forces the plant to make, it keeps it warm so that it'll grow faster.

Q: Oh yes.

R: And then they get large enough to plant, where they takes that cover off so they can tough-up putting them out and (unintelligible).

Q: Those tender little plants! Now, when the field is prepared, and you're all ready to plant, then you go to the tobacco beds and ...

R: Draw your plants, get you water, have your land already prepared by filling-in fertilizer, and get your plant and your water, and get your plants together.

Q: Now, you plant with a machine.

R: With the machine.

Q: What do you call that machine?

R: Tobacco planter.

Q: A tobacco planter

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R: And you plant. Some have one row, plant one row. Take three to operate those. Some plant two rows, and that take five to operate those.

Q: A two-row planter and a one-row planter.

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R: One row planter. Then we cultivated-up there often to try to keep it worked-up.

Q: The land.

R: The land. The plants would have some side-dressed again. And as it growed, sometimes it need a spraying for different diseases. Come in the field all insect.

Q: Mm-hmm. A spraying.

R: That man charge you about two hundred, I think. That come from the university.

Q: You mean that sprays with an airplane?

R: Mm-hmm. And I think you must have, you had to pay them people.

Q: But, in the long run you get more for the tobacco. It pays to do that.

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R: Oh yeah. It make the tobacco much better. Especially if you get all the worms that eat it all up in the top.

Q: Eat it all up in the top? The worms?

R: They gets in the top, and then they'll keep on, they'll (unintelligible).

Q: Just take care of the whole plant.

R: (unintelligible--both Q and R talking at once).

Q: What kind of worms?

R: We always called those worms "tobacco worms". I know they're green. Same color as tobacco--it's hard to see.

Q: Oh yes.

R: But if they been on there long, they get long, you'll see little worms. It's the same kind of a, something little black, a, you

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hear them and see thm them, butterflies, something that look like a butterfly, what was the name of that thing? He lay the eggs on there and that's where them worms come

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from. Something like a caterpillar, or something like that. A little thing that flies through the tobacco.

Q: Well, now they have a lot of sprays for these things up at the station.

R: Up there, they have all those sprays, I tell you about them. (Q and R talking at once) smooth as can be.

Q: Yeah, it looks pretty.

(Q and R talking at once)

Q: Yes, they turn the irrigation on.

R: They have quite a few farms right around here that have it.

Q: Oh, you do. When the rain gets too much in the field, what happens to the plants?

R: Harold got others in low places.

Q: In the low places. Too much water there? The plants get ...

R: Drowned out and they won't grow.

Q: Drowned out.

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R: But now they, growed all, they run down the field ditches or something. They drained that water from it, you know.

Q: And drained the water off.

R: Drained that water off. 'Cause that ruined that crop that in that lowland like that.

Q: Now, if you don't get enough rain, the opposite. If you don't get enough rain ...

R: Your crop is short.

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Q: The crop is short.

R: (unintelligible) and stick and all like that. (unintelligible).

Q: It's not going to grow right.

R: 'Cause it, up at the university if it hasn't had enough rain, they'll come and irrigate it. Still it's nice.

Q: What do they call that crop when it hasn't had enough water, or when the water is lacking?

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R: They call it. they can't call it a drought, 'cause we ain't had a drought.

Q: Drought?

R: (unintelligible). Wouldn't have enough rain on it and it didn't grow good.

Q: But if they don't have enough rain, then it's a drought.

R: Then it's a drought for me.

O: Back to that tobacco planter--it has a barrel of water on the side. And the little waterer comes down. And they say when it the water comes out ...

R: You can tell, 'cause you see, you see the water come out, you put your plant there.

Q: You put your plant there?

R: They's, oh, about, the tobacco plant's about, must be twenty-two, twenty-two, twenty-four inches to hill.

Q: Oh, apart? Twenty-two, twenty-four inches apart. And then the machine ...

R: When you get onto it, you's watching down there, here come the water and there go the plants.

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Q: Real quick.

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R: Then they coughs it up--sees there's a wheel behind, too, two little wheels like that behind. They pull the dirt right up to it.

Q: What's that part down below called? That's the shoe, isn't it?

R: Yeah.

Q: Is that the shoe?

R: That's the shoe. And they come along to cup them seeds up. Like a little disc in the front, it open up a little row.

Q: And the person sitting there ...

R: Put the plant out. Yeah that thing open up a row--here's this thing dropping, you know, pouring the water, and then back behind is the shoe cup (unintelligible) up.

Q: Covers it up. Plants that. On the plants that they miss or the worms eat, or something like that, then what do they do?

R: When you got plenty of help then you go back and re-plant, but now...

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Q: You replant.

R: Rain come and you go back when it's season (unintelligible).

Q: When it's season. So you have to have it seasonable.

R: Unless we've been going to the field with water, but that's when you got plenty of help. It takes too much help like that. You have to Like now, this rain we've had, we doing some planting out there. See the land is still in good order.

Q: The land is still in good order? This year's been good for rain, hasn't it?

R: Almost too wet to work it, but you have to do it. Grass