

Oral history with 16 year old white female, Jackson, Kentucky (Transcription)

The first excerpt is taken from original tape W 101. Begin M20 B(7)

RESPONDENT: I was born on May 22, 1954 in Lexington, Kentucky at the Good Samaritan Hospital. I'm an only child.

QUESTIONER: That's surprising, because there are a lot of big families around here.

R: Yeah, not that many though. They've mostly died away.

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But there's still, you know, just one. Well, I have a little foster sister. We took a little girl in to raise. So I got her. That makes two of us now. I live down at Pambo, it's just about a mile, mile and a half out of Jackson.

Q: ()?

R: No, I live in Pambo. You have to go around a big curve before you turn down and go to the lake.

Q: Oh, I didn't know that there was like a little community there.

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R: Yeah, there's not many there, but you know, enough of us. There's about, oh, I guess twenty families. Or maybe less. We have a church, and then right out from my house is where I went to my first year of school. It's a one room school house, made out of wood, white. We had grades one through eight there, I think. One teacher, she taught us all. She's retired now. She had to retire because of arthritis. It drew her so bad.

Q: And she had to teach all different grades?

R: All different grades, mm-hmm. Well, one thing I'll never forget about that, we were studying the word "nothing", and, you know, she was writing it up on the board. And she went "no", she was dividing it into syllables, "thing". And she says that's "nothing". And I kept wanting to call it "no-thing".

Q: Yeah, sure! (laugh)

R: Yeah, and there's a, I didn't want to school and I tried to go home and tell Mommy that-- I'd go home for lunch, you know, 'cause it was so close, and I'd go home and tell her well, Mommy, there's no more school the rest of the day. Teacher let us off.

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Q: Did she believe you?

R: Uh-uh. She'd have to walk me back to school, and I'd cry. But I'd, you know, run home the demons, but she'd bring me back.

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Q: What about your folks? What do they do?

R: Well, my father drives a gas truck for Standard Oil Company in South Jackson. And Mommy's just a housewife. She used to work before she got married, and then when she got married she used to work in the theatre that used to be in Jackson before it burned down, selling tickets. And then she worked at The Red Ones clothes shop down in town. But she's not working anything now. She's been sick. And then we took in a little foster child, so that don't make for her to want to work. But Daddy drives a big truck.

Q: Did they go to school in () County?

R: Yeah, Mommy went up to Jackson City, and went to () County. Downtown.

Q: Is Jackson City a high school or a grade school?

R: It's a grade school. Or, and high school. It's the city school for all those, you know, who live in the city. And then there's () County, that's for, well down there they have high school and then they have the seventh and eighth grade. And we have the LBJ school, which is grades one through six. And there's a fabulous school, you ought to go see it.

Q: Yeah, I saw it from just the outside, it looked beautiful.

R: Beautiful inside, carpet, and they have TV sets all through there. And they have in certain spots, I think they call them "the pit", or something or other, they have steps. And then

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there's a place down there where the teacher sits and the children sit on the steps, you know, and it's all carpeted. It's beautiful in there. The governor has picked it as his school, you know. It's been represented as the governor's school. And they have all these modern things. Well, first graders taking home ec, and agriculture, so you can imagine...

Q: The boys too?

R: Well, like for six weeks, the girls will take home ec, and the boys will take agriculture. And then they'll change over. The boys will take home ec and the girls will take agriculture. And they have typing over there, you know. About the second or third grade they start out with typing.

Q: It's great. These kids are going to be so much smarter than us.

R: Uh-huh! (laughs) That hurts!

Q: Well, did your, how far did your folks go in school?

R: Mom graduated, and I think Dad got as far as eighth grade. But he's smarter than her!
(laughs)

Q: Well, you know () in school. Where are you in school now?

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R: Where am I in school?

Q: Yeah, how far?

R; I'm just a freshman. Second semester.

Q: Do you want to finish up at least?

R: Yeah, I plan on going to Lee's next semester, next fall, and next spring semester, and then transferring to Eastern. It's down at Richmond, Kentucky. College down there. Either

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there or Moorehead, one. But I think Eastern. That's where I'd like to go.

Q; Were your folks born and raised in the county?

R: Yeah, both of them were, I think. My mom has a twin sister, but they don't even look like sisters, let alone twins. Yeah, they were both born and raised in () County. Daddy's dad was a schoolteacher for a long time. Then he died.

Q: Have you always lived downtown, then?

R: Eighteen years! (laughs) Well, when I was first born we lived up in town for maybe about two weeks. And then we moved down there.

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Q: Do, well, I'm sort of interested in, do the people now handle, do they feel like they're a part of Jackson? Or do they feel like they're sort of a little separate community?

R: Feel like they're part of Jackson. I mean, the community isn't really that close, you know. We know everybody that lives around us, but really there's not that much interaction between people. I mean, sometimes you can see, you know, maybe they'll come visit you, and sometimes they don't. Most of the people work down there. So the only free time they have is in the night, and then they like to spend that with their families. If there isn't, you know, church or something like that that they go to.

Q; Does everybody around here, says there's one church down there. Does everybody more or less go to the same church? I mean everybody going to that church instead of coming to town?

R: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Q: Tell me about your little sister.

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R: Well, she's be three in July. And we got her right before Christmas, and when we got her she couldn't walk or talk. She was, well, at a year they said she could walk and talk just like any other normal child. At sixteen months, she just started going back. Her parents had mistreated her and fed her cow's milk all day. And all she had for breakfast was just the yellow of an egg.

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Q: So she had no strength ().

R: No strength, was anemic, you know. She was just helpless. So we got her, and we took her to the doctor for a check-up twelve days after we got her. And he could tell such a great change in her just in those twelve days. And he says, before you know it she'll be walking. And that night she started walking. But when the social worker brought her in, they sit her down on the couch, and she just sit there, mouth wide open, and her eyes, she was real dark under her eyes and had a real funny, strange look out of her eyes. And just played with her fingers. So they had this old dress on her that looked like it was about a four or five or six year old's. So they brought some more clothes for her. So I put a little pants suit on her and got down on the floor with her and started playing with her. About thirty minutes after she got there. And she just started laughing you know, and (). So the worker came back that night to fill out some papers for my mom and dad, and he couldn't believe it was the same child, you know.

Q: Offering just a little attention ...

R: Love was all she needed.

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R: So now she's a character.

Q: What are some of the things she does now?

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R: Well, she's learning now, she's beginning to learn how to talk now. And she'll holler, if she wants Mom, Mom'll be like, she'll put her to bed in the evening for a nap. And when she wakes up, if Mommy's not there, she'll go, "Hey Mom!". You know, Mommy'll go get her. And Daddy's got her now where she'll start showing her muscle, and say <unintelligible text>, show your muscle." And she'll just hold up her hands, you know, and act like she's showing her muscles. And we got her a Rocky pony and a inchworm the other night. And she went wild over those. She didn't want to get off. But she eats, she loves to eat. She'll run to the table before you get there and she'll sit in her high chair. And she's, you know, learning how to use her spoon and fork. And she loves milk. She can't pronounce the "i", she'll say "mulk". "Mulk", you know. But she's something else.

Q: That's great!

R: She has blonde, curly hair and brown eyes. And she's real clear-complected. You can see everything, you know every little touch or dimple.

Q: Can you think of some of the things that even just, you know, in your lifetime that you've seen change in the county? Changes that you've noticed? In terms of people, the way they dress, the way the act. Or even like buildings ...?

R: Oh, the dresses have change a lot! They've got a lot shorter! A lot of girls carry it to the extreme, though. Some have, you know, gone out when they're not wearing bras. And then just

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recently the girls, you know, were allowed to wear pants-suits down at () County. They never had before, but the Board, I guess, kind of felt sorry for them. And they kept protesting. They had a lot of girls to be suspended from school. But they finally decided to let them, you know, wear them. But it seemed like everything happened, all the good things happened after we graduated our class. And they, you know, we were know as one of the happiest and wildest classes that had ever been knowed at (). I remember my freshman year, we was putting on a play for our English class. And our math teacher had gone with the seniors to Washington,DC, so we has some other teacher in there. So we decided we was going to put this play on for the other class. And so our administrator over the building where we were caught us. And we were all out there in sheets, you know, running down the hall. It was a () play that we was going to rehearse. I never will forget that. And we had this boy with us and he says what are you trying to do, make him a star or something the other?, you know. We really had some good times down at (). But the teachers haven't changed that much. The teaching has. I mean, like I think it was in sixth grade, they started teaching us modern math. And it's real hard. All these angles and stuff like that, you know, you have to learn. That really bugged me. Math used to be my favorite course, but in high school, seemed like it changed. The teacher, we had one teacher in our junior year, sophomore and junior year, she would teach us this long, drawn-out way to do things. And then she got pregnant and had to leave school so we had this other

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one to come in to teach us. And he showed us such short, simple methods. That, you know, we'd been doing all this other stuff and just for nothing, really.

Q: ().

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R: Yeah, they were glad to get rid of her, though. We got, in grade school, we got a rid of a lot of our teachers, you know, got on their nerves. We kept one for one day. Got rid of him if we didn't like him, you know. Get on his nerves. We had a lot that'd throw 'rasers at us. We had one teacher that'd throw erasers and chalk at us. But the schools have changed a lot. I mean, you know, there's just so much different techniques of teaching that they teach. The buildings haven't changed that much really, except for LBJ. It's the most modern school, you know, we have. The buildings are still just as cold as ice on a winter morning.

Q: Can you think of some teachers you have had that you really didn't like? You know, you thought were bad teachers or maybe even one in particular?

R: Let's see. Well, that math teacher kind of bugged me. But as far as really disliking any of them, hmm. I don't think so. I mean, you know ...

Q: Nobody stands out in your mind as being just unusually bad?

R: No. I had one that cut-up with me a lot. He was my history teacher. Called me "Giggles". I'd get tickled every day and he'd send me out to the hall to stand. (laughs)

Q: What about, what do all of the young kids around here do? What kind of recreation?