

# Mississippi Oral History Program

Simpson County Historical and Genealogical  
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Lewis B. Bynum

Interviewer: Joe White

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*An Oral History with Lewis B. Bynum, Volume 1217, Part 2*

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## Biography

Lewis Benjamin Bynum was born on Everett Reed Break, MS in 1911 to France Bynum and Molly/Mary Pauline. One of eight children, Bynum's family moved to East Texas during World War I and returned to the Magee, MS area in the early 1920s. Bynum began working on a farm at the age of nine, hoeing and plowing the fields. He became married to Minnie Velma Saxon in December 1930. During the Great Depression Bynum worked at a sawmill where he performed a multitude of tasks, such as operating a gin, truck driving, etc. In 1933, Bynum worked for the Public Works Administration, laying the foundation for Highway 49 from Collins to Magee. Lewis and Minnie Bynum had two children together, Buddy and Kathleen. After sharecropping through the mid-1930s, Bynum bought 120 acres of land through a federal program. During World War II, Bynum worked for the Soil Conservation Service. After the war, Bynum served as a foreman for Standard Mills in Jackson, MS. Lewis Bynum bounced around the country working various jobs and finally returned to Mississippi in the 1960s. Bynum received the title of Master Mason from the Grand Lodge Masons in Jackson in 1951. In November 2000 Bynum and his wife received a letter from President Bill Clinton congratulating them on their seventieth wedding anniversary.

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AN ORAL HISTORY  
with  
LEWIS B. BYNUM

*This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi Simpson County Project. The interview is with Lewis B. Bynum and is taking place on July 26, 2003. The interviewer is Joe White.*

**White:** My name is Joe White. Today is Saturday, July 26, 2003. This interview is conducted under a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council as a part of the oral history project directed by The University of Southern Mississippi. Today we are interviewing Mr. Lewis B. Bynum at his home in Byram, Mississippi. Mr. Bynum, could you tell us your full name, please, sir?

**Bynum:** Lewis Benjamin.

**White:** What was the middle name?

**Bynum:** Benjamin.

**White:** Benjamin. I had an—

**Bynum:** Benjamin Franklin. Do you remember him?

**White:** I sure do. I don't remember him, but I certainly remember hearing of him. (laughter) When were you born, Mr. Bynum?

**Bynum:** [February] 9, [19]11.

**White:** February 9, 1911. Where were you born?

**Bynum:** Location or what?

**White:** Yes, sir. Kennedy Springs Community, wasn't it?

**Bynum:** Well, yes, in that area, but I was born on Everett Reed Break(?), if you know where that—

**White:** Everett Reed Break.

**Bynum:** You know Old Bob Everett's where he was raised, him and Henry, all, before they moved to Magee. They had, back in them years, they had huge logs to build houses out of, and they lived in a, they built two big rooms. I'll say this, sixteen foot wide and sixteen foot long or twenty foot long. Anyway you could put a bed in there and have an area to sit and talk or visit, anything you want to know, a living area,

them two rooms had a ten-foot hall between them things. They had a door to each one here. They had old planks or boards for window shutters, just went down through the—like they had a side room on each one of them for a bedroom. Door went into them. They had a walk, went from this hall, you know? See there?

**White:** Right.

**Bynum:** They had a eight-foot porch. Yeah, it was eight foot, about eight foot, across the front, be across the front, and you went to an angle back to the kitchen and dining room. Had a big dining room, a big kitchen, fireplace in that kitchen. Had a big shed on the left to put the stove wood in. Had wood stoves and had some way of somehow or another a tank on that stove to heat water and had a water keg or something to slip inside of that stove to get water. And they had a porch right down in front of that kitchen with the door coming in there. Door went into the dining room. Door went into the kitchen and dining room, and we had a well sitting right on the corner of that porch, and they hung the harnesses on a rack right near that porch, and they drawed the water and a big shelf up here with the water bucket on it, with a gourd hanging there to drink water out of. And they drawed water out of there and watered the horse right there, side of that well. Got your water here on this shelf, and your other water, you drawed it out; you carried it where you wanted to. Anything water (inaudible).

**White:** That sounds a little bit like my grandma's house that I grew up in. The kitchen was, I think it was at one time separate from the house. Was that one separate from the house at one time, or do you know?

**Bynum:** Oh, it was built separate.

**White:** It still was separate.

**Bynum:** Yeah. It was about, oh, it was ten foot apart. The kitchen was built down here by itself.

**White:** That's the way they used to build them. You remember why?

**Bynum:** No, I don't.

**White:** I think it was because of fire. They were scared it was going to burn the rest of the house. That's what my grandmother always told me.

**Bynum:** Oh, well, I imagine that's a good idea.

**White:** How many fireplaces did you have in it?

**Bynum:** Had a fireplace in each end of that big (inaudible) other part of the house.

**White:** I think my grandma's house, which was similar to that, they called a double pen log house.

**Bynum:** It was a double pen log house.

**White:** Is that what it was? They built two big rooms—

**Bynum:** Two big ones.

**White:** —out of logs, probably heart pine logs, too.

**Bynum:** It was heart pine, that long leaf, yellow pine. They hewed them out with a broad axe, like that, on each side and on the top. They had to fit smooth on each of them. They put them on (inaudible), and it was put up with pegs.

**White:** How big were those pegs?

**Bynum:** Oh, they was about eight and a half.

**White:** Wood pegs?

**Bynum:** Wood pegs.

**White:** What did they cover that with on the inside? Was it just the flat side of the log?

**Bynum:** No. It was just the flat side of the log.

**White:** They didn't have planks on the inside. Remember what they chinked between the logs?

**Bynum:** They didn't have to chink.

**White:** It fit that tight, huh? (laughter) Somebody did some sure enough cutting, didn't they?

**Bynum:** They did some work, some good work, right.

**White:** Do you have any idea who built that place, and when it was built?

**Bynum:** Oh, no. See, Bob Everett, he was a young man when they left there, and Old Man Everett, I don't remember his name. I've heard it and knew what it was. He went by the place of Everett Reed Break. Everett Reed Break, that's what you called it, Everett Reed Break. That's some of the coldest water in the world. And it'll have two springs or a bunch of springs up on the side at about, I'd say, 300 feet from where

the house was sitting, and it was a reed, just a regular reed, old reed growing up, now. You've seen these little reeds growing in them branches.

**Bynum:** Yes, sir, but I heard of cane breaks, but I didn't know, I've never heard the expression reed break.

**Bynum:** And quick (inaudible). There was a lot of (inaudible). Everything stayed on the outside. They wasn't no shut up to it unless they wanted to pen them up or something. Turkeys, geese, ducks, hogs, and cows was all on the outside, and you get out there and holler, they knew your voice. They'd come to you. And—

**White:** You didn't have any fences then.

**Bynum:** No fence. Nothing but on what you were going to keep around the house.

**White:** What kind of fence was it? Was it split rail?

**Bynum:** Probably a split-rail. Most of them was.

**White:** Y'all didn't see any barbwire around about that time?

**Bynum:** No, no, no. I didn't know what barbwire was until several years after that.

**White:** Well, who were your parents? What were their names?

**Bynum:** France was my father's name.

**White:** France Bynum?

**Bynum:** Yes.

**White:** And where was he born originally?

**Bynum:** Laurel.

**White:** Laurel? What did he do to make a living? Farmed?

**Bynum:** Yeah. That was about all. After he growed up, he finished college up at Rock Bluff, or something up here above White Oak or somewheres up in there. He had a uncle up there. He went to school, college up there, to school, finished school there.

**White:** Rock Bluff?

**Bynum:** Is it Rock Bluff, the place up there?



**White:** I don't know. I thought that's what you said.

**Bynum:** Rock Bluff I think it was, or Rock (inaudible) School, way up there somewhere. And see, my granddaddy and Uncle Wes Bush(?) had—

**White:** Wes Bush was your granddaddy or your uncle?

**Bynum:** He was my granddaddy's brother-in-law. My granddaddy married his sister. They were German, and they moved from Laurel. They moved with the sawmill. Everything you worked was cotton gin and everything from Laurel, up there when they homesteaded, up there. And when my daddy finished school and everything, he and my mother married.

**White:** And what was her name?

**Bynum:** Molly. Molly Pauline.

**Kathleen Bynum:** Daddy, was it Mary Pauline?

**White:** Mary Pauline?

**Bynum:** Well, it could've been Mary Pauline. I don't remember.

**White:** They called her Molly.

**Kathleen Bynum:** They did.

**Bynum:** Called her Molly.

**White:** And she was from Laurel, too?

**Bynum:** From (inaudible).

**White:** OK. Excuse me. Go ahead.

**Bynum:** And he farmed a little, but they run the gin and the sawmill and all that down there.

**White:** Where was that?

**Bynum:** It's right there at—

**White:** Oh, when you were born? Around the Kennedy Springs area?

**Bynum:** Right in that area there.

**White:** What were your grandparents' name? You mentioned your grandfather who came from Laurel.

**Bynum:** Morgan. Morgan Bynum. That's all I know, is Morgan.

**White:** You don't remember your grandmother's name?

**Bynum:** Elizabeth.

**White:** Elizabeth.

**Bynum:** Elizabeth, yeah, Elizabeth.

**White:** And did you have any brothers and sisters?

**Bynum:** There's three brothers and four sisters.

**White:** Three brothers and four sisters. Were they all born in that house there?

**Bynum:** No, no, no, no, no, no. Just me and my oldest sister was born in that house.

**White:** What was her name?

**Bynum:** Hailey Elizabeth(?).

**White:** Hailey Elizabeth.

**Bynum:** And my brother, Estus, Estus C., Estus Colin(?), that's what it was.

**White:** Estus Colin.

**Bynum:** They were born there. We moved to Texas after he was about four months old; stayed in Texas three years.

**White:** What part of Texas was it?

**Bynum:** East Texas.

**White:** Farming?

**Bynum:** Yeah. That was during the World War, World War I, um-hm. And we came back to Mississippi.

**White:** Settled back in the same area?

**Bynum:** Yeah. We come back from granddaddy's, and I got sick with something. I don't know what it was. They said it was typhoid pneumonia, but I stayed down. I stayed unconscious from February the ninth to May the twentieth, I believe. It was the time that the hurricane tore Braxton all to pieces, if you can remember that time.

**White:** Nineteen twenty-two.

**Bynum:** OK. That's when I was down. I was down from February—how old—that was [19]22.

**White:** Let's see. You must have been about eleven years old.

**Bynum:** Yeah. I was nine, I think, or ten.

**White:** Yeah, ten.

**Bynum:** Anyway, I didn't know anything until I woke up, and my mother said, "That's a bad cloud coming." Well, she went back to the kitchen for something another, and I got up to go look and see, and I fell.

**White:** You were weak from lying down all that time.

**Bynum:** I'd been unconscious from February the ninth. I remember going to bed on the ninth of February, and I didn't remember waking up at no time until I got up on May 22.

**White:** What kind of doctoring did you have?

**Bynum:** Oh, they had every doctor that—I don't know all of them. Had a bunch of that Eastman Gardner(?) Camp up there, right in that area, and they were the last ones we had.

**White:** Is this a lumber camp you're talking about?

**Bynum:** Yeah, when they was cutting all that long leaf, yellow pine.

**White:** The reason I ask that, my grandfather was a company doctor for the Great Southern Lumber Company, and they moved around different lumber camps and things.

**Bynum:** They's two of these doctors. I remember them quite well.

**White:** Remember what their names were?

**Bynum:** Sure don't. (laughter)

**White:** Now, I'm going to put you on the spot this morning. (laughter)

**Bynum:** I sure don't.

**White:** But then you had some more sisters and brothers there, I believe, along the years.

**Bynum:** I had a brother that was born on that Everett Reed Break up there. When we went to Texas I had another sister born in Texas.

**White:** What was her name? I'm putting you on the spot, man.

**Bynum:** Let me think just a minute. I've about lost my mind. (laughter)

**White:** No, you haven't, either.

**Kathleen Bynum:** Medda?

**White:** Medda.

**Kathleen Bynum:** Pauline.

**Bynum:** Medda Pauline, right.

**White:** Medda.

**Kathleen Bynum:** M-E-D-D-A.

**Bynum:** Medda Pauline. Then she was born in Texas. Well, in [19]22 or [19]23 or [19]24 or something. I don't remember. I had a brother, Levon(?), when we lived around Magee (inaudible) Rials Creek area.

**White:** Levon?

**Bynum:** Yeah, Levon. I've done forgot (inaudible) name.

**White:** That's all right.

**Bynum:** And we lived in the Rials Creek area; was Walker Town. Walker was my Uncle George Walker (inaudible), and I went to school to Rials Creek.

**White:** Where was Rials Creek School, and how many grades was it?

**Bynum:** Rials Creek.

**White:** You probably didn't know how many grades it was back then, did you?

**Bynum:** How many grades?

**White:** Yes, sir. Just a couple of grades, or was it a pretty big school?

**Bynum:** It was a big school, a pretty good-sized school. The road coming from Magee right on out by Corinth Church went right to Rials Creek. It was a road come from [Highway] 28 over there, across to Mendenhall. Rials Creek had that big, big pond right there. It was a big pond. Had a (inaudible) watermill sitting there at one time.

**White:** Is that close to where the church is now?

**Bynum:** It's pretty close to the church. I think the church school—we went to school just where the old watermill used to be, and the church was across the road.

**White:** Who was your first teacher? You remember?

**Bynum:** When I started to school?

**White:** Yes, sir, or the first teacher you remember that made an impression on you.

**Bynum:** Well, Mr. Plummer Turner(?) was the first teacher that I had. He and me and my sister went to school. I think she was about three or four, something like that, and I was about a four-year-old.

**White:** Started that early, huh?

**Bynum:** Yeah. And had a gang of them. I mean, a gang of them went to (inaudible) School. That road was full every day with cousins and people, the Coles(?), Bynums, Bushes, Caytons(?), Wellses, just, I mean, they was gangs of them. I mean, it was a big gang. The road was dusty, and some of the kids get to run out there and run and stir that dust up, you couldn't see them. (laughter) You remember such as that? (laughter)

**White:** I remember a little bit of that, but I think we had mostly gravel on our roads by then, but it was still pretty dusty. How many rooms were in the school?

**Bynum:** Two.

**White:** Two rooms. What did they heat it with?

**Bynum:** Pine knots.

**White:** They had a stove in each room, or just one big stove.

**Bynum:** One big stove. One big stove that they—what you call two rooms, they didn't have no partition. (inaudible) one big room. That's where we started to school. Rials Creek had two; they had two rooms. And Ms. Lina Edwards(?) was teaching there. You've heard tell of her, I'm pretty sure. She was a woman that was tough. Boy, she covered the ground she walked on. (laughter)

**White:** Is that right?

**Bynum:** Yes. Bunch of Walker boys was grown. What I'm going to call grown was seventeen, eighteen year old.

**White:** Still in school, huh?

**Bynum:** Yeah. And—

**White:** And she was trying to teach them from first grade on up.

**Bynum:** No. She taught, I think, from the ninth through the twelfth, and Miss, it was a girl from Magee; she married Fordy Walker(?), taught the other (inaudible) eighth. There was another group smaller, smaller classes, three different, three places.

**White:** Did y'all bring your lunch to the school?

**Bynum:** Yeah. We carried our lunch.

**White:** What did you have for lunch most days?

**Bynum:** Maybe a potato or a piece of bread and something, or just something, ever what we could put in our lunch (inaudible).

**White:** Was your mama a good cook?

**Bynum:** I figure that she was one of the best.

**White:** What do you remember her fixing that you liked best?

**Bynum:** Vinegar pie, chicken and dumplings, and possum and taters.

**White:** How'd she fix her possum and taters?

**Bynum:** Well, the way it worked out, (inaudible) was a kid, fooled around with the puppies and dogs and things. So my uncle gave me a little, old feist, just about like this one here. He had brown spots on him. His ears was brown and big, brown spots on his side. I played around with him, and I was pretty bad to night-hunt, go to the woods. So I carried him to the woods at night. I got through with my lessons and things and get me a torch, sticks. I'd go to the woods. It wasn't very far down to the

swamp down there. I'd go to the swamp, and I'd be on this bar; I'd sit there a few minutes. And he'd finally—he was about a year old. If he got tired of sitting around there, he got to stirring around. The first thing I knew, he barked. And I sat there a pretty good little bit. After while he barked again. I went down there, and he had a little, old possum on a sweet gum switch. And I shook him off; he gnawed him real good, and I put him in the sack, come to the house.

**White:** You didn't have a gun or anything with you?

**Bynum:** No. I didn't hunt with no gun. And I went back down there. I got to where I'd go every night. And Mama told me if I'd get a—[if] Shadow(?) caught a good, big, fat one, pen him up and feed him, and she'd cook him for us. OK. In about two or three nights I caught a big one, carried him. I had me a screen, a wire pen built for him, and I threwed him in there, and I started feeding him potatoes, peanuts, anything in the world that (inaudible) table, and that scoundrel got so fat, he couldn't hardly live. So I broke his neck, (laughter) skinned him. She cooked him. I don't remember what we were doing, but anyway, she baked potatoes. She boiled that possum, clean him up and boiled him. He was good and tender. She had those baked potatoes, and she peeled them and put them in a big, old pan that just fit in that stove. It was a big, old, *big*, old stove. And she put possum, taters, possum, taters, possum, tater, put him in there, and she baked him till he was real good. And you talking about eating. You didn't even know where he come from. (laughter)

**White:** Well, what did it taste like?

**Bynum:** Really good. I couldn't tell you the taste.

**White:** Did you ever eat 'coon?

**Bynum:** We tried it, but—

**White:** You didn't like 'coon?

**Bynum:** Unh-uh. I trapped and caught a 'coon, and we tried it two or three different times.

**White:** Well, let's get back to school here a little bit. Who was your best buddy at school?

**Bynum:** He was a cousin of mine, Wendburn Rhodes(?) (inaudible). We buddied all the time, either at home, or he and I stayed together most of the time.

**White:** Just rooting around the farm and having a good time?

**Bynum:** Yeah.

**White:** Did you work on the farm, too?

**Bynum:** Me?

**White:** Yes, sir.

**Bynum:** Sure, sure.

**White:** What were your jobs?

**Bynum:** I could do anything on the farm. I could hoe, thin corn, plow, anything. I could harness a mule. I was a young man, eight or nine years old; I could harness a mule. I could yoke a bunch of oxen.

**White:** Did y'all have any oxen?

**Bynum:** Yeah. When we was on Everett Reed Break, before we went to Texas, my daddy was always, he always kept a yoke of oxen, a yoke of young oxen; maybe they would be a year or a year and a half old. When he was a kid, that's what he did. He played with training them and working them. So before we went to Texas, I guess my brother was about, oh, I guess he was about, might have been two or three months old. I don't know, but anyway, my daddy had a small yoke that he had put together. [He] kept calves. He had a one-horse wagon, and he'd take the shafts off of it and put a tongue in it, and he would use ties, make, cut down that old timber, that broke down, the hurricanes or something up there. And it was that old, long leaf, yellow pine. And he'd hew out four or five ties, or maybe it was eight, to put on that little, old wagon. And we'd leave, going to Magee about four o'clock in the morning with them little, old oxen to that wagon. He was on a white horse. He had a beautiful, white horse. He wouldn't even soil his stall. When we'd get up a morning, he'd be hollering. Daddy knew what to do. He'd go up there and just open that door so he could get out. He wouldn't soil his stall. Daddy said he wasn't (inaudible). So he got on that horse and saddle, and we sat up there on that spring seat covered with a quilt to stay warm. We (inaudible); went to Magee, went down around, close to that depot and unloaded them ties. And Allen, Mr. Ben Allen(?) was a young, young man. He'd buy ties for the railroad. Mother'd take that little bit of money. We'd go to the stores around there. We'd park right behind, right where city hall is, I reckon, now. There wasn't anything there, but parking space for horses, mules. There were very few horses and mules, very few mules.

**White:** They still have a hitching post up there then?

**Bynum:** Yeah. You hitch up there. Get through, we'd go back home. It'd be dark when we'd get back.

**White:** Take all day, huh?



**Bynum:** Yeah, all day.

**White:** You didn't see a lot of money back in those days, either. Did you?

**Bynum:** No, I didn't see any (laughter) because I was a kid, but—

**White:** They didn't carry you to Wal-Mart then, huh? (laughter)

**Bynum:** No. I didn't know what a dollar was back then.

**White:** Do you remember ever getting any store-bought candy or anything like that when you were little?

**Bynum:** Christmas.

**White:** What was Christmas like?

**Bynum:** Christmas was real good as far as I know. You got a apple and a orange and a piece of candy.

**White:** Man, that's pretty good, isn't it? Did y'all have company come in for Christmas?

**Bynum:** Sometime. That's how come us to go to Texas. When my aunt come from Texas over here for Christmas, and we went back with her. They drafted people then, and I think they had my daddy.

**White:** For World War I?

**Bynum:** World War I, and he got over there, why, I think they got through with him, but he didn't have to go. So we farmed over there for what time we was there. I don't remember how long, but anyway we come back to Mississippi. And he started farming. Of course, I was down after we got back here. I was down there about three or four months (inaudible).

**White:** Right. Well, we got you up to Mott School, now, too. Did you stay at Mott School? Where'd you go from there for your education?

**Bynum:** Goodwater.

**White:** Goodwater? What was at Goodwater? Close to Goodwater Church?

**Bynum:** Yeah. It's where it burned down there. It wasn't right close to the church. It was on, on, on, on, on, all the way close to—it was on down the road going towards Rials Creek just a little ways over there. It was Duckworth(?) area.

**White:** I think that's where you said you met Mr. Jones, another man that we interviewed—

**Bynum:** Yeah. We went to school at Goodwater, right there.

**White:** Who else was in school with you there?

**Bynum:** Oh, it was Roy Irving(?), D.C. Myers(?), Kelly Myers(?), the boy, Roy's brother-in-law. What was his name? Kennedy boys, they was two or three Kennedy boys, Albert Flint(?), Dewitt Flint(?), another Flint. What's his name?

**White:** You remember all the guys. You don't remember the girls, I notice, during that time.

**Bynum:** Oh, no.

**White:** I bet you started remembering them later, though.

**Bynum:** The only girls I can remember, really, is the one's married to the schoolteacher. She was a Ducksworth(?). Cody Ainsworth(?), Ruby Kennedy(?), Audrey—

**White:** Yeah. You remembering some of the girls, now.

**Bynum:** Yeah.

(End of digital file named tape one, side one. Interview continues on digital file named tape one, side two.)

**White:** Did you marry? What was her name?

**Bynum:** I married her.

**White:** We didn't ever mention her name, though.

**Bynum:** Minnie Velma.

**White:** Minnie Velma.

**Bynum:** Saxon.

**White:** Saxon, S-A-X-O-N?

**Bynum:** Um-hm.

**White:** And you guys got married when?

**Bynum:** Eighteenth of December, 1930.

**White:** My wife would congratulate you. I never can remember our anniversary. She stays on me about it. Where'd y'all get married. Close to Magee?

**Bynum:** Yeah, in Magee, Judge Runnels' office, right there where the hospital is today. He had a office right there.

**White:** Was he a justice of the peace or a circuit judge?

**Bynum:** Justice of the peace, I reckon. That's been eighty-two years, eighty-two or eighty-three. How long is that? It was 1930.

**White:** You were nineteen years old. Well, you were late getting married in those days, weren't you?

**Bynum:** Yeah. I wasn't interested. (laughter) I wasn't interested. I (laughter) didn't have no money, and I didn't have no home.

**White:** I believe the Depression had started about that time, too.

**Bynum:** Yes. It was starting, and I had five acres of cotton. I had five acres of cotton. Daddy had I don't know how many acres, about eighteen or something. I don't know. But anyhow, didn't have much corn, just a little bit of corn. Everybody went on cotton because the year before that, [19]25 and [19]26, I mean, yeah, [19]25 and [19]26, cotton was a good price, and they went wild, thinking it was going to last. And shoot—

**White:** Led right up into the Depression, huh?

**Bynum:** Oh, right into the Depression, really. I was working for a dollar a day with a man, had that gin in (inaudible). Springs up there. He bought grandpa and them's old gin, and he give me a dollar a day to go up there and stay with him and operate the gin, sawmill, grist mill, anything that needed doing, sawing, anything, hauling. He had a truck; he couldn't drive. I had to drive the truck, and somehow or another, I wasn't interested in marrying, but we had kindly planned before, set two or three different times to get married, but she was trying, wanted to finish school and make a nurse. Well, I (inaudible), that, but I dropped out at ten.

**White:** In the tenth grade.

**Bynum:** I think it was, and I went to work for him to get enough money to get married on and everything. But it worked out. I told him to hold my pay. Don't pay me. I didn't want no pay until November. I was going to get married. OK. He didn't pay me. And so November come on, I said, "Well, now, I'll pick up my money, and

I'm going to get married, and we're going to find a place to live." He said, "Well, I got bad news for you." He said some company was closing him out, (inaudible). I'd been hauling seed over to Hazlehurst for about a week, and he said, "They going to close me completely out tomorrow." He said, "Let's get up early in the morning. Let's go to (inaudible). (brief interruption)

**White:** —marriage to Miss Velma there and how tough it was, and you were talking about the man who owed you all the money for doing all that work before you got married, and he said the company that y'all had been hauling seeds over to, where was it? Crystal Springs?

**Bynum:** No. It was a company in Hazlehurst, ever what it is.

**White:** Hazlehurst.

**Bynum:** It loaned money to operate those gins, the gins (inaudible). And he had his place mortgaged, and everything he owned was mortgaged, had a mortgage on it, and they were going to close him completely out the next day.

**White:** This was 1930, right?

**Bynum:** Yeah, 19—

**White:** Right before y'all got married, last part of 1930.

**Bynum:** That was in November. We supposed to get married in November, and they closed him out. Didn't have anything.

**White:** You said y'all had to ride over there and check on it or something, or did they just close him up?

**Bynum:** All I know is they come out there and closed him up, taken everything he had as far as I know. He had a barn, had two houses on it, had two teams, two wagons, and had a truck, practically a new truck that I was using to haul the cottonseed on. He had a big warehouse full of cottonseed down there. And I hauled that to Hazlehurst, as I worked with him there for a while. But when November come, and I told him that, we went down there and got my clothes, and we were fixing to go get married, and I just couldn't hardly, I just couldn't see where I could go through that.

**White:** Didn't have any of your money, huh?

**Bynum:** Didn't have, not one penny. All I got was some clothes, a suit of clothes. I think I got a pair of shoes and a suit of clothes, and a shirt. I hadn't bought anything, hadn't used any money at all. I worked in my old clothes as long as, all that year.

**White:** You'd been living there, too, hadn't you?

**Bynum:** Yeah, stayed right there. And that was a big worry, I mean a letdown, really. Well, I thought I'd get out of it, but Velma wouldn't let me. (laughter) She wouldn't let me.

**White:** You committed to that wedding.

**Bynum:** You ain't kidding. Said, "We're going to get married, and we're going to make it." OK. Well, I kept putting it off as long as I could. I carried the license in my pocket, in my coat pocket for, I guess, two or three weeks before we went to get married. And finally Uncle Clumpert(?), one of my uncles, come over there. He said, "Lewis," said, "now, you promised to get married." He said, "You've got your license here. You hadn't used them, and you're not doing anything about it." He said, "Get your clothes on. Let's go." We went down and went down there and told her we was going that night to get married. So—

**White:** Went to see Judge Runnels, huh?

**Bynum:** Went down to see Judge Runnels, and we were supposed to go back to Kennedy(?) Springs Community to Preacher Conrad(?). He was a real good friend of mine, or ours, and was a preacher, and he was supposed to do the wedding, but her daddy didn't want her to come up there, so we got up there, and after we got married, we caught a wagon, went to Magee. No, Uncle Comfrey(?) come and got us. That's right. Uncle Comfrey met us in Magee and picked us up, carried us up to home, and we hadn't been there but a day, something like a day, my daddy told me, says, "Mr. Tom Shoemaker is asking about you." Said, "He might could use you if you go over there and talk to him." But I'd worked with him before, but I hadn't lived (inaudible). I went over there to see him. He says, "I got a house, and I got extra land." And he says, "I got a garden out there. I've got that milk cow. Now, if you want a place to stay, there's a pair of mules and a wagon. Go get your wife and your stuff. Move in."

**White:** That sounded like a pretty good deal, didn't it, to somebody who didn't have a place to stay?

**Bynum:** It was a good deal. I said, "I hadn't got anything to move but my wife." (laughter) He said, "Well, you'll find something." (laughter) Well, Daddy said Uncle William had a stove (inaudible) lot out there somewhere. It needed cleaning up. Said, "It'll work." Had a wood stove. Well, they scratched us up a knife and a fork and a spoon apiece, and two or three tin plates, and some lids, and that stove, and we picked up an old bedstead at Uncle William's up there, and we moved in.

**White:** Called an instant house, huh?

**Bynum:** Yeah. Mr. Tom, he had corn meal. He didn't have no flour because you couldn't, the flour, you couldn't afford it. And he had his meat and everything.

Velma went up there, and she got—he gave her stuff to start off with. Then he went to town, and he got us some stuff.

**White:** That's a good neighbor.

**Bynum:** He was a good man, but I didn't treat him right. I don't know. I just didn't treat him right. I should have stayed with him, but anyway, he went to town, and he got us some rice, coffee, you know, what you use. He had plenty of lard up there and plenty of meat. He gave her that. She got something to eat. And I went to cutting bushes in the pasture, cleaning up in the pasture at fifty cents a day, on my bill.

**White:** Did you do it by hand, or did you have a mule and a (inaudible)?

**Bynum:** We did it by hand. He had goats in there, but they didn't keep it clean, so we had to. Me and the boys, his two boys, one of them wasn't in school, and me and him cut bushes, cut them bushes off of them stumps in the pasture. He had a big, old pasture, and he had a bunch of milk cows. Velma would go up there every morning, and Ms. Shoemaker(?) taught her how to milk, how to milk a cow, and he gave us a cow. And we had to go up there and milk her. He fed her, taken care of her himself, saw that we milked her. And we had milk and cornbread. And we couldn't have had anything better than that. We had an old, iron skillet we cooked the bread in, had something or another we cooked turnips in, and I eat Japanese turnips until I decided I never wanted to see another turnip. (laughter)

**White:** Japanese turnips.

**Bynum:** Yeah. Japanese turnips. Had an old, white root about that long, and the stalk, the stem way up this way.

**White:** Tall stem, huh?

**Bynum:** Yeah. It didn't have no taste to it. Gosh. We had to go up there and get corn every Friday and shuck it, and—

**White:** Miss Velma grew up on a farm?

**Bynum:** Yeah.

**White:** She just didn't know how to milk a cow.

**Bynum:** No. She didn't know how to milk a cow. She grew up in cotton country. She grew up in the Delta. The biggest part of her time was—

**White:** Is that right?

**Bynum:** Yeah, was learning how to pick cotton. She learned how to pick cotton. She could pick cotton, too. Boy, I'm not kidding you. She could pick cotton. Our first year we had a pretty good-sized cotton patch. I don't remember how much. We had a good farm that first year. Had a good farm and a good garden. We started a garden. We had a good garden, plenty to eat. Somebody give us a rooster and a hen, and that raised us a bunch of chickens, and the first thing we knew we had a bunch of chickens. And come on fall, picked cotton. I never picked a hundred pounds of cotton a day in my life. If I ever got to a hundred, or to ninety-five is something I didn't know about. (laughter)

**White:** But your wife could pick cotton.

**Bynum:** Oh, gosh! Man, she'd pick 350, 400 pounds of cotton a day.

**White:** Really? She was a cotton picker.

**Bynum:** Went to the scale, finished up that day, I hadn't picked a hundred pounds (laughter) all day. Now, you talking about somebody sick. (laughter) I was sick. She had picked about 350 pounds. I said, "That ain't going to work. It's just absolutely not going to work." I says, "How do you manage to pick it?" She said, "I pick it and throw it in the sack."

**White:** It was that simple, huh?

**Bynum:** Yeah. Now, I went the next day. I got 150 pounds. The next day I got a little over 200. That next day I got about 300. And you talking about proud. Boy, I was proud. Got up there, and I'd beat her, after so long a time. It taken me a long time, boy.

**White:** You had you a goal to work against there.

**Bynum:** Oh, boy, did I. But she grew up in that kind of country where you (inaudible) cotton that just (inaudible).

**White:** How long did y'all live on that farm there?

**Bynum:** Two years on that farm and moved to another one. That didn't work out. Moved. I went to public work, public works.

**White:** Public works.

**Bynum:** Um-hm. I started. I moved to Collins, moved between Mount Olive and Collins, and started on road work. They were doing the roads from Collins to Magee.

**White:** That's Highway 49?

**Bynum:** Yeah, Highway 49, Collins to Mount Olive, that's where it was. Well, I started about three miles this side of Collins, working.

**White:** What was the road like when you started?

**Bynum:** Well, when I first started, it wasn't anything but a gravel road.

**White:** Just a regular two-lane, gravel road?

**Bynum:** A two-lane, gravel road, narrow just like—

**White:** That must have been around 1933, 1934, somewhere along in there?

**Bynum:** Thirty-three, yeah, [19]33.

**White:** What kind of work did y'all do on the road?

**Bynum:** The crew was laying the foundation. They had a crew, clearing and building the road up, and they had a crew that was getting it ready to pour the concrete. And then they had a crew that had to lay the rails to hold the concrete. And I was in the crew where they used the teams and the heavy equipment, to (inaudible) up and building, getting ready and everything. I could handle a pair of mules. I could do anything that they had to do. I was supposed to work three days a week. Instead I worked six days a week, and some of the (inaudible) was out of (inaudible) over there. Some of my wife's people found out I was working six days a week, so they come over there and jumped on the foreman, told him he was wrong. The government told him three days, three days.

**White:** Oh, he wasn't paying you anymore to work six days, huh?

**Bynum:** Paid the three days. They paid a dollar a day for every day I worked. Of course I didn't get no money. I had to trade it out at Calhoun and Farris(?).

**White:** Is that the way they did it? They give you scrip money.

**Bynum:** Yeah. (Inaudible) I worked all the way up to—they put them on. They couldn't hold out, so they quit, but I stayed right on till they got to Mount Olive, six days a week. I made it real good. Well, then I went to Braxton. They was doing that road to the Rankin County line.

**White:** Highway 49 from Braxton to the county line?

**Bynum:** So I did that stretch, too, six days a week, and worked the same way. They worked something out, some way, or somehow or another, they kept me on. Worked six days a week. Well, I got that stretch on. They picked up at Mount Olive; they



come to Magee, and that's when I did—well, when I was on that Rankin deal, I walked from Martinville to Weathersby.

**White:** Martinville to Weathersby. That's a long walk.

**Bynum:** It was about ten miles.

**White:** You do that every day?

**Bynum:** Every day.

**White:** Just to go to work. What time did y'all start work?

**Bynum:** Six o'clock.

**White:** What time did you knock off in the afternoon?

**Bynum:** Six o'clock.

**White:** Oh, from six to six, twelve-hour day.

**Bynum:** Twelve hours a day.

**White:** You had to get up pretty early to walk, get there by six, didn't you?

**Bynum:** Well, the way it happened, that first of October of that year, what was it? Thirty-three? Buddy was born in [19]35, wasn't he? OK. That year, yeah. Maybe I'm ahead of my horse, but anyway, I walked from Martinville back over there to Mr. Shoemaker's to Weathersby. Harnessed (inaudible), my team was already harnessed. I usually drove a team all day that had a three (inaudible). That's the only one they'd let me drive was three of them because I was a good driver. Man, I was good.

**White:** A three what?

**Bynum:** Three of them.

**White:** Three of them. What's that three of?

**Bynum:** Three horses. And they had those big, old, three-wheelers; tell you to take (inaudible) Buck, Buck Newart(?), to Buck, and I did that quite a bit. I drove a three-team or a five. It didn't make any difference. They did all of them.

**White:** Was a five-team harder to handle?

**Bynum:** No.

**White:** About the same, huh?

**Bynum:** About the same (inaudible) like the others. Same thing. It was all hooked together. I (inaudible). Let me see. Buddy was born that day, the first of October. The second I walked to Weathersby, and I got there about noon and asked a man about getting on, and one of the Maddocks(?) boys—

**White:** Maddocks?

**Bynum:** Maddocks, Oscar Maddocks. You've heard tell of him. He was a schoolteacher, but he was with them, and he hollered and said, "There he is! There he is! There he is! Hire him." The man put me on, and I worked till six o'clock. I went home, got me some blackberries and cornbread. That was all I had to eat.

**White:** You needed that job then, didn't you?

**Bynum:** You ain't kidding. I needed that job. Had plenty of cornbread and plenty of blackberries.

**White:** Well, you mentioned Buddy. Let's go ahead and mention children did you have, and what are their names?

**Bynum:** This one and one more.

**White:** One more. And her name is?

**Bynum:** Kathleen.

**White:** Kathleen.

**Kathleen Bynum:** Kathy.

**White:** And when was she born?

**Bynum:** Thirty-two.

**White:** Thirty-two.

**Bynum:** Right?

**Kathleen Bynum:** April 3, [19]32.

**White:** April 3, 1932. So you had two children to feed then. You really had to get out there and work.

**Bynum:** You ain't kidding.

**White:** Well, I think you kind of got used to walking a little bit during your earlier years. Didn't you have to walk a pretty good distance to school when you were earlier, too?

**Bynum:** Oh, yeah. Walked to Rials Creek, and that wasn't very far to go. That was about three miles.

**White:** Three miles? That's not very far to walk to school, is it?

**Bynum:** No.

**White:** I don't think a lot of kids these days would think it wasn't (laughter) very far. Is that the farthest you walked to school?

**Bynum:** Yeah, (inaudible).

**White:** How long did you have to walk back and forth, that ten miles from Martinville to—

**Bynum:** I don't remember how long it was, but anyway, I picked up in Magee, after something or another. I don't just how long we was up there. It didn't take long to go on up to the county, by the Rankin County line. And they picked up, started at just below Magee down there, going to the part that they'd picked up, I guess, in Mendenhall. That's there that one started, Mendenhall. Of course I started at Weathersby, finished up. I went to Magee and started there and then come on into Mendenhall. And that's the same work, same thing. I'd walk from Martinville down there. That was still the same thing.

**White:** Early in the morning.

**Bynum:** Early in the morning.

**White:** That sun wasn't up, was it?

**Bynum:** No way, man. It was two o'clock in the morning. I'd get in about two at night, and I'd leave at two the next morning. My wife would stay up to see that I got up and had me a bucket, cornbread and blackberries to start with. When we got some money, we done something else.

**White:** You didn't get a whole lot of sleep then, did you?

**Bynum:** (laughter) No, not much.

**White:** Were you renting a farm?

**Bynum:** No. I was working on a farm, sharing.

**White:** Sharecropping.

**Bynum:** Sharecropping, um-hm.

**White:** How many years did you sharecrop?

**Bynum:** I left sharecropping in [19]37 or [19]38.

**White:** And where did you move then, and what kind of job were you working at?

**Bynum:** I was with Willie Walker(?) down there. After I finished that job in Magee, I sharecropped with Mr. Tom Shoemaker one year, and I went to Willie Walker's, spent two years, and I went from Willie's to Puckett. Puckett with Marvin Burnham(?) on the lake out there, and I sharecropped there two years, and I moved to John's. I bought, through the government I bought 120 acres of land just above, just in the edge of John's.

**White:** I got a good friend who lives out there on a farm close to John's now. What kind of government program was it that you bought the land through?

**Bynum:** I really don't remember.

**White:** They were just offering it pretty cheap?

**Bynum:** Yeah. It was a SIA or VA [Veterans Administration] or some kind of.

**White:** It wasn't a VA. You hadn't done any military service, had you?

**Bynum:** No.

**White:** They never did call you for military service?

**Bynum:** I was exempt.

**White:** With a family and everything, huh?

**Bynum:** I don't remember what it was. It was something. I went and taken my physical, and the doctor told me that, to forget it; I wasn't going into service. Well, it kindly hurt my feelings a little bit because I was interested in going.

**White:** Didn't keep you from working, though, did it?

**Bynum:** Oh, no. I worked, really, for the government then. I had 140 acres. No, I had eighty acres and forty acres; that's what I had. I had forty acres the road; I had

eighty acres that way and about forty acres in bottomland. And I had fooled around. Well, the government had fooled around and bought the place for me, and I bought me a pair of mules and horses, and I saw that I couldn't do nothing with that land. And that's the way I wanted to go, so I had to have a tractor. So I used my neighbor's, Preacher Patrick(?).

**White:** Patrick. I know a lot of Patricks out that way, still live out that way.

**Bynum:** Well, he died not too long ago, and he let me have his tractor to do the first year. (Inaudible) I used it any time I wanted to. I was on a buying spree. I was going to buy me a tractor to farm with. Somebody was going to give me one. So I went to Brandon and talked to Harold Kennedy. I talked to the other fellow they had there. They had (inaudible). They wouldn't sell me one on a credit; wouldn't help me. I went to (inaudible); they wouldn't do anything. One night about ten o'clock, there was a car pulled up in the yard. I got up and went out on the porch. They said, "So-and-so and so-and-so live here?" I said, "Yeah." Said, "You looking for a tractor?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Well, there'll be one setting in your lot when you get up in the morning." That was the Ford Company in Mendenhall; had one of them little, old, what do you call it? Massey-Ferguson.

**White:** Farmall?

**Bynum:** No. It was Massey-Ferguson.

**White:** Massey-Ferguson.

(End of digital file named tape one, side two. Interview continues on digital file named tape two, side one.)

**Bynum:** They learned to cultivate with tractors and work with tractors, and that's what they did. They worked (inaudible) they could work with tractors. But I worked (inaudible) work with mules. And finally the government was offering so much money to build terraces and ditches, and soil conservation was what it was. So I bought me a plough for that, and that's what I did until I got to where I couldn't go. But doing that work, that was regular. You know, it was regular, and (inaudible) all to pieces. It killed one boy, Steve's boy. He and I were doing the same thing, and he was out there. Come to find out, it shook his kidneys all to pieces, and mine was just about gone when Dr. Holifield told me I couldn't do it no more. I'd have to stay off of it. So I sold my tractor.

**White:** So you began work for the soil Conservation Service. After you got sick—

**Bynum:** I got sick, and I went—

**White:** About what year was that? Do you remember?

**Bynum:** Forty-two or [19]43.

**White:** Right about the Second World War time.

**Bynum:** Yeah. Well—

**White:** During the war.

**Bynum:** —they were just, that was just (inaudible). The war had just closed, and the companies was hiring these people that the government was paying the companies so much to hire these people from the war. And I went to work with the soil conservation. That was surveying or something like that, and a friend of mine come along one day. I couldn't walk and stay up real good. I was real weak. He come along. He says, "I want you to carry me to the doctor in the morning." I said, "I can't (inaudible)." He says, "Yeah, come on (inaudible)." The mills were opening up, and they wanted help. He says, "Let's go over there." I went over there. He got (inaudible). I told them I didn't want it. The superintendent said, "Come on." Said, "Fill out this application." He looked at the application. He said, "Be here in the morning, ready to go to work." I says, "I don't want to work." (laughter)

**White:** You got hired anyway, huh?

**Bynum:** And he said, "Yeah. Just be here. We'll talk about that later." (inaudible). He had all new equipment in that building. It was Standard(?) Mill Work and Supply Company (inaudible). He carried me out there, walked me over to the plant. He said, "I want you to stand right here and watch this fellow." Well, that fellow fooled around there and fooled around, and he wasn't doing nothing, really. The cutting was automatic; all you had to do was mash a button, and it'd (inaudible) operating, but he wasn't doing anything. So he fooled around, and fooled around there (inaudible) little bit. And I says, "How about letting me trying that a little bit?" I knew what he was cutting. I knew what he was doing when he was cutting. It was parts for a window. I said, "Let me try it." So I got over there, and I turned that thing on automatic. It (inaudible) do anything but cut. It cut as fast as you could feed it, and I cut out every (inaudible). I saw it was splitting that stuff up, and that thing put it on there; he couldn't keep up with it. (Inaudible) come by. He said, "Come on and go with me. And I went. He carried me down to (inaudible). He says, "You can take off that (inaudible)." I said, "I don't want to work." He says, "That's OK. You going to do that. Come on and do that for me." I went over there. I went on back out there and started to work, and every night I quit. (laughter)

**White:** You just didn't like it?

**Bynum:** No. I didn't like it. I'd been on the farm and doing something else. I didn't like mill work, being shut up. So he made me foreman of the mill. I operated that for five years, the assistant superintendent.

**White:** Is that National Homes?

**Bynum:** No. It was Standard Mill Work, (inaudible) company on Main Street over here in Jackson. It's brand-new. Well, I went from there to Avery. I went from twenty-eight dollars a week. We started off at Standard Mills, and they got me up to sixty-five dollars a week. Well, I left there and went to Avery's on Mill Street, and he put me in a plant on Main Street, carried me up there and left me with it. Well, I was handling it so well, I reckon; I don't know what it was. But anyway, he says, "I'm going to put you where I can take care of you. You won't be idling around so much." So he carried me down to Magee.

**White:** Back toward home, huh?

**Bynum:** Carried me down to Magee. He says, "Can you work with those colored people down there?" I said, "Yes, sir. I was raised with them. I ought to know." He said, "OK. Let's go." He went down there, and he bought that plant. He give twenty-five thousand dollars for it. He went to New Orleans and got the money to pay for it. Forrest(?) bought that plant, and that was on Saturday morning. He said, "Sometime on Saturday morning, you start stripping this machine out of here, and they going to start moving that other stuff in here for you to work on. I want you to start, and idle time, you'll have time, see a new lumber company buying up this lumber that you're going to need to cut them slats with, to cut Ford slats and Chevrolet slats. And you get this machinery out of here." I said, "I'll get (inaudible) to pick it up and get so-and-so down here and let them start hiring some help at Crawford and Sanders out in Jackson." So I called Crawford. I knew where he lived, and I knew him well, anyway, to come down there and start hiring some help. And he said, "I want you to make your first—I want you to have a car on the tractor at a certain time in November." Well, I knew the boys down there. I knew most everybody down there. So I got some good help. I started cutting that stuff, and I had more than that; I had two or three cars on the tractor (inaudible).

**White:** Excuse me for interrupting, but you said you cut Chevrolet and Ford slats. What are you talking about slats—

**Bynum:** Body slats.

**White:** Body slats.

**Bynum:** Yeah, went in the floors.

**White:** Oh, the floor and in the pickups.

**Bynum:** Yeah.

**White:** OK. I just wanted to make sure that's what that was. I thought that's what you were talking about. I wanted to make sure because some people don't know what

slats were for in the bottom of a pickup because they've been making solid-metal bodies for so many years now. Excuse me. Go ahead. I just wanted to make that point.

**Bynum:** Let's see now. Where we was at?

**White:** You got in down there, and you were supposed to have them on the track by November.

**Bynum:** Yeah. They got on there. We had, I think, three cars (inaudible). I had to move to Magee. I couldn't drive that far. He wasn't paying that much money. I was working for sixty-five dollars a week. I told him I had to have more. He moved it up to ninety-five, and I stayed with them through [19]54, wasn't it? National Homes, I'd left Avery. Mr. Avery told me when I started with him; we was sitting up there at the plant one day, sitting on the outside. I said, "Well, Mr. Avery, now, I want to stay with a company that I can retire from and live off of. I want to stay with one company." He said, "You're wrong." He said, "You going to stay with one company any longer than you can learn what's going on, and you can't get no higher?" Said, "Move over and find you something to"—(laughter)

**White:** Giving you some advice, huh?

**Bynum:** Yeah. And I'm working for him, you know. Well, I did. I quit in [19]54, and I went to Texas. Well, I got a job in San Antonio and one in New Orleans and so-and-so, and I was supposed to go to it on a certain day, and somebody called the house about (inaudible) and told them they wanted to talk to me. That was long distance. So I talked to her one morning. I was in Brownsville, Texas. I just was fooling around. I wasn't (inaudible). The kids had gone; they was out on their own. I was out, wasn't worrying about nothing, and so I told her, "Tell him I'll be there at six o'clock in the morning." So I left, headed for home, and I was give out, tired and everything, and I'd just had an operation, and I got there, and they wanted me in Lafayette, Indiana. (Inaudible) was calling me. He was from Laurel, a great, big lumber company down there, and he went with National Homes in Lafayette.

**White:** But he knew of you from this area.

**Bynum:** My record, I reckon, was what it was, the reason he knew because he had talked to Mr. Avery. So Mr. Avery said that he had talked to him, and he said Mr. Avery had talked to him and told him about me. Well, he kept, he wanted me to come up there, and I wouldn't go, and finally he just—somebody I worked with, Leroy Rohr(?) up in (inaudible) told him that he would be there at a certain time. He called up there, and I was over there talking to Leroy, and Leroy talked to him, and I heard him tell him, "Well, he'll be there in the morning. He'll be on a plane tonight." (laughter) Gone!

**White:** He committed you, huh?



**Bynum:** Yes, he did. Well, I got on the plane. Mr. Avery was on the plane. He and I got the same seat. Mr. Avery told me, says, “Well, now, you’re going to National Homes. They’re good people. Don’t leave them. Stay with them. They’ll pay you. Don’t worry about it.” So I got up there, and they met me at the plane, and they sent me to Horse Heads, New York. I named every machine he had in that plant and what it would do, and he was putting out—Lafayette was putting out seventy-five houses a shift, and they was running three shifts.

**White:** Building prefabricated houses?

**Bynum:** Prefabricated houses. They was loading out seventy-five houses a shift. Well, I (inaudible) New York, they hadn’t had a superintendent over there for all the year. They had nine, and didn’t have a one. Roy told me, “Go over there and stay and don’t come back.” If I wanted anything, call him. I went. You couldn’t get to the shop. It was in one of them barracks, Army barracks, railroad on each side, and a street on each side, and a street on each end. And it was a big, long thing. And they had dumped lumber all the way up the other side, come down this side, this side. As they unloaded the car, they just put it anywhere they could put it. And I told them, I said, “Well, I don’t want the job. Just give me my money and let me go back to Jackson.” (laughter) And they kept on.

**White:** Looked like a big mess, didn’t it?

**Bynum:** Oh, it was a challenge; I guarantee you. It was a big one. I knew I could handle it. I just didn’t feel like it. So he told me I was a coward.

**White:** Oh! He put the dare on you, huh?

**Bynum:** Yeah. I told him I had to have \$500 a week if I stayed and knew he wasn’t going to pay that. He says, “How you know I ain’t going to pay it?” So I stayed with it. He didn’t pay me no five hundred though. I told him I’d settle for less than that to start with, but if I proved, I wanted my \$500. OK. He had to go to Texas over here. They were building a new one over there. He was engineering that. I’d been there about, I guess, a month. He said, “You take it over and handle it. Do what you want to (inaudible).” I’d already started, and I wasn’t making no big moves. I got two (inaudible). I found a big lot just across the street. It was empty. I asked one of them to get on the board and start laying out how they was going to (inaudible). Told the other one to start (inaudible) where they could stack the lumber. Stack the lumber here, here, here, and here (inaudible). And they started doing that. I started hiring another crew I put on at night. And I stayed with them (inaudible) night, and then somebody would carry me to the apartment to change clothes and take a bath (inaudible). Had a boy from Mendenhall brought in. He was foreman for the mill up there. Man, that was the nastiest place in the world I ever seen in my life. So they got started cleaning up, and I think about a month or two months, I think about two months, they unloaded—there was forty-eight cars sitting, to be unloaded down there,

forty-eight cars. But they was unloading cars day and night. It taken about two months, I believe it was, to get them unloaded, get them down, get everything straightened up. And that guy came back from Texas. I forget the name of that place (inaudible). He called (inaudible). I (inaudible) told them to come over there. It was Hoyt(?), George, and Jim. Jim, Hoyt, and George to come over there. In a few minutes, they was over there, and I didn't know he had done that because I wasn't planning on calling them until I got through. They come over there, and Hoyt, the first thing I know, Hoyt was out there on the yard where I was at. He said, "I don't believe it." So I have stayed right on. They either raised my wages (inaudible). I didn't have nothing else to do. I had everything just like—

**White:** Got them organized, huh?

**Bynum:** Yeah. Everything was in good shape, and everything was going real good, and I had a bunch of—I think I had to make five hundred houses to put in (inaudible) to draw from. They were building those houses, and we called a secondary. They had to keep putting it in there. They cut them each day. They cut so much each day. They keep putting it in there, or either cutting it and running it on the (inaudible). But they lacked just a little bit. They didn't lack too much, being up. The cars were unloaded. There wasn't any cars on storage. Everything was coming through, and they was producing seventy—they produced thirty-seven houses on the shift, and I had put on two shifts. That give them so many trailers they loaded out. And after they left, they were so happy. Price(?) told me, "You can get anything you want." So they raised my wages up to five hundred and something and give me a bonus of \$600.

**White:** You earned your money on that, though, didn't you?

**Bynum:** Yes, I did. I stayed with it. I got it.

**White:** Well, did you retire with them?

**Bynum:** No. I left there and went to—I had to come home. My wife's people, her mother was down, and my daddy was down, and they didn't have no help. So we come home to do that. She said she was coming home, so I knowed I was going to have to come home. (laughter) (Inaudible).

**White:** About what year was that?

**Bynum:** Let me see. I went up there in [19]54, [19]56. I was up there when Gary was born? Was I there when—no, I wasn't there when Tracy—yeah, I was there when Tracy born? Or was I in Toledo, Ohio? Where was I at? (Inaudible).

**White:** Must have been the late [19]60s when you came back.

**Bynum:** In [19]60 I was in Miami.

**White:** You did move around, didn't you?

**Kathleen Bynum:** Fifty-eight, somewhere around there.

**Bynum:** What happened at National Homes, I didn't want to move. I didn't want to leave, and I had to come home. I didn't have a thing in the world to do. I had a secretary, a young boy just finished college, eighteen year old. He could take care of anything, didn't matter. All he'd do, he'd tell me or ask me something. And they didn't want me to leave because they paid me on for about three months, and I finally told them, "Don't pay me no more." And I got a good, good bonus every year, that they paid a thousand dollars for (inaudible). Well, I got \$900, and nobody got a thousand, and I come home, and I wasn't here a month, Charter(?) Corporation was bugging me to come to (inaudible), Pennsylvania, set up a—I had a friend that went over there. He told them about me when he went over there, and they just kept on and kept on and kept on, and (inaudible). So I went up there, set up for them, got everything started, and we built thirty-eight houses, and one of the men committed suicide. It was Charlie somebody. They owned the largest appliance in Philadelphia.

**White:** All right. We hadn't got you back to Simpson County yet. We going to have to get you there eventually, but you got better then. Did you work anymore places there before you retired and settled back in in Byram? You didn't move back to Simpson County? You did a whole lot of working during your life, and from the looks of the machinery you got outside, somebody's still kind of tending to all kinds of (inaudible). But I have in my hand a letter here, from the White House, signed by Bill Clinton on November 22, 2000, congratulating you and your wife on your seventieth wedding anniversary. I believe your marriage lasted a lot longer than a lot of marriages did these days. One of them obviously was that you worked awful hard, and so did your wife all those years, but sounds like y'all both had a whole lot of determination, too, to make things go.

**Bynum:** I guess so. I guess so. We still alive.

**White:** Been a pretty good life, so far, then, huh?

**Bynum:** Has been a good life, really good life. There's been a lot of ups and downs, but we made it. I think we been married eighty-two or eighty-three years.

**White:** I know you had also mentioned in here on the form that you filled out that you were affiliated one time with the New Home Baptist Church out of Martinville. The church has meant something to you, obviously, all these years. And I believe you've been a Mason, too, haven't you?

**Bynum:** Yeah. I joined the Masons in 1940, I believe it was.

**White:** Nineteen forty?

**Bynum:** Yeah. And I joined the (inaudible) in [19]74, I believe it was, or somewhere in the [19]70s, I believe.

**White:** Have here, too, also a certificate from the Grand Lodge in Jackson where you were given the Sublime Degree of Master Mason in 1951. I don't understand how you had time to go to church and raise a family and (laughter) go to the Masons with as much work history as you've given us today. We've interviewed several people whose lives have been really filled with work and the joy of work, and the satisfaction of it, and I think more than anything else that's what I've felt from this interview today is that it's a pretty tough thing getting out and going to work, but somebody's got to do it, and it might as well be you. Is that right?

**Bynum:** I enjoyed it.

**White:** I believe you did.

**Bynum:** I enjoy work. Always did enjoy work.

**White:** How often do you get back to Simpson County these days?

**Bynum:** Oh, maybe once a week or something like that.

**White:** Well, you still got a lot of contacts down (inaudible).

**Bynum:** I got a granddaughter down there.

**White:** Have you really?

**Bynum:** Yeah, and I got a brother down there, and I got a lot of kinfolks down there.

**White:** So you still maintaining a lot of contacts then.

**Bynum:** Oh, yeah.

**White:** Well, that's good. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about or tell us while we've got this tape recorder going today?

**Bynum:** I'll be right with you, whatever you want to know. (laughter) Anything I don't—I know I couldn't tell you about it.

**White:** You pretty chockfull of information. I do appreciate your taking this time to let us talk with you today, and there are a lot of people, your family members and otherwise, who will appreciate this information. Thank you, sir.

(end of interview)