

# Mississippi Oral History Program

Simpson County Historical and Genealogical  
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Roy Powers Jones

Interviewer: Joe White

Volume 1217, Part 10  
2003

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*An Oral History with Roy Powers Jones, Volume 1217, Part 10*

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## Biography

Roy Powers Jones was born to Wilson Jones and Ellen Smith on the Goodwater Community near Magee, MS in August 1909. He attended Goodwater Elementary and Magee High School. Jones married Audrey Mae Stephens and had two children together. He worked as an electrician for most of his life, with a focus on refrigeration. After working at Western Auto Store for four years, starting in 1941, Jones bought the store and owned it for thirty-eight years until retirement. Jones started the Miller Trail Hunting Club in Port Gibson.

## Table of Contents

Personal/parents' history.....	1
Childhood.....	4, 7
Education.....	6
Farm work.....	8
Marriage.....	9
Work as electrician/business owner.....	10, 15
Family.....	14
Refrigeration.....	16
Stables, wagons, railroads, and Highway 49.....	20
Retirement.....	25

AN ORAL HISTORY  
with  
ROY POWERS JONES

*This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi Simpson County Project. The interview is with Roy Powers Jones and is taking place on June 25, 2003. The interviewer is Joe White.*

**White:** This is Joe White. Today is Wednesday, June 25, 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. Roy P. Jones at his home in Magee, Mississippi. Mr. Jones, could you state your full name, please, sir?

**Jones:** Roy Powers Jones.

**White:** And when were you born?

**Jones:** August the twenty-fourth, 1909.

**White:** Where were you born?

**Jones:** In the residence at that time. (laughter) They didn't have a hospital.

**White:** Born in your home?

**Jones:** Yeah, uh-huh.

**White:** And that was at the Goodwater Community?

**Jones:** Yeah, the old home. The old home is still there.

**White:** That's between Magee and—

**Jones:** Between the railroad and the church.

**White:** Between Magee and Sanatorium.

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Between the railroad and the church. And you still, you live fairly close to there now, even though you live in Magee. You said you were born at your house, at your parents' place. Your dad's name was?

**Jones:** Wilson.

**White:** Wilson Jones. And you had told me earlier that he was born in Rankin County. Was it in Johns or over close to Johns?

**Jones:** Well, he called over so many (inaudible) little villages, I don't really know. He'd say John Cado(?) and Nathan Riddy(?), and he never, I don't believe he ever mentioned Puckett(?) as (inaudible) any part of (inaudible).

**White:** He was born on a farm, then, my guess is.

**Jones:** Oh, yeah.

**White:** Between Johns and Cado.

**Jones:** Right in there somewhere.

**White:** Close to the Simpson County line probably, too, because it's not very far there to it. And your mother's name?

**Jones:** Ellen.

**White:** And she was a Smith, I believe you had said. And what community was she born in?

**Jones:** Around Coat.

**White:** C-O-A-T?

**Jones:** Um-hm.

**White:** I've heard of that. Where is it?

**Jones:** That's going from Magee, south, on the old highway.

**White:** About how many miles south of Magee?

**Jones:** About five miles, six.

**White:** People in Pinola call that Coats. I don't know why they put an S on it. (laughter) That's what I remember hearing.

**Jones:** They do. (Inaudible) say Coats.

**White:** When I was growing up. According to the little biographical sheet that you had filled out, your father had a number of children, didn't he?

**Jones:** Yeah. He was married twice. He lost his first wife, and there was six of the first family. He lost a boy when he was fifteen, I think, with pneumonia. And then he lost his wife, the best I could tell, from childbirth. Yeah, we'll say he did because the child weighed fifteen pounds.

**White:** Oh, my heavens. I would imagine that would have been it, too. Do you happen to know what year that was? I know you don't remember it.

**Jones:** No. I never did hear him say. Dad would talk to me a lot, and a lot of times he would say things to me as if it were someone else and let me figure that out. So.

**White:** Speak in the third person?

**Jones:** Yeah. And I was sharp enough to figure out a lot of it, just like that wife. That was his wife, his first wife, and the child, and other things he would speak of like that.

**White:** Well, did the child survive?

**Jones:** No.

**White:** Fifteen pounds.

**Jones:** No. That was the sad part. I'll take time to tell you this part of what he said. Now, he didn't say it was him, but I told my wife—I don't know how long ago—I said, "Now, when Dad said that, he knew I'd figure it out." He said there was a woman trying to birth a child, and she couldn't birth that child. The doctor said, "Now, if you'll put your hand on my hand, I'm going to stick this knife in the soft part of his head. Then we'll take the child out by pieces." And evidently that's what he did, and the woman died, too.

**White:** She still didn't make it, despite what they tried to do there.

**Jones:** No. Audrey and I were talking about it the other day. I said, "What a pity, and how far we've come." That would have been no problem today for her. She wouldn't have had the child, but they'd have done surgery. And they didn't know nothing about doing surgery back then.

**White:** But then he later married your mother who was Ellen Smith and had several children.

**Jones:** Six.

**White:** Six.

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** You have all those names handy? (laughter)

**Unknown voice:** He's the thirteenth child. (laughter)

**White:** You are the thirteenth child?

**Jones:** Yeah. I can give them to you. Ola was the oldest one, and Hetta and Erma, and that's three girls. Essie and Clyde and Roy, six.

**White:** And did the children of his earlier marriage still live with y'all then, or was this several years later?

**Jones:** Yeah, [three] of the girls, in fact all of them.

**White:** Had a pretty big household there at one time.

**Jones:** Well, at one time, see, we had two of the older boys were not married, and one of the girls was not married, and there was six of us, and that was three, is nine, and Mother and Dad was eleven (inaudible) that big, long table. And there was plenty of food on it.

**White:** Well, he had a nice, built-in set of farmhands, didn't he? (laughter)

**Jones:** He did, yeah. (laughter)

**White:** Well, tell me about that big, long table. What was breakfast like?

**Jones:** Well, (laughter) a hot biscuit.

**Unknown voice:** (Inaudible)

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

**White:** What time did your mama have to get up and start fixing that breakfast?

**Jones:** Just about daylight; just about daylight.

**White:** What kind of stove did she cook on?

**Jones:** Wood stove.

**White:** Did she build the fire, or did one of you kids do it?

**Jones:** There was fire in that, and she had what was called the reservoir on the side, warm water. And well, it was a long time before I ever saw a kettle sitting on the



stove for water. She used that thing on the side. She'd have about, say, it'd hold eight gallons.

**White:** Well, who cut all that wood outside, and who brought it in?

**Jones:** We boys, two boys would bring that wood. (laughter) And we'd put it on the back porch.

**White:** Did you ever get tired of doing that?

**Jones:** Yeah. (laughter) See, Mother had to cut in that day (inaudible) wood, and we'd get wood in the summer, cutting trees, then split the wood.

**White:** And let it cure, get dry.

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** What was breakfast like for twelve children? (laughter)

**Jones:** Well, it was all right. Mother was an excellent cook, and what we would have is what I ordinarily have today. We'd have, it could be ham. It could be bacon, and certainly there was going to be eggs, biscuit and cane syrup, about like the food that they use now.

**White:** Yeah. Did y'all make your own syrup?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Or did you buy it? What kind of supplies did they go to town and buy?

**Jones:** I heard Dad say one time, said that about the only thing he'd have to buy was sugar, rice, maybe flour, sugar, rice, coffee, and I don't know what the other one was.

**White:** Most everything else you'd grow on the farm (inaudible).

**Jones:** We'd grow on the farm. Make the corn meal. Make the corn and have the corn ground for the meal. But now you had to buy the flour, of course.

**White:** Did y'all have a big lunch, or were you working or at school during lunch? (laughter)

**Jones:** Yeah, (inaudible). We'd have a big lunch.

**White:** Where'd you go to school?

**Jones:** At Goodwater.

**White:** How many grades did they have at Goodwater then?

**Jones:** Well, didn't get credit for it, but you could get—I had sixteen units without credits. And I went to Magee. I thought maybe they would claim my credits. They said, "We can't claim. You wasn't an affiliated school." And says, "We can't claim your credits."

**White:** Oh, it wasn't accredited by the county or anything like that?

**Jones:** Unh-uh.

**White:** What year schooling were you in when you went to Magee?

**Jones:** I believe it was in 19[30]; seems like about 1930 when I went to Magee.

**White:** About what grade were you in?

**Jones:** Well, I went down there and thought I'd get a diploma, twelfth grade.

**White:** Oh, in the last year.

**Jones:** Yeah. They said, "Well, it's not going to help you any." I already had the units. And they said, "You'd have to go back to," I believe they said to the ninth grade and come on up.

**White:** Oh, heavens. They had some bureaucrats around in 1930, too. Didn't they? (laughter)

**Jones:** Yeah, they had. (laughter)

**White:** Did any of your brothers and sisters go to school at Magee, or did they all go to Goodwater?

**Jones:** Well, that's the mistake I made. We had a car, and when it come time to go to high school, they went to Mendenhall. And I went to Magee. The best way I could go was on foot, and (laughter) that was a bad thing to do. I never will understand why I didn't go up there with them, but I just didn't want to go to Mendenhall.

**White:** Well, there's still a little animosity between Mendenhall and Magee.

**Jones:** (Inaudible)

**White:** Even in the same family, you know?

**Jones:** Yeah. (laughter) Always will be. Yeah.

**White:** And is the old house still out there that you grew up in?

**Jones:** Yeah, uh-huh. The only one that I know of in the whole country. The others burned for some reason. That house had—let's see. The rooms were terribly big. I believe they was fourteen by sixteen, eighteen, something like that, and a fireplace in that room, a fireplace here. And across the hall, there was a fireplace in that room and a fireplace in the other, which they called a double chimney.

**White:** Yeah, heating two rooms, back to back.

**Jones:** And then in the kitchen, there was a fireplace, and the piece across here was about this high, and I wanted to know why. Dad said, "Well, the women in the kitchen couldn't sit down." (laughter) They were cooking. And said, "They could stand back there to get warm if they wanted to."

**White:** Turn around and stand up (inaudible) a fireplace back in there. Well, I know in some of, in my grandmother's old kitchen out in Pinola, it was high because they had a couple of hooks in it. They had what looked like wash pots hanging in there, which she fixed soup and stuff in. I remember that. What kind of—you weren't on a city water system, I don't imagine then, either, were you?

**Jones:** No. We had to crank it up. (laughter)

**White:** You had a deep well?

**Jones:** By hand.

**White:** You had a deep well?

**Jones:** No, not really. I think the well there run about fifty feet, something like that.

**White:** What'd that water taste like?

**Jones:** Good water.

**White:** I still remember what the water tasted like out of our old well down in Pinola.

**Jones:** (Inaudible)

**White:** That's the reason I asked. Just as sweet and clear and cold.

**Jones:** Now, we had to run a cane mill; my dad had a well down at the cane.

**White:** Had what?

**Jones:** A cane mill, where you grind the cane and make the juice to be cooked for something.

**White:** You got your hearing aid in, and I probably need a little of it. (laughter) I missed that.

**Jones:** Yeah. He would cook the juice off and made syrup out of it.

**White:** Well, did y'all put up your own, smoke your own meat and things like that back then?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Well, did you have a separate smokehouse?

**Jones:** He had a big smokehouse back there, and you won't believe how much meat I've seen hanging up in there. He'd kill, Daddy would kill about six hogs (inaudible). And of course he'd let the people on the—the hands, he called them, here on the place. One of them lived out here where we live.

**White:** Farmhands, huh?

**Jones:** Um-hm. And there was two or three of us.

**White:** Well, if he had farmhands and twelve children working, he must have had a pretty big farm. How many acres did he have?

**Jones:** A hundred and sixty.

**White:** A hundred and sixty acres was a lot of acres to work then.

**Jones:** We had a few. I believe we worked six mules. Of course as you got your ground broke, them mules seem a lot to cultivate.

**White:** So what all did y'all raise then?

**Jones:** Corn and cotton usually, and then the sugar cane. We made that for the syrup.

**White:** Where'd you haul your cotton to sell it?

**Jones:** Magee. They had to go there to the gin.

**White:** Which gin was it then?

**Jones:** Well, Everitt(?) had a gin, and finally they had a co-op. And then there was Mr. Vance Williams(?) had a big store, and he had a gin.

**White:** He had a general merchandise store, I believe, there. Didn't he?

**Jones:** Yeah. And Mr. Everitt, he finally managed two gins. There were six gins below the railroad, and I've (inaudible).

**White:** Six gins?

**Jones:** Six gins. Sometimes they'd have to run them at night to take care of the cotton.

**White:** Well, how were those gins powered then? I hadn't thought to ask anybody that. Did they have big engines, diesel engines?

**Jones:** Yeah, um-hm.

**White:** Or I guess kerosene probably in some cases, too.

**Jones:** Some of it was that.

**White:** Did you farm any? I'm getting off a little bit here. We actually going to get up to your current life and your wife and everything else one of these days. I have a tendency to get sidetracked. I enjoy talking about old times.

**Jones:** What was the question?

**White:** Did you farm any after you grew up?

**Jones:** I farmed like Dad taught me to farm. Audrey and I married, and we lived—

**White:** Which is a good time to mention her. Her name before you married was?

**Jones:** Audrey Stephens.

**White:** Audrey Mae Stephens, and she grew up in the Coat Community, I believe.

**Jones:** No. (Inaudible) here.

**White:** Well, I have it wrong on this sheet.

**Unknown voice:** We lived just a little piece from this (inaudible).

**White:** Oh, you lived right around here then.

**Jones:** I don't who we (inaudible) down from Coat there. My mother, I think is what you was getting at.

**White:** Well, it might have been. I probably read the wrong. That's right. Your mother was born in the Coat Community. I'm sorry. I looked at this biographical sheet a little bit [wrong] here. And she did, your wife, I believe, did, after going to Goodwater Elementary, did go to Magee High School. Is that where you met her?

**Jones:** Audrey?

**White:** Yes.

**Unknown voice:** (Inaudible)

**Jones:** Yeah. But she was from (inaudible). (laughter) We (inaudible).

**White:** You didn't meet her at school?

**Jones:** No. We were going to same school.

**White:** Oh, at Goodwater.

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Oh, OK. Well, your dating dates back then, didn't it?

**Jones:** Yeah. (laughter) Yeah. Somebody asked me about that a while back, and I said, "Well, I'm going to tell you the truth. I dated four girls." And I said, "Finally, I married the best one in the four."

**White:** That's a smart thing to do. You know? (laughter) That's certainly the smart thing to do. You farmed. I believe you worked as an electrician for a number of years, didn't you? How'd you get into that?

**Jones:** In 1940, well, I took a course in it. It was a course through the mail. And then I went to work with a man, a good electrician. And then I went out on my own.

**White:** You remember the man's name you went to work—

**Jones:** Yeah. (laughter)

**White:** You'd have remembered if I hadn't asked you, huh?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Well, maybe you'll remember it, and if you do, you can tell me that. Go ahead, though. You went out on your own as an electrician?

**Jones:** Yeah. I believe it was in 19—yeah, it was. We were already in the store. We didn't (inaudible) I was working in the store. Did we buy the store in [19]45 or in [19]44?

**Unknown voice:** Somewhere along there we bought the (inaudible).

**Jones:** But I—

**White:** You began working there, I think you had said earlier, in 1941. And then you bought the, you say the store; that's the Western Auto Store here in Mendenhall.

**Jones:** Yeah. I worked for a fellow that was working in Sanatorium. And he was one of the electricians out there. And he had—

**White:** That's the tuberculosis sanatorium.

**Jones:** He asked me to do some work for him, and the first job he gave me was six houses up in Rankin County, and I went up there and wired them out for him and several more out in that (inaudible).

**White:** Were they new houses or old houses?

**Jones:** Old houses.

**White:** You had to pull the wires through and figure out where to run them then, didn't you?

**Jones:** Yeah, yeah. (laughter)

**White:** Well, that first electrical work was a little bit different from what it is these days, isn't it? Can you tell us a little bit about what you did, and how you hooked it up?

**Jones:** The way I would do it, I'd first figure out where I was going to put my switches and everything, the lights in the ceiling. And then I'd cut the holes for them. I'd first go and see what I was going to do up in the attic, and then I carried my wire up there and run it down. And if I had a helper, he'd pull that wire out about that far, set a box for me.

**White:** Leave it sticking out of the hole?

**Jones:** Uh-huh. So that's the way it worked out.

**White:** After you got it wired, you'd call the power company, or did the homeowner do that?

**Jones:** No, the homeowner. They would pay me for what I had done, and then they'd call the power company.

**White:** You remember about how much money you'd get for wiring the average house?

**Jones:** It was too cheap. (laughter) Two dollars an outlet.

**White:** Two dollars an hour?

**Jones:** Outlet.

**White:** Oh, an outlet.

**Jones:** Like this plug right there, (inaudible).

**White:** Well, did you have to pay for the outlet, too, or did they buy the supplies?

**Jones:** Well, I had to furnish everything.

**White:** Two dollars an outlet you got for it. I wish I could talk my electrician into that (inaudible). (laughter)

**Jones:** Well, later, though, we got paid better for what we knew to do.

**White:** But did you do electrical work when you started to work at Western Auto Store here, also?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** In 1941.

**Jones:** And I didn't want to, but I had started; that was my trade, and people wouldn't let me alone. I'd have to go out and wire a house and—

**White:** Well, did the Western Auto Store open about 1941, or was it already open when you started to work there?

**Jones:** Oh, we didn't buy that store till [19]45, but I had worked there. It opened in [19]41.

**White:** Who'd you buy it from?

**Jones:** Doolittle(?). I can't remember his first name.

**Unknown voice:** Doolittle, um-hm.



**Jones:** When he came here, I asked him if he was going to hire any [help], and he said, “Yeah. I’ve already hired a man.” Said the bank down there told him who to hire. (laughter) And that wouldn’t do, so—

**White:** They had loaned him the money. I imagine (inaudible) who you ought to hire, huh?

**Jones:** The guy was no good. He said, “People will come in.” Says, “He’ll stand there and talk to them instead of waiting on them.” So he said, “I want to hire you.” After he got that fellow, I said, “Well, you’ve got a man.” “Yeah, but I’m going to let him go.” I said, “Well, let him go. I’m not coming in there with him.” So he let him go, and I went to work for him.

**White:** What kind of work did you do other than electrical work in the store there? Just anything that came along?

**Jones:** Yeah, uh-huh, anything. See, we sold a lot of tires, and that’s what he was doing when he came here. He worked for a big tire company in Oklahoma.

**White:** Well, during the war years, I imagine it was kind of hard to get tires, wasn’t it?

**Jones:** It was, even when we bought the store. They were rationed, and we just had a good friend that (inaudible) if he had any, well, he was the rationing man. And he would let us have tires when he maybe wouldn’t let anybody else have them.

**White:** We’ve got a little bit of tape left there so we can keep talking. I’ll just have to look at it very closely. Well, you worked in the store then. You weren’t in the service then during the war years or anything.

**Jones:** No. I believe that come along later. It ruined me, though. I’ll tell you what it done. It ruined me. I was called to Mendenhall two or three times, and they put me in 1A. Well, I set up the place here for the (inaudible), knowing that I was going to the Army, and we had to have somebody here, but that never did happen.

**White:** They just didn’t call you up.

**Jones:** Never did call me. I didn’t do a thing about it. I just said I’d wait and see what they going to do.

**White:** So you kept working then.

**Jones:** Yeah. And they called me back in. Well, the last time they called me in, said, “You’re in 3A.” So that (inaudible).

**White:** But you bought the store, you had said—

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** —in 1945. And I think ran it some thirty-eight years, I believe.

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Before you sold it and/or retired. What kind of products did you sell in the first Western Auto here during the [19]40s that you didn't sell later?

**Jones:** It went right on the same way.

**White:** Pretty much the same thing then, huh?

**Jones:** Yeah. We had a lot of merchandise in there that would sell. And Audrey, she comes in, and that (laughter) helped, having a woman in there.

**White:** Oh, she was working with you, too, down there then, huh?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Well, that's good. Now, while we're talking about her, I think we probably need to ask about family. How many children did you have?

**Jones:** Two.

**White:** Two.

**Jones:** A boy and a girl.

**White:** And their names?

**Jones:** Larry and Sandra.

**White:** Larry and Sandra.

**Jones:** Sandra was here a while ago.

**White:** Yes, I met her. You mentioned that she was married. Her husband was here. What's his name?

**Jones:** David Stewart(?).

**White:** David Stewart.

**Unknown voice:** They got one little girl.

**White:** And they have one daughter. What's her name?

**Unknown voice:** (Inaudible)

**White:** Little Audrey.

**Unknown voice:** We call her Little Audrey.

**Jones:** The son has two boys. They're both, his boys are grown.

**White:** Does he live around here?

**Jones:** Jackson.

**White:** Lives in Jackson.

**Jones:** Well, Brandon I guess it is. Ain't it, Audrey? Brandon I reckon.

**White:** Same type area then. I'm going to jump up just a minute, and then we'll get back to some earlier times. Did you sell the Western Auto Store after that thirty-eight years when you retired here? Did you sell it to somebody else?

**Jones:** I sold it to somebody else.

**White:** Who's got it now? Same man who had it, or has it changed hands several times?

**Jones:** No. They didn't—

**White:** Changed hands a couple of times then.

**Jones:** To make the story short, they had enough money to buy us out. And then the mistake they made, they didn't do like we did and just draw enough money to buy groceries. They paid themselves. The man and his son paid themselves a salary. They didn't ask me. If they'd have asked our daughter—she worked for them—she could have told them what to do, but they didn't ask.

**White:** Pulling a little bit too much money out of the business and not putting it back in.

**Jones:** Yeah. Couldn't do that.

(End of tape one, side one; interview continues on tape one, side two.)

**White:** Well, can you tell us a little bit about some of the people you met and ran into over the years while you were running the store down there and while you were doing electrical work?

**Jones:** Well, I run into all kinds there and everywhere else I've worked. Really, the people were real nice people, everywhere. I think we had the best customers anybody would ever want.

**White:** They're pretty loyal customers.

**Jones:** Yeah. Well, what happened, we treated them like they were people. I told some of them; I said, "You're welcome in this building anytime you want to come in. You don't look like a dollar to me. You look like a friend." So we had a lot of good customers.

**White:** I believe you told me you started selling refrigerators and things like that.

**Jones:** Yeah. Freezers and that kept me on the run.

**White:** Big demand for them, huh?

**Jones:** Yeah. See, the electric—well, I had been out in the country doing a lot of wiring.

**White:** You'd been out wiring those houses, and they had to have something to hook to it, huh? (laughter)

**Jones:** Yeah. (laughter) And our son had got up to about fifteen, I reckon, and I had had helpers. But he helped me. We'd put it on a roller to carry our freezers, and he knew exactly what I was going to do next. And I told him one day; I said, "Son, these folks think we're mad at each other. We ain't saying a word." (laughter)

**White:** Just getting the job done, huh?

**Jones:** Yeah. But he was such good help, and I had several helpers, but I'd rather have my son than any of them.

**White:** Well, what happened to the old iceboxes when you put the refrigerators in?

**Jones:** I really don't know. I don't know what happened (inaudible).

**White:** Did y'all have an icebox when you were growing up?

**Jones:** No, not in our home. Seem like we finally got one, too. Now, I'm not sure. But when we wanted to make ice cream, and by the way, we'd have to go down—

well, no, we had a car. We'd go down and get us some ice and wrap it in a (inaudible) sack good.

**White:** Down at the ice plant?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Who ran it then?

**Jones:** It was run by Mr.—one of them was run. Well, they had two down there. Of course the ice was shipped in.

**White:** Oh, they didn't make the ice here.

**Jones:** Unh-uh. And they would have it in that house, covered with sawdust.

**White:** They had a ice house then instead of a—

**Jones:** Put it in that house.

**White:** We had an ice house in Pinola, but they had an ice manufacturing place up in Mendenhall (inaudible). You don't have any idea where they shipped it in from, do you?

**Jones:** No.

**White:** Probably would have been the railroad, I imagine. Didn't they?

**Jones:** I don't know where it came from.

**White:** But go ahead. When you made ice cream and things like that, you'd bring ice home in a (inaudible) sack?

**Jones:** Yeah, (laughter) any way I could get it here and then wrap it up, to try to keep it.

**White:** Well, you didn't have electricity and an electric freezer then, either, did you?

**Jones:** No. (laughter)

**White:** Who had the job of churning that ice cream when you were a kid? Did your folks do that?

**Jones:** Over at home, it was my brother and I, and even the girls. Well, they'd set it up for us and all. We'd make the ice cream.

**White:** What else was cool in the summer when you were growing up? Did you ever eat a watermelon?

**Jones:** Hell, yeah. (laughter)

**White:** They weren't too cold, though, were they?

**Jones:** No. Well, they'd do very well if we'd put them in the shade several days. They'd be pretty cool.

**White:** Y'all raise your own watermelons, too?

**Jones:** Yeah. Yeah, we raised some good ones.

**White:** What's different about raising watermelons? I got a father-in-law who does that, and he says there are tricks to it.

**Jones:** Well, there's not a whole lot. My dad used lot of fertilize, and now, he'd put a pile about so big. And then he knew every one of those, even after he'd covered up with his plow. I guess he started at the end and—

**White:** Knew where they were.

**Jones:** Yeah. And that's where he put the seed in.

**White:** Did y'all ever sell watermelons, or did you just raise them to eat?

**Jones:** Just raised them.

**White:** Come in sometime around July the Fourth, I would imagine. (Inaudible)

**Jones:** Yeah. Well, we (inaudible) on July the Fourth.

**White:** Did y'all have a big July Fourth celebration anywhere, at church or at the house or anything?

**Jones:** Yeah, at church sometimes we would.

**White:** Which church did you go to?

**Jones:** Down at Goodwater here.

**White:** Baptist Church? What was get-together or homecoming like down there?

**Jones:** Well, if it was going to be a homecoming, it was a big thing because they'd have just like a country dinner spread.

**White:** Dinner on the grounds we called it out at Strong River Baptist Church.

**Unknown voice:** Yeah. We had a big table on the outside, too. A big, long table.

**White:** Every year you'd have that.

**Unknown voice:** (Inaudible)

**White:** Well, we need to get back to the—I got sidetracked there. I told you I got sidetracked about certain things, and watermelon is one of my favorites, too. You were talking about the people in the store, and y'all never did, at least until later, have one of those iceboxes and everything. But you don't have any idea what those people did with their iceboxes.

**Jones:** I don't know. I don't know.

**White:** Most of them were probably glad to get rid of them, I would imagine.

**Jones:** A lot of times when I'd carry a freezer out, we'd have to move the old one out. Well, usually they'd say, "Just put there on the porch." And we had a roller to carry it out with. I don't know what they done with it. And the old refrigerators, we sold a few of them for them. Not many.

**White:** The ones that were still running?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Did most everybody use freezers, or did some people can?

**Jones:** Oh, (inaudible) can (inaudible).

**White:** Did y'all ever can when you were raising your own vegetables?

**Jones:** Yeah, you did, didn't you, Audrey? I sold a man—let's see. Anyway, he had a—no. It was a stove. I sold him a gas stove, range, and he had an old stove that made me sorry for his wife. He wouldn't let her cook on it. Only on certain things.

**White:** He wouldn't let her cook on it?

**Jones:** No.

**White:** On the new one.

**Jones:** She had to cook on that old stove.

**White:** Was that a wood stove?

**Jones:** Yeah. (laughter)

**White:** Oh. He just liked stuff cooked on the wood stove. (laughter)

**Jones:** She ought to made him because he had to get the wood. (laughter)

**White:** Well, who are some of the early businessmen you remember around here? I mean, even when you were growing up, maybe before (inaudible).

**Jones:** There was Mr. Mounze Williams(?) had the big store that's still there. And I remember the first one he ran, just an ordinary store. And then he built all of this on block. And Mr. Everett(?) over on the other corner, he had a big store. And then across the street there was just average. Those fellows done well, too, but the big stores, they'd carried fertilize and things for the farm. And Mr. Williams store, when he built the new one, you could buy a wagon from him, a buggy, most anything like that.

**White:** Well, we had mentioned earlier, we were talking a little bit earlier about a livery stable here, too.

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** You remember the livery stable?

**Jones:** Yeah, yeah.

**White:** Tell us a little bit about that.

**Jones:** They had two.

**White:** Had two of them, huh?

**Jones:** A lot of times they'd ship in mules. They said they came from Missouri. I don't know. I think they came out of Texas and sell the mules and horses. Mr. Williams had a lot behind his store, and Mr. Everett had one over there, and people'd buy those mules and break them. I know Dad and the older boys, they'd break mules. They could do it. They weren't afraid of them. They'd break them.

**White:** Well, some of the livery stables rented buggies and things. People would come in on the train. You remember that?

**Jones:** Yeah, the Spaulding(?) Buggy.

**White:** Spaulding Buggy?



**Jones:** Spaulding. My brother bought one, and the man that was selling them down there, he said, “Would you carry some buggies over to (inaudible)?” Said, “Yeah.” And I said, “Well, how did you do that?” Talking to my brother. He said, “I tied two behind the buggy that I was riding in and carried them—

**White:** Pulled them in tandem, then, huh?

**Jones:** Yeah, yeah, carried them over to (inaudible).

**White:** What was Highway 49 like? You live right off of Highway 49; 149 it is now, which is the old two-lane that ran from Jackson to the Coast. We’ve got a four-lane over there a few miles, bypassing it now. But what was the old highway like?

**Jones:** What they were trying to do was to build it as close to the railroad as they could, and I think that was to keep from doing a lot of clearing (inaudible). But now up here at the crossing, (inaudible), no, up at Sanatorium, it come around because there was, well, the high banks (inaudible) had to take them down.

**White:** So the highway moved over just a little bit due to the high banks.

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** It was still gravel when you were coming up, I imagine.

**Jones:** Oh, yeah.

**White:** Wasn’t it? What was Main Street and [Highway] 49 like?

**Jones:** Main Street was gravel, as you mentioned. I didn’t finish telling you a while ago. They had hitching racks on the street.

**White:** In front of the stores.

**Jones:** Yeah. And an old boy I knew real well, he come into town. I saw him come in on his horse, and the street had no gravel on it at that time, and that horse was muddy all underneath, was (inaudible) itself, and his legs was muddy, too. And he hitched the horse over to a hitching rack and went in to clean up. I thought, “Well, I see no need in cleaning up if he’s going to get right back on the horse and mud.”

**White:** Go back in that same dirty road, huh?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** What was the barber shop like back then?

**Jones:** Fifteen cents for a haircut. (laughter)

**White:** Well, did they give baths back then, too? They did at one time.

**Jones:** Yeah, you could get a bath there.

**White:** And you said, “When he went in there to get cleaned up,” that’s what made me wonder about that. Did they have a hotel here?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Just one, huh?

**Jones:** One.

**White:** (Inaudible) probably pretty close to the railroad there in town, wasn’t it?

**Jones:** It was.

**White:** I imagine everything was pretty close to the railroad businesswise.

**Jones:** It was, yeah. Yeah. That building’s still there that they had. That wasn’t the first one. It was one that they built.

**White:** Do you remember some of the other early businessmen? When did the first funeral home come in around here? Do you remember that?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** I’m going to jog your memory on some things.

**Jones:** Mims Mitchell(?) worked for Mr. Mims Williams, and he let him have one section of the store building as a warehouse, and that’s where Mims had his caskets. But now I don’t know where they—there wasn’t no funeral home. I don’t know why. I don’t remember how they handled that part of it, but that’s where his caskets—

**White:** Probably at the churches.

**Jones:** Well, yeah, that’s where he had his caskets.

**White:** We interviewed one man who talked about the cooling board. Do you ever remember the cooling board?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** What was that? I’m not sure I know (inaudible).

**Jones:** It was a board, and I didn't see it. But there's a board, they tell me, that after a person dies, they left them on that board for a certain number of hours maybe, and that was the cooling board.

**White:** What was the purpose of leaving it on that board?

**Jones:** I can't understand why.

**White:** I just wondered if it was for viewing or keeping the body straight. I just really didn't know what it was, and I was curious about it, and the man had mentioned it.

**Jones:** Well, I was just reading today or yesterday about a place where they had thrown away some bodies, a funeral home, and (inaudible) going to try to do something about that. One of them had never—one of the bodies had never been embalmed.

**White:** I read that, and I believe there were six bodies that they had found there. Mr. G.O. Parker, when we interviewed him, had some interesting stories on the early funeral business here, too. Usually I imagine funerals were held pretty soon after the death back in those days.

**Jones:** Yeah. I never did know of one to be carried as far as they will now.

**White:** But we were talking about Highway 49. The highway itself, it was gravel as long as you remember. It wasn't dirt or anything like that.

**Jones:** No. It was gravel.

**White:** How far did you go around the county when you were growing up? Did you drive around farther than Mendenhall or anything like that?

**Jones:** Yeah, after we got a car, I (inaudible).

**White:** What was your first car? Do you remember?

**Jones:** Twenty-four.

**White:** Nineteen twenty-four, and you didn't mention what type, but I bet it was a Ford.

**Jones:** It was a touring car, [19]24 model. (laughter)

**White:** What was it like to ride in that? (laughter) Twelve of you didn't fit in there, did you?

**Jones:** It was better than the buggy. (laughter)

**White:** Was it easy to crank?

**Jones:** Yeah. We got one with a—what did they call it? It was a self-starter.

**White:** Oh, a self-starter, huh?

**Jones:** Yeah, you mashed the button with your heel (inaudible).

**White:** You guys were big time.

**Jones:** Yeah. (laughter)

**White:** Your dad must have made pretty good money farming then. (laughter)  
Nineteen twenty-four, huh?

**Jones:** And then we kept it through [19]25 and persuaded Dad to let us get a Chevrolet, and that was a much better car than the Model-T Ford. Of course it was four-cylinder, too.

**White:** Was there a dealership here then?

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Who ran it? Do you remember?

**Jones:** I don't remember on the Ford who had that. Sure don't.

**White:** Well, Highway 49 wasn't nearly as busy back then as it is now, either.

**Jones:** No.

**White:** Was it?

**Jones:** No. It came down right by the side, as near to the railroad as they could get, going down here.

**White:** Did you ever go to Jackson when you were growing up?

**Jones:** Yeah. Well, I don't think I ever went until we got a car. I don't remember going by—I'll tell you this little story. Mother and Dad went to Jackson when I was a baby, so the story is told me. And somewhere they were, I was allowed to be laid on the bed. (laughter) And Dad wanted Mother to stay close by. He was afraid somebody'd get this boy. (laughter)

**White:** In that big town. (laughter)

**Jones:** Yeah. But it might have been all right if they'd have got him. (laughter)

**White:** Well, what have you been doing since you retired?

**Jones:** Rambling around (inaudible).

**White:** Rambling around. Do you like to fish and hunt?

**Jones:** No. I hunt. I like to hunt—

**White:** I thought I remember you—

**Jones:** I established a hunting club over in—

**White:** Port Gibson?

**Jones:** Port Gibson.

**White:** You had mentioned that on your biographical [sheet]. You didn't mention you had started it. I didn't know you started it. How'd you get off, over there in Port Gibson?

**Jones:** Well, I went to Louisiana and hunted with my uncle. And then I went with somebody in this state, and my son was twelve years old. And I said, "I got to do something for that boy." And I went to Vicksburg, trying to find a place and nothing. And I mentioned it to a few of my friends, and they said, "Well, let us help you find a place." So we went into two places before we got where we are now. We bought this old, big house on eighty-five acres of land, and then we'd lease, I think it's about 1500 acres.

**White:** Well, you got a good size hunting place. What do you hunt?

**Jones:** Deer and squirrels, whatever you (inaudible). And they killed a few wild hogs. I haven't been in on the hog hunts.

**White:** When you were growing up, did you hunt?

**Jones:** Here on the place was all, and that was rabbit.

**White:** You didn't do much cooking at home with wild game?

**Jones:** Unh-uh, no. I don't know when we ever did.

**White:** Well, give me some good tips on squirrel hunting. What kind of gun do I need to use?

**Jones:** I use six-shot, and that's big enough.

**White:** You use a 410, 12 gauge?

**Jones:** Either one of them will do. It depends on the height of the tree. If the tree's real tall, you need a 12 gauge gun or some six-shot.

**White:** You ever cook any of those? Eat them?

**Jones:** They cooked them over at the camp. I didn't eat them. (laughter) Did you ever cook wild squirrel?

**Unknown voice:** No.

**Jones:** (Inaudible) (laughter)

**Unknown voice:** But now we had two or three out there every morning. I said to call you. I said, "They was out there, look like playing."

**White:** Yeah, they fun to watch.

**Jones:** They come out of them woods down there.

**Unknown voice:** That's the first time I seen them in a long time, but they sure was having a lot of fun.

**White:** They're fun to watch. Is there anybody else you'd like to mention before we wind up the interview here? Is one of the folks who have made an impression on you coming up around Magee or who've been here that you think happened to really build the community while you were, in those years while you were running Western Auto?

**Jones:** Not really, I don't think.

**White:** Do you miss being in business downtown?

**Jones:** (laughter) Yeah. I miss the people.

**White:** Miss the people. I think you mentioned to me earlier when the tape wasn't on how much you enjoyed the people those years you were in business.

**Jones:** Yeah. Well, before I got in the store, I didn't care about that. Oh, I had some friends, and that's all. But then after I got in there and I saw all the people, I said, "Well, I just love the people."

**Unknown voice:** We had a good business.

**Jones:** Yeah.

**White:** Well, that's what life is all about, too, is the people, too. Well, I do appreciate your taking this time to let us talk with you, Mr. Jones. Thank you, sir.

(end of interview)