

Mississippi Oral History Program

Simpson County Historical and Genealogical
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Eddie McDonald

Interviewer: Joe White

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An Oral History with Eddie McDonald, Volume 1217, Part 17

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Biography

Eddie McDonald was born to Samuel McDonald and Ollie Lockhart in Magee, MS in March 1924. He had two brothers, one of whom, Robert, was killed in an automobile accident (run over by drunk driver). Though he went to school in Hawpond, McDonald dropped out to start working for Weaver's Lumber Company. He later did public work by building roads during the 1930s. Eddie married Emma Lee Edwards in December 1946; they were together for forty-seven years until her death. Together they had seven children, six boys and one girl – all seven children graduated with a degree from Jackson State. McDonald has served as the minister of numerous churches throughout Mississippi, which include spending thirteen and a half years preaching on the Gulf Coast and an additional ten years in Lawrence County. He served in an all-black unit during World War II. After finishing his service with the military, McDonald worked for the Reynold Lumber Company. At the time of the interview, McDonald lives in Mendenhall, both a grandfather and great-grandfather.

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AN ORAL HISTORY
with
EDDIE McDONALD

This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi Simpson County Project. The interview is with Eddie McDonald and is taking place on August 30, 2003. The interviewer is Joe White.

White: —conducted under a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council and as a part of the oral history project of The University of Southern Mississippi. Today we're talking with Mr. Eddie McDonald at his home near Magee. Mr. McDonald, could you state your full name? Do you have a middle name?

McDonald: No middle name.

White: No middle name. Did you ever go by an initial or anything?

McDonald: No, no, no.

White: Didn't need to, huh?

McDonald: No.

White: We've talked to several people who don't have middle names, and some of them were forced for legal reasons and everything else just to make up an initial and put it in the middle. One of them was a man named James Smith, so I can understand why he had to come up with an initial.

McDonald: I knew a James Smith in Mendenhall.

White: That's who it is, James J. Smith. That's the man I'm talking about. (laughter)

McDonald: He's dead now, isn't he?

White: No. He's doing fine. He's doing real well, as a matter of fact. He used to work for the railroad.

McDonald: Right.

White: Yeah. He's doing well. He really is. We interviewed him and talked to his daughter. But you were born—you told me—pretty close to where you live now.

McDonald: A mile and a half, right up the road here on Old Man Hulon Brooks' (?) place.

White: Hulon Brooks?

McDonald: Right.

White: I know some of the Brooks around here. I don't remember him, though. That'd probably be the father of the Brooks I—

McDonald: Oh, he was the foundation of that Brooks family just about it. I think he's (inaudible). I think he's about half kin to (inaudible), way he walk and talk. You don't cross him. I can tell you that much. Don't cross him. He wouldn't cross you, but if you cross him, you dead. Black or white, you dead.

White: Pretty tough man, huh?

McDonald: Oh, I tell you what. He was fair. No, he was fair. He just—cross him? He won't cross you. If he owe you, he'd roll down the highway to pay you, and if you owed him, you'd better walk up the highway and pay him. (laughter) That's the way he was. Black or white, it doesn't make any difference. He just straight. He'd always call you, "Sonny Boy."

White: He called you, "Sonny Boy?"

McDonald: "Hey, Sonny Boy!" That was his words, Sonny Boy. He shot fair and square with blacks and whites, and everybody respect him, and they didn't fool with him.

White: Well, there's still a lot of Brooks around here. I know some of them. There's a Brooks Road about a couple of roads down.

McDonald: Well, I tell you what. H.L.(?) lived right up the road there. I always called him (inaudible). That was his son, and she was a Loftin(?). She married H.L. Brooks. She was a Loftin. And he had two daughters, and the daughters moved off and got married. And I (inaudible) up at his place, and I run a bunch of cattle of mine through (inaudible). So I always called them Ma and Pa. When they passed, I thought just as much of them as my—

White: Um-hm.

McDonald: And they called me Sonny Boy.

White: Good country people, huh?

McDonald: Oh, we just loved one another to death. I set there in that window there, and I'd tell her, I said, "Now, if you ever need me"—he passed first. And I said, "You blink your light two or three times. I'll be there quick, quick, quick." I said, "They

wouldn't like me when I get there. Ever who is up there, black or white, they wouldn't like me." (laughter) No, they wouldn't. They wouldn't like me. (Inaudible) stuff like that.

White: You keep a watch out for your neighbors, then, huh?

McDonald: I'd sit right there. Had that air conditioner there, and I said, "Just blink your lights a couple of times." (Inaudible) passed, (inaudible) that goes by. I worked. I come in, scatter my cattle on up there and see to them, and I come back. She got (inaudible) her medicine. She'd write it out. (Inaudible) Write her grocery bill out, and I'd take it. She signed the check, and ever what it was worth, they'd put it down, and I'd bring it back. Ma and Pa.

White: Run errands for them, huh?

McDonald: Right. Wilma Barefield(?), you know who?

White: Yes, uh-huh.

McDonald: That was her brother's—that was her sister-in-law. I know Wilma and all of them. I knowed all of them. I was born right here, you see.

White: Yeah. Well, who were your mother and daddy? What was your daddy's name?

McDonald: Samuel McDonald.

White: Samuel McDonald. And was he born right around here?

McDonald: No. He came from around Wiggins, off in there.

White: Stone County.

McDonald: Stone County, right. He come in this country, here, Pullman porter. And I think he fooled around and let whiskey overthrow him. (laughter)

White: Oh, a Pullman porter on the railroad, huh?

McDonald: Right. That was years ago.

White: Well, how'd he get up to Simpson County? Do you know?

McDonald: Well, he was a Pullman porter. That train was running from there to Jackson or somewhere. I don't know. I used to hear him talk about it. Used to see him on it with his little, old grip and catch it. I don't know. He just—

White: Probably ride from Jackson to the Coast and back.

McDonald: Just got whiskey, whiskey, whiskey. They called him Good Whiskey (inaudible). (laughter) And he just had (inaudible).

White: Was that his nickname for a while?

McDonald: Yeah, that was his nickname, Good Whiskey.

White: What was your mom's name?

McDonald: Ollie.

White: Ollie. And what was her name before she married?

McDonald: Lockhart.

White: Lockhart. There are a lot of Lockharts around Simpson County.

McDonald: Right. She was kin to Lockharts (inaudible), and Lockharts there used to teach school at Mendenhall. Ms. Lockhart used to teach school there at Mendenhall. (Inaudible) established.

White: She was born pretty close around here, too, then, huh?

McDonald: My mother, yes. She was born in Simpson County, somewhere they called it the May Town Place back up between Mendenhall and Magee.

White: May Town.

McDonald: Yeah.

White: Must have been some Mays lived around.

McDonald: All those Mays lived up there years ago. This community of white people maybe owned a whole company, and that same way with (inaudible). The Brooks owned just about everything here. Mays owned that back through there, and the Wilsons owned up a little bit further, and so they just a big plantation, big family.

White: How old were you when your dad died?

McDonald: Well, he died—about five years. No, let's see. He died—my wife's been dead, be thirteen—let me get this right, now. My mind won't transfer as fast sometimes. She been dead twelve years, and he died before she did. So he been dead about thirteen or fourteen years.

White: Well, that whiskey kept him preserved a pretty good while then. He lived a good, long life then, didn't he?

McDonald: Oh, he lived to get a good, old, ripe age. Good, old, ripe age.

White: Did he retire from being a Pullman?

McDonald: No. Like I said, that whiskey retired him.

White: Oh. It made him retire.

McDonald: Yeah, that whiskey made him retire. (laughter) Some companies just don't go along with that, you know. They just go so far, and they, "Open the door. (Inaudible) Don't come back."

White: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

McDonald: I had two brothers. One lived over there (inaudible) on Airport Road. He bought George Rivers' (?) house on Airport Road.

White: Oh, on Airport Road here in Mendenhall, toward Magee.

McDonald: Magee, right (inaudible) the airport, right over there.

White: Right. Close to Magee Airport.

McDonald: Right at the airport, really.

White: Didn't you say something about state home? I missed the phrase you used. You said, "He lives over"—OK. I'm sorry. I must have just missed the phrase there. He just lives off of Airport Road.

McDonald: Right off of the Airport Road.

White: OK. What's his name?

McDonald: Darth(?) McDonald, Jimmy.

White: Jimmy he goes by?

McDonald: Yeah.

White: And what was your other brother's name?

McDonald: Robert George McDonald.

White: Robert George McDonald.

McDonald: Right. He got run over right up at that fork in the road. I was here one night. Had went to the barber shop. H.L. Smith(?) came out here. He dead now. He said, "Eddie." It was sometime, back around March. I said, "Yeah." He said, "Your brother got run over up there." Said, "You better get up from here and go up there and see about it." Said, "He's trying to play some tricks." I caught that.

White: Is that up close to Highway 28?

McDonald: Right up here to the park. Say, "They trying to play some tricks. Did you catch that, that word tricks?"

White: Tricks.

McDonald: Said, "They trying to play some tricks."

White: What [did] that mean?

McDonald: Well, that was some kind of trick, something going on. I thought that when he first drove up, when he said, "You got to go up there and go up there quick." Said, "He's trying to play some tricks." That was the (inaudible) there. If you got a open mind, you can catch something's going on fishy.

White: Right.

McDonald: At least I'm not that dumb enough.

White: You caught it, huh?

McDonald: I caught it. I caught (inaudible). I said, "Right there." (claps hands) (Inaudible) When I got there he was in that car (inaudible) that supply Simpson County. He was laying right in the road. I drove up there, and I got out, and I picked his head up. And I sat down in the middle of the road, put his head in my lap. And you could hear bones rattling in him. And most of them dead now. Ossey Jones(?), this little, old carnival out here, he's—I can't call his name. I said, "(Inaudible)." I said, "These fellows drunk. Can't y'all smell it?" "No." I said, "Don't tell me these fellows not drunk." I said, "Man, I can smell it, and I'm setting here on"—I said, "Put these boys in the car." "No, (inaudible) not (inaudible)." I wanted to come and get my Gatling gun and go up there and kill every one of them of them up there, and I know that'd been wrong.

White: They'd all been drinking, huh?

McDonald: Well, them there what run over him was because you could smell it. And I'm setting down in the middle of the highway, right in the center of the highway with

his head in my lap till the ambulance, and I don't know why the ambulance come from Prentiss to pick him up.

White: That's a long way, Prentiss. What year was that? Do you remember?

McDonald: No. But we got in a pretty good dispute right there, right then, quick (inaudible). So I come on back out on Saturday night. That Sunday morning I got up. He had one shoe on and one shoe off. He had a white, knitted cap on, one that had a lot of hooks hooked around that knitted cap. I walked back up there that Sunday morning and looked. I don't know whether he was trying to cross the road, or they run out and hit him. I couldn't say either one.

White: He was walking, though, huh?

McDonald: He was walking. I couldn't say if they run out and hit him, or he crossed the road, and they hit him. He underestimated the car coming down the road. It was dark, and they hit him. They carried him distance from here almost to that trailer, and so my old man was always, he was kind of scared. You don't scare me. You knock me down; you still don't scare me, and I'm a old man now, but you don't scare me, not one bit. I stand the ground. I'm a little man. Jim McLeod(?) and them'll tell you I respect (inaudible). I don't care (inaudible). I'll get (inaudible). I ain't got enough sense to be scared. (laughter) You say my eyes is blue, and I say they black, and you knock me down, I get up and still tell you my eyes is black. That's the kind of person I am. I don't care who it is. So my old man let me fix it. He got into it. Well, he was his son, and I couldn't get ahead of him. He got scared and dropped it. No! I'd have been fighting it till right now because I knew that the guys run over him, and I'm not going to call the name, and you know them, and he from around Pinola, too. And you know him.

White: Simpson County people, huh?

McDonald: Oh, yeah, Simpson County, and I said, "Now, these fellows is drunk." I said, "I couldn't say they intentionally run over him, or he crossed the road and underestimated the car, and they hit him through a accident." But my old man got scared. He always was scared of people. I ain't got enough sense to be scared. I reckon I ought to been dead fifty years ago, but I ain't got enough sense to be dead. (Inaudible) You may kill me, but I ain't got enough sense to be scared, not one bit. And I'm a old man now, and I ain't got no sense now to be scared. These people told him, "Sam, you better hush that. You better not go around." He had got a little, old, two-bit lawyer out of Jackson. Now, I wouldn't settle for that. (Inaudible).

White: Didn't push the issue, huh? How old was your brother when he died?

McDonald: Oh, he way up in his—that's his picture right there. See him there? Back there. He was in the service.

White: Yeah. He had already been in the service then when he got killed, huh?

McDonald: (Inaudible) And so I couldn't say that they actually run over him for a purpose or what. I wouldn't (inaudible) to say it.

White: Were you married then?

McDonald: Yeah, I was married then. Right, right.

White: You had been in the service then, too.

McDonald: See, I was the oldest one. I had been in there and out and married and setting right here. (Inaudible) sitting right here, that been about thirty, twenty-five years ago, something like that.

White: Yeah. I was just trying to figure out about what year it was and everything. Was he married?

McDonald: Well, he had been married. He went in there. He come out. He stayed in there almost three years and come out, and his wife had a seven- or eight-month-old kid, and no money. He say, "Unh-uh. No!" He quit her, went on, taken up with another woman. He was working at (inaudible) Plant there at Magee, and he caught another man with her, and he say, he got where he say, "Ain't none of them no good." He say that. (laughter) "All you women ain't no good." He turned against them. (laughter) He would drink heavy, and he never would come in here, but he had (inaudible) out there (inaudible) given him money to drink. All those kids get out there, and they'd (inaudible) at that point. He wouldn't come no further than that fence because he knowed I didn't fool with it, you know?

White: Yeah.

McDonald: He respected me that much. But so we just left it like that.

White: Well, we need to nail a couple of things down here, and then we'll go back and talk about your earlier life. We were talking about your wife a little while ago. Your wife's name—

McDonald: Emma Lee.

White: Emma Lee, and she was an Edwards—

McDonald: Right.

White: —before y'all married, you said. You married—when did you marry?

McDonald: In [19]46, the twenty-fifth day of December in [19]46.

White: You won't have any trouble remembering December 25, will you?

McDonald: No, I won't. I even lost my license. I went to Mendenhall and bought them and lost them (inaudible) and walking down the street, and I had them stuck in my pants, and they some way or another, they worked out my britches leg and lost them and went back and found them.

White: Oh, you did find them.

McDonald: Found them. Well, you know we (inaudible). You know how we (inaudible) boys and teenagers. I wasn't no teenager, but I was fully grown. I (inaudible) and nothing come out, and I didn't care nothing about nothing, just wild.

White: And you got married where?

McDonald: In Prentiss.

White: Down in Prentiss. How come you got married in Prentiss?

McDonald: Well, I tell you what. We slipped off from her mama and daddy.

White: They didn't know you were getting married.

McDonald: No, didn't know we were getting married. And like I said, I was wild and mean and didn't care for nothing, so. He knew it, and he told her to tell me to stay away, and I said, "I'm going to (inaudible) somebody." You know how we old bullhead boys. You been a boy. (laughter) You know.

White: Yes, I have.

McDonald: You bullhead. Just have to knock you down to make you see something or believe something. (Inaudible) you didn't believe it then. You believed you done wrong then. We stayed together forty-seven years (inaudible) till we parted.

White: Forty-seven years.

McDonald: Forty-seven years.

White: That's a long marriage. And you—

McDonald: That's her right there.

White: That's a nice-looking lady, too.

McDonald: This is her right here. And that's my daughter, here. That's her right there.

White: And how many children did you have?

McDonald: The Lord blessed us with six girls and one boy, seven.

White: Can you name all of your children?

McDonald: Oh, I can name every one of them. I don't know their age, but I can name every one of them. Rosetta, she's the oldest one. Eddie Jean Carl(?), I know you heard her; she's the city clerk there in Jackson. She's running against somebody there. She's in the runoff in November.

White: Right. Now, what's her name, again? I missed what you said.

McDonald: Eddie Jean Carl, she married a Carl.

White: Carl, right.

McDonald: Right. Lula Mae Dixon(?), her and her husband still on this side of Shivers down there. He's one of they top farmers down there. He got a hundred and some (inaudible) cattle and all that kind of junk. (Inaudible) enough money from here to Mendenhall. (laughter) But he's a big-time operator. All right, then Lula Mae Dixon, you got her. All right, Francis Smith(?), you got her. Eddie Jean Born(?), you got her. Terry Adderson(?), you got her, and my boy, Samuel McDonald. You got him. That's him up there.

White: That's the group of them. That's a good-looking group.

McDonald: Well, I can tell you what. I think so if nobody else don't. I think so. (laughter)

White: We going to get back to your early education and everything later, but—

McDonald: I passed by the schoolhouse. I passed by the schoolhouse (inaudible).

White: You passed by the schoolhouse. Did you—

McDonald: I had the opportunity to go. From here it's seven miles, walking. If it rained, you didn't get to go. And my old man was a sharecropper in those times. We might as well tell the facts like (inaudible).

White: Right.

McDonald: Black people was in the field till December. Then when December, it was so cold you couldn't walk them six or seven miles. If it rained, you didn't go. And in March school was out. That's the way it was, now, when I come along. And when you come along, too, because you ain't no baby. When you come along—
(laughter)

White: You right about that.

McDonald: Right. The bus would pass us a many a day, walking from here to Hawpond. We'd have to go through the woods, and that big creek was up.

White: You went to school at Hawpond.

McDonald: Right. When that creek was up, it started raining, the teacher would let us out because we had to cross that creek before it'd get up. Then you would have to wade that creek. So didn't have very much, and what little I learned, by the grace of God, experience.

White: Experience is a good teacher, though, isn't it?

McDonald: Oh, it's the best you can get. Teaching's good, but experience is better.

White: Well, you made sure all of your kids went to school.

McDonald: Every one of them got a college degree. Every one of them.

White: I thought I had heard that. That's good.

McDonald: Every one of them got a college degree. My son up there, he come out a four-star general. Every one of them up there. I got two up there teaching school. One's a medical up there. Eddie Jean Carl, she taught school at Mississippi Junior College, down in Gulfport. She told me, say—I know you might have heard her mention—say, “I sold some cattle to get her in school in Jackson.” She told them when she was running for different things. She pulled corn, picked cotton, and everything else. (laughter)

White: Right.

McDonald: And said Mother and Daddy sold some cattle to get her in school. She got all kinds of degrees.

White: What schools did they all go to?

McDonald: They went to elementary, and left there, and went to Harper(?) High. When they graduated Harper High—

White: In Mendenhall.

McDonald: Right. They went to Jackson State.

White: All of them went to Jackson State.

McDonald: Jackson State. They finished there in Jackson State, every one of them.

White: You got a lot of money invested in Jackson State, then, don't you?

McDonald: I (inaudible) tell you (inaudible) that time, a black fellow couldn't get a government loan. That come out of my hip pocket (inaudible) lumber company, put them in school with the cattle I could raise, preaching. So that's—they tell anybody, "My daddy survived (inaudible), and he always had a way for us to go, always sent us to school." I didn't send them to church. We always went to church. We always done that. I first started parking cars on the outside of the church, the next—

White: What church was that?

McDonald: St. Peter Hawpond, they call it. Next step was usher. Next step, junior deacon. Next step, senior deacon, treasurer. Next step, full-time preacher. And the first two years I was (inaudible).

White: Were you ordained at Hawpond?

McDonald: (Inaudible) and I told them, "I don't care how far I go and how long I (inaudible) right there."

White: That's your home church, huh?

McDonald: That's my home church. Largest church in Simpson County. You go by there now; that's the largest church in Simpson County. I baptized the boy is pasturing there now.

White: Was that where you first served as minister?

McDonald: No. Well, I was assistant pastor there. The first church I served as minister I was in Copiah County, in Georgetown, Lily May(?) Baptist Church.

White: Lily May?

McDonald: Lily May. I left from there and pastored thirteen and a half years down on the Gulf Coast, (laughter) ten years in Lawrence County.

White: Were you living here at the time?

McDonald: I was living here.

White: You drove a lot of miles, didn't you?

McDonald: Every two years I'd have to buy a new car. (Inaudible) every day. Every two years I'd have to buy a new car, put a hundred thousand miles on it, work every day and revival at night. I'd drive down there, and I'd take my wife. I said, "Now, you drive back." I'd jump in the back seat because I'm done exhausted. (laughter) I done worked all day and then preached twice, maybe that day or that night. I said, "I'm exhausted." I'd jump in the backseat, lay down. Next morning she'd wake me up. I'd lay my head on the table there, and she'd make me a cup of coffee. I'd say, "Let me get out of here." She said, "I be so glad to hear you say one of these days that you ain't going to get out of here." I said, "I do, too." (laughter) When I retired I told Jimmy McLeod(?), I said, "Jimmy," I said, "now, if I make \$6000 you holler at me." He said, "What you going to do?" I said, "Well, whenever I make \$6000, you holler at me." He said, "All right." He was city clerk. He wasn't married then. He was city clerk.

White: This is Jimmy Clive(?) of the city of Magee, right?

McDonald: (Inaudible) So one day we was eating lunch. I said, "I better go to city hall." I said, "I hadn't kept up with it." I said, "I believe I done made around \$6000." I got up and went on up there at noon. He rode a bicycle back and forth to his house to city hall. (laughter)

White: Jimmy Clive did?

McDonald: Right. "What is it, preacher?" I said, "How much money I done made, Jimmy?" He said, "I don't know. What's going to happen?" I said, "I just want to know how many, when I makes it. It (inaudible) that's confusing." He say, "You made \$6500." I said, "I've got to go right now. I was intending to let you-all know two weeks notice whenever I made that \$6000."

White: Well, how many years did you work for the City (inaudible)?

McDonald: See that shot right there behind her head there?

White: Right. Got a nice plaque, huh? (laughter)

McDonald: I said, "I've got to go." So I had made \$500 more than I was supposed to make in a month's time. I was up on the house there, fixing a leak. (Inaudible) Said, "You got a (inaudible) to live here." And I opened it up. Government say, "You owe us \$500." (laughter) I said, "Oh, boy."

White: That's all you could make; otherwise you going to have to pay back social security. Is that right?

McDonald: Right. I had to pay that \$500.

White: So you had reached sixty-five.

McDonald: Right, I'd reached sixty-five, and I had to pay that 500. Said I owed them \$500, and they asked me how'd I want to pay. I told them take it all. I didn't make no difference (laughter) because I was the preacher, and they had a (inaudible). I reckon it was just about that time I raised anything you name to eat, anything you name around here at that time, I had it. I didn't care what it was. I had so many guineas and turkeys, hogs, chickens.

White: You had a big garden, huh?

McDonald: Big garden, fifty-two head of cattle. Black man has fifty head of cattle, six horses, he had something. He had something.

White: How much land did you have here?

McDonald: Well, I got some across [Highway] 13, and my wife got some across [Highway] 13. (laughter) So I mean, we—

White: Scattered all over, huh?

McDonald: We didn't have no money, but we wasn't hungry. We raised something to eat. We raised it. We raised it, and my memory, when I'd get ready to leave from church that night, she tell me, "Give me your keys." I'd give my car keys. We'd get here. We'd have so much different stuff that said I just (inaudible).

White: Plenty to eat and a good place to sleep, huh?

McDonald: And we give God (inaudible) people that didn't. I remember they'd give me, and I'd, "Well, I'll just go give some to somebody else." Never.

White: Well, let's get back to some of your earlier years here, too. One thing I wanted to talk about was you were just six months out of the service when you got married. Is that right?

McDonald: No. I wasn't but four days out of service.

White: Four days out of service.

McDonald: Four days. I got my discharge December, thirteenth day of December in [19]46. I was in Fort Lewis, Washington, and it taken me—I got home I think four days before Christmas.

White: And then got married on Christmas.

McDonald: Home on Christmas. I had met her before I went in service, and after I went in service, I met so many different people I forgot about her. I came home, and she was in school, and I asked a boy—I went to put my discharge on record, and I asked him, I said, “Who is that?” He said, “That’s the little gal you used to try to flirt with you before you went in”—I, “Naw!” He said, “Yeah.”

White: She grew up, didn’t she?

McDonald: She had done grewed up. And I went there and asked if I could come see her that night. She told me, “All right.” Well, I went on and got drunk and stopped by.

White: You drank a little in your younger days, huh?

McDonald: Oh, drunk, walk along the street, spit it up.

White: Did you get used to that during the service? Is that where you started drinking?

McDonald: Well, before I went in service I was drinking a little bit. After I went in there, then you just got a mean streak.

White: We’re about to reach the end of this tape. I’m going to stop it here, and then we’ll take a little break and start again. (End of digital file named tape one, side one. Beginning of digital file named tape one, side two)

McDonald: Birthday is the twenty-fourth year, and the third month, and the tenth day, and the twenty-fourth year.

White: Nineteen twenty-four. So today you’re how old? I can’t add that. (laughter)

McDonald: Yeah, well, I can tell you what, seventy-nine.

White: Seventy-nine. We talked about a lot of things, and I’d sort of like to go back to your early childhood years, what it was like growing up.

McDonald: It was (inaudible).

White: Was not pleasant, huh?

McDonald: It was not pleasant, not for one minute.

White: Was that because your dad was drinking?

McDonald: Yeah, because he was drinking and get that (inaudible). He was a sharecropper. Got the sharecropper and didn't know—I don't know. I had one pair of overalls, and my mama would wash them and dry them by the fireplace at night where I could put them on the next morning.

White: Didn't have any clothes.

McDonald: *No!* (Inaudible) I thank God I (inaudible) black people. I think the white race, not everybody, (inaudible) has been in the black race two years and one day, 1940, [19]39 and [19]40. You ought to been there just one day. If you was born into our world.

White: It was rough, huh?

McDonald: Oh! I don't like to even talk about it because it bring up a evil streak. I can't hold no bitterness. Not make it in. And I'm going to make it in. I'm going to heaven when I leave this world, but I couldn't hold that in me and go there.

White: Yeah.

McDonald: Love. You can't love and hate, all the same time to save your life because you ain't got—your heart ain't big enough. A black man, people don't like to hear people talk this, but like if you have people come along my age will tell you the same thing. You'd walk down the streets in Magee; you better walk out in the middle of the street.

White: Get off the sidewalk, huh?

McDonald: You *better* get off the sidewalk. Don't, some mean white folks would knock you off. Now, see there's most of them don't want to hear that, but I just am telling the truth. (Inaudible) I tell them, I said, "I'm a man now. You don't back me."

White: It was definitely different.

McDonald: Oh, it was different (inaudible). But God know how to fix things. Just wait and move as God command you, and everything will be all right. Don't try to do what you want to do. Move when God lead you to move, helping you survive. It was rough. It was rough, and then some of them still that way, but (inaudible), no, no, no, no, no, no, no. It's all the difference. It's the difference in daylight and dark. We got some of the sweetest people, now, in the world here in Simpson County, in Mississippi. See, I come up when thirty-six states in the United States.

White: There wasn't a lot of sweet people around when you were coming up, though.

McDonald: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. But we got some of the sweetest people now in Mississippi that ever have before. See, we had a mean streak (inaudible). I first went in Georgia, and we couldn't go uptown in Columbus, Georgia. We been in Georgia, right out from Columbia. You'd have to send an MP [military policeman] when we all went to town.

White: Was that when you were in the service?

McDonald: Yeah. Keep them mean white guys, police and things, from going upside of our head. But when we got ready to leave, we ramshacked Georgia. (laughter) We tore it up.

White: Got some of it back.

McDonald: Oh, got some of it. (Inaudible) People burning houses and stores and things; that's the wrong spirit. But you satisfy yourself, and leave God out of the picture.

White: Well, did things change while you were in the military?

McDonald: Oh, it changed gradually.

White: Gradually.

McDonald: Gradually.

White: Were you in an all black unit?

McDonald: Yeah. It was all segregated. (Inaudible) much about that because unless you don't mind it will build up something just like when they assassinated those guys over there in Neshoba County. I wouldn't watch it because you have to be very particular. Don't need to put no prejudice. And you can't go to heaven with that old prejudice. I'm going to have to love you, brother. You better love me if you want to go to heaven. And I'm going to heaven. I ain't going to hell because I just dislove you or dislike you. I'm going to treat you right.

White: Not easy to say that or to do that, though.

McDonald: I can tell you what. It's just as easy for me. (laughter) But then I can tell you something else. I'm not going to fool with you; then, you better not fool with me. I'll pray to God, and God will forgive me, and (inaudible), forgive and never bring it up again (inaudible). All he want me to do is just treat you right. That's all God requires me to do, treat you right, love you. That's all he require for you to do; treat me right. Jimmy Clyde(?) and them can tell how I worked there for them, and we was in the loveliest group of people you ever—me and Harvey Blakeney(?) always cooked for the chamber of commerce, fire department, police department, the City

(inaudible), and whenever they done all that dancing for Christmas, me and Harvey Blakeney. I'm the only black they had there. I learned to do just about anything that come to hand because I never knowed when I was going to fall in (inaudible).

White: Might get called in.

McDonald: Right. And then I could do it. I could make my children, my family, a living.

White: Let's get back to growing up a little bit. I know it was tough, tough on the farm. You didn't have running water, probably, did you?

McDonald: No. We didn't have no running water. Didn't hardly have a bucket to tote it in.

White: Did y'all have a well?

McDonald: We had a well at the old boss's house. (Inaudible) well at the boss's house, now.

White: Go over there and get water, huh?

McDonald: Go over there and get water. Right.

White: And you heated with a wood stove or a fireplace?

McDonald: Wood stove.

White: What do you remember your mama cooking when you were growing up?

McDonald: Well, I can tell you what; most people raised what they ate and some (inaudible) bread and milk, turnip greens, syrup. They raised what they would eat. We didn't go to town to buy too much. We even raised the rice. (laughter) (Inaudible) they (inaudible) raise what they eat.

White: Raised rice, too?

McDonald: Oh, they raised just about what they had to eat. Go to the smokehouse and four or five hogs in the smokehouse, big churns of milk, butter, syrup. Go to the smokehouse, fifty, sixty gallons of syrup sitting there and potatoes.

White: Y'all make your own syrup?

McDonald: Well, the old boss always had a cane mill, and the only way made the syrup there. He always got somebody to make the syrup, see. He got so many; you

got so many. Then when you give out, he sell you what he (inaudible). So we could live and eat and do around, just—

White: What was the best thing your mama fixed in the morning? What do you remember smelling for breakfast?

McDonald: Well, ham meat and eggs. Always had a bunch of chickens, bunch of chickens and ham meat.

White: Your mama made pretty good biscuits?

McDonald: Oh, she'd make some about like that cup over there, and you would eat about two of them.

White: Big biscuits, huh?

McDonald: Oh, big biscuits. You got two of them and that cream and syrup, so it was something fine. (Inaudible)

White: Did you carry your lunch to school when you started to school?

McDonald: Well, you'd take it in your back pocket.

White: In your overall pocket, huh?

McDonald: In your overall pocket. And they had a little, old corner there. If you had a bucket, you'd put it in that corner there. When it was noontime, they'd go over there and pass it out. You know when they'd pass it out, you'd raise your hand, and they'd bring it to you. (laughter) (Inaudible) It was a lovely time when it was Christmastime, and there was peace and happiness and love, joy.

White: There was love even in the middle of being uncomfortable, huh?

McDonald: Oh, uncomfortable really when you went to town and couldn't walk the streets.

White: How'd y'all get around? Did you have a wagon?

McDonald: A wagon and my old man always had an old car, an old T-model car. He had an old T-model car, and he'd pick it up. And I would set a block up under it, and he'd crank it with the back wheel.

White: Crank it with the back wheel off the ground, huh?

McDonald: Right. You ever see that done?

White: Yeah. I remember hearing about it. I never did see it.

McDonald: Well, he'd crank it with the back wheel, he'd spin that thing's back wheel about a couple of times. Varoom, crank that thing, then he'd go over there and pick it up. He'd knock it out of gear and pick it up, and I'd have to get that block out from under it and put the block. He done down the road. We'd get where it wouldn't pull the hill, he'd turn around, back up it. If it wouldn't back up it, he'd come home next two or three days. Get some leather. Take that off and that manifold up there, pull it off of there for the clutch or something in that thing. On up the hill, varoom.

White: Belt slipping in it probably, huh?

McDonald: Something. I don't know how it was, but (inaudible) one of those things, and then they fool around and got an old [19]36 Ford. And boy, when we got an old [19]36 Ford, whooo, look out, man. Gallon of gas fifteen cent. You'd get a gallon then. You don't get no gallon now. Back then you get a gallon jug, and that jug was full when you got a gallon. But you get a gallon jug now, and lack that much getting full. And I can't understand that. They say it's a gallon. I say, "Well, I tell you what. When I was a kid, that same jug would be up to the neck. I mean, almost running out."

White: You don't think a gallon's the same size?

McDonald: No, no, no, no. (laughter) (Inaudible)

White: Where'd y'all go buy gas? Was there a service station close to here?

McDonald: Tommy Walker(?) had a little, old store down there. They called Bill Hill(?).

White: On [Highway] 13?

McDonald: No. Right—

White: On [Highway] 28?

McDonald: Off of [Highway] 28, going, before you get to Rials(?) Creek. Sylvester Walker(?) had one there at Rials Creek, and he had some old pumps.

White: Manual pumps.

McDonald: Right. They'd pump it up, and a gallon'd run up there, and when that goes out, you had a gallon of gas.

White: That's when they had a glass top (inaudible) on top of it.

McDonald: Right.

White: I remember those.

McDonald: You'd see it on the side there, and that figure was up there at one gallon, two gallons, three gallons, all that (inaudible) and all that.

White: Manually pump the gas up in that glass tank, and then let gravity feed down the hose in the car.

McDonald: Right.

White: How old were you when you started driving?

McDonald: Well, I started—I don't know. My old man had the old T-Model, and (inaudible) learned me how to drive in that. Go down the road with him. Wasn't no such thing as no driver's license then because didn't too many people had a car. But someway or another he had an old T-Model by the grace of God. We survived.

White: And you went to school at Hawpond. Is that right?

McDonald: Right.

White: You remember some of your teachers?

McDonald: Yeah. I can remember Dawson(?). That was the first teacher, I believe, I really (inaudible) under. He was an albino.

White: Albino?

McDonald: Right. He and his wife; wasn't but two rooms.

White: Two-room schoolhouse, huh?

McDonald: Right. But now you had to get your lesson. Didn't, he'd get you. (laughter) You'd have to get the lesson, and he was an albino, and he'd put his hand over where you could see, you know. You'd have to get it. He turned the boys out before he did the girls, or turn the girls out before he did the boys. And they better not let him catch (inaudible). Did, the next morning he called them in there and said, "I'm going to bless your bones."

White: Bless your bones. Is that what he—

McDonald: (laughter) That's what he called it, "I'm going to bless your bones."
(laughter)

White: What did he bless your bones with?

McDonald: One of them long blackjack switches.

White: Oh, me.

McDonald: Long one. He said, "I'm going to bless your bones."

White: And he didn't mind blessing them.

McDonald: No, he didn't mind blessing them, not one bit. Not one bit. That was his words, "Bless your bones."

White: Well, I know you didn't go to school many months a year.

McDonald: No.

White: How many years did you go to school?

McDonald: Well, I really don't—after I got up some size and the times were so rough, I needed some money. Said, "Well, I can get out, and pick up forty cents." I started working for Weaver's Lumber Company. He used to run—

White: Weaver?

McDonald: Weaver used to have a sawmill—

White: Weaver's.

McDonald: —at D'Lo.

White: Weaver's.

McDonald: Right.

White: OK. I remember hearing that name.

McDonald: And then he put them little, old, two-bit sawmills up all through the country, but the big mill was there at D'Lo up there to your left.

White: Did you work in D'Lo?

McDonald: No. These little, old, two-bit mills around here, and he would pay you off every two weeks in an envelope. And then when he get through paying you off, he turn around, throw the first pair of craps on the ground. (laughter) Try to beat you back out of it. (laughter) (Inaudible)

White: He knew how to get some of it back.

McDonald: Oh, (inaudible) back or (inaudible). He was a old politician, old what I call a politician. He was on the job. He knowed how these teenage boys, he'd get them all (inaudible) with sawmills and whatnot, with the big mill there at D'Lo. And they used to call it Finkbine there at D'Lo.

White: Finkbine Lumber Company. Yeah, I remember it.

McDonald: Right. But we was operating it, but they called it Finkbine. So that's where we were, and then I worked for Ms. Will MacIntosh(?) for wages, twelve dollars a month.

White: Was that farming?

McDonald: Yeah, and (inaudible). Me and a little white boy, when we had that place out there on [Highway] 49, where all them places at, (inaudible) that farm out there, and twelve dollars a month (inaudible). Every morning she would cook biscuits a little bit bigger than that thing there, syrup, cream, coffee, and a piece of salt meat about that big.

White: About as big as your hand, huh?

McDonald: And she would tell us—she called us boys—“Boys,”—she called her old man Papa. Say, “Papa got the mules here. Time for y'all to get up.” We'd be in the road there, and we didn't get up, she just (inaudible), and we'd get on up and go in there and eat. And we plowed them mules till them mules hear that bell ring: ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling. And then you'd have to take them mules to the barn because they going to the barn. They got used to it.

White: Was that lunchtime or suppertime?

McDonald: That was lunchtime.

White: Lunch. You did take a break for lunch, then, huh?

McDonald: Yeah, from twelve till one. No break through the day. Sunup to sun down. If it rained, you got something to do. You clean out the fencerows, or you clean out the barn, or you cut stove wood, or you done something. And they was sweet as they could be. They sweet, old people. I know you heard them talking about O.L. Steve(?) had that big store in Magee. That's his mother-in-law and his daddy-in-law. They were sweet people. They were sweet people.

White: Y'all live there in the house, or did they have another house?

McDonald: No. We lived there in the house, in the front room, me and that white boy. His bed there, and my bed over there, Robert Mactosh; he's dead. He lived over there in Pinola. His wife still living.

White: Yeah. I knew him.

McDonald: Well, his mama and daddy. And Old Man Willie, wasn't a finer man in the country than Willie. We didn't have too many people like that, just a very few of them.

White: You lucky to find one of them then, back (inaudible).

McDonald: Oh! Well, like you said, you didn't find too many of them like that. He was so fine, and she lived up till these recent years. She'd always tell me, said, "Eddie?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." "You tell people that you got something that they don't have." Said, "Tell them you got a white woman and a black one, too." And I always called her Mama Mac. (laughter)

White: Well, you had a couple of them there along those times. Had the others living here next door to you and the MacIntoshes, too.

McDonald: Right. And she said, "Well, you tell your people." But these here wasn't just like her. It was something about her that was a little bit different from these right up here. She said, "Now, you tell your people that you got something that they don't have." Said, "Tell them you got a black woman and a white one, too." (laughter) (Inaudible) business day or something, she would call me to come out there when (inaudible) and them run that big store. She'd go get me something out of that store. And I may as well come get it. She was going to give me something. (laughter) Don't, she's going to call till I come get it. Margaret, Myrtis, and Ms. Trudy.

White: That's her daughters?

McDonald: That's her daughters. I'm going to have to go get it. She said, "Now, you tell them"—

White: Well, you went to work for the WPA [Works Progress Administration] at some point in there. We were talking about that earlier.

McDonald: Well, I'll tell you what. When we was sharecropping, these white folks set you to work for the, not WPA, but they called it the road tax or something.

White: Had to work, do public work.

McDonald: Right. So many days out of a year, build up.

White: Help build the roads.

McDonald: Right. They had one old motor grader. Didn't have no kind of machinery like they got—

White: Well, that was county, then, wasn't it?

McDonald: Right, it was county.

White: You had to work so many days rather than pay taxes to the county.

McDonald: Right. They called it road tax or something. That's been a long time.

White: You were a young man when you did that.

McDonald: I was a young man, drove (inaudible) mule. I was too young to have that slip, but them older men, big men, load that dirt in them (inaudible), and I drove them mules to (inaudible) to dump it. When I'd go up there and have to build them dump things. Drove them mules up there, and then dump it. I'd turn them mules around and go back, and that guy was loaded. He'd be standing there, and he was loading again. One coming and one going, all day, just like that.

White: Well, did you work mostly in this part of the county, right around here pretty close?

McDonald: Sure did. Just like you kept your beat up, and they kept their beat up. (Inaudible)

White: Yeah, it kept the ditches clear.

McDonald: Cleared and roads. That old bushy thing. Wasn't growed up the side of the road like it is now.

White: Was [Highway] 28 paved then?

McDonald: No, it wasn't no paved. When I started working, Magee wasn't paved.

White: Is that right?

McDonald: Wasn't nothing paved but Main Street, and it stopped down there at the funeral home. It stopped up there at the fire station, and there wasn't a fire station up there. Didn't have no fire station.

White: But you pretty much worked on the farm, and did jobs like that until you went to the service.

McDonald: Till I went to service. Then I went in service. I come out and worked for Reynold(?) Lumber Company till he got killed.

White: Who was that?

McDonald: Reynold Lumber Company.

White: Reynolds Lumber Company in Magee?

McDonald: In Magee. He got killed, and Ms. Reynold said, "Eddie," said, "you going to stay on?" I said, "No." I said, "I don't believe I could work for you like I could him because I was the first man went to work, last to quit. I went to work back at 12:30. Every morning when they was getting there, I'd be there and start. And I said, "I don't believe I can work with you as good as I worked with him." I talked with him every night after he got killed just like I'm talking to you.

White: How'd he get killed, in a wreck or something?

McDonald: Yeah, a car. He was a alcoholic, now. When he'd get drunk, he'd stay drunk two or three months. And then when he sobered up, he sobered up, and he'd tell us, say, "Y'all go ahead. Everybody know their job. Y'all go ahead and work and keep your time. Turn it in. I'm going to pay you for it." Now, I know you heard them talking about Reynold Lumber Company years ago.

White: Oh, yeah.

McDonald: And he was as fine a man. He come from Neshoba County. He was as fine a man as you ever want to go to work with. He would pay you. He said, "I ain't going to be the little fellow." Said, "All the reason I don't beat the government, I can't draw (inaudible)." (laughter) But say, "Y'all ain't got nothing (inaudible) going to pay you." And then he got killed. Told her, "I don't believe I can work for you like I could him. (Inaudible) work for the town."

White: What year did you go to work for Magee?

McDonald: I just don't remember, but I stayed there twenty-three years.

White: And retired when you found out you were fixing to pay the government more than you were going to pay yourself, huh?

McDonald: Right. (Inaudible) pay them. I got out (inaudible), paid them, and (inaudible).

White: Well, once you got married and settled down and started going to church, the Lord spoke to you at some time or other there, didn't he?

McDonald: Oh, yeah. Well, you heard me said I started parking cars on the outside. Big days a lot of cars, I'd park them over there and this and that. Next step, front door, as a usher. Next step a junior deacon. Next step senior deacon. Next step Sunday school teacher; made me step by step. Step by step. Last one, you see over there, I was in one church there. See that picture there?

White: Right.

McDonald: Back on over here. I'm talking to ushers. You see it there?

White: Right there.

McDonald: Yeah, that's me there. That's me when I was in business, meeting up there with my deacons up there in Lawrence County. See up in that frame up there now? I've buried every one of those guys up there.

White: Outlasted a lot of them, huh?

McDonald: (Inaudible)

White: Well, when did you actually start preaching?

McDonald: (laughter) Thirty years ago, somewhere along there, just don't remember what day. It's been so long.

White: Did you ever regret it?

McDonald: No, no, no, no, no. I just wished a lot of times that I was strong now as I was then because along in then I never did get tired. I mean, I could blow my bugle, but I can't blow it now. Them heart attacks won't let me when I get ready, ready, that (inaudible) will leave me, and I had to cut down.

White: You said you had a heart attack about three years ago?

McDonald: Yeah, four.

White: Four years ago. And when did your wife die?

McDonald: She died in, twelve years ago in February.

White: All your children were grown and out by then.

McDonald: All of them grown and married and gone, all of them.

White: How many grandchildren do you have?

McDonald: Ooh, me. God bless them. I don't know. A whole house full of them. (laughter) Great-grandkids, you know.

White: Got great-grandkids, huh?

McDonald: Great-grandkids.

White: Well, they pretty much scattered all around, too, aren't they?

McDonald: All around. I got them all around. Some up here in L.A. [Los Angeles(?)]. Some up here in Oklahoma; some in Kansas. Some's in there, overseas, and some still around here. And some in school, and some—every one of my great-grandkids over there, that chair leaning behind your head there.

White: Angela?

McDonald: Right, Dixon(?).

White: Yeah. I've seen her picture in the paper.

McDonald: Right. She's from Mendenhall up there. So I got a whole bunch of them.

White: Yeah. That's where I live, in Mendenhall now. But once you got grown and everything, it's been a pretty good life in Simpson County. Is that right?

McDonald: It's been a sweet life. It's been a sweet life. Every day hasn't been a sunshiny day, and I don't expect for it to be. But it has been well as you could expect. And we got along about as well as you can expect.

White: A little more sunshine than you felt when you were growing up, huh?

McDonald: I never did believe that I would be successful and be blessed in cooperation (inaudible) with the people because it was a terrible experience, and then (inaudible) at all. Make you trust God.

White: You got some pretty good neighbors still live around you today?

McDonald: Oh, we got some of the best neighbors that ever lived in this community. These guys up here (inaudible) Braxton. They come in here and bought the H.L. Brooks(?) Place up there. And this guy here, that used to be the Welch's(?) Place over there, and his son-in-law—

White: Is that part of Wilson Welch's family, some of that bunch?

McDonald: Part of Welch's what run for sheriff, some of his—

White: Tommy Welch.

McDonald: Right.

White: Yeah, they're cousins, Wilson and (inaudible).

McDonald: Oh, yeah, they're cousins by marriage.

White: Right. Yeah, that's the Wilson Welch group.

McDonald: Right, and Zack(?) and Horace(?) and all those people. I knew all of it. And this boy here, he married in that family. His daddy-in-law just left them gobs and gobs of money, gobs of money. And he didn't have sense enough to use it right and lost everything, and it makes me almost sick at your stomach the way he—and his daddy-and-law, he and I was eight days different from one another. My grandma nursed him for me.

White: Is that right?

McDonald: Right. So that's how close he and I come up together. She nursed him for me, and this boy lost everything. (End of digital file named tape one, side two. Beginning of digital file named tape two, side one.)

White: —construct your own house these days and everything. You said you had a little money saved from the military.

McDonald: Six hundred dollars, and when I got married, my daddy-in-law told people, "My daughter married a rich boy." (laughter)

White: Got money, huh?

McDonald: Didn't have but \$600, but I can tell you what. That \$600 would have bought a mountain, just about it. I spent that \$600, and I never will forget it. Old Mr. Welch, Dick Welch(?), I know y'all heard people talk about him. He laid the foundation (inaudible). Please forgive me for using that word. "Son," says, "my new barn up there, I got plenty lumber. You come up there and get it and (inaudible) your house." I told him, "No." I said, "I can tell you what. You got all those grandkids and kids." And I said, "Now, if something happened to you, first thing they'd want me to do, take that lumber out, and I done got used to it. And (inaudible)." "Shit." He said, "That's mine." (laughter) I said, "No, I won't do it." I wouldn't do it. But my children come up with his grandchildren, and his grandchildren called him Pa, and mine started calling him. He said, "You don't care. Do you?" I told him, "No! I don't care. I'm easy." (Inaudible) them my babies. And so my kids always called him Pa Dick. His children called him Pa Dick. People look at them, and they didn't think nothing about it. Go on about our business and wasn't thinking nothing about it.

I took my wife, my first child there, he wouldn't (inaudible). Didn't have but two doctors in Magee then, Dr. Pierce(?) and Dr. Sampson(?). She wouldn't (inaudible). And then seem like he, Old Man Dick, "Huh!" (inaudible). "Better not let that gal lay up there and die for nothing." Said, "Do a forty, forty (inaudible)." I got a prescription here. Said, "A forty, forty (inaudible)." (Inaudible) He said, "Them my babies." (laughter) He said, "Well, Mr. Welch, I can tell you what. If I can get a nurse to stand by me and help me, I'll be with you (inaudible)." He said, "Hell's bells! You better pull it." So he said, "Well"—that child was born the twenty-first of December, and (inaudible).

White: He was right there at the birth of the first one, then, huh?

McDonald: First one. (Inaudible) That's him right there.

White: Sure is.

McDonald: And I can tell you what. He was a man, a man, but I can tell you what. Don't fool with him. If he was for you, he was for you, and if you told him, say, "Where you staying?" Said, "I stay with Mr. Welch." "Well, you go on home." That's him right there, and I know y'all heard people talk about him, Dick Welch.

White: Yeah, sure have.

McDonald: He's (inaudible) that place back up there.

White: And he's a patriarch.

McDonald: Oh, what you talking about? He (inaudible) the foundation in this house.

White: But did you build all this yourself?

McDonald: Every bit of it, myself. I'd come in, work a while, come in, do something at night. Nail up a backdoor back there. Didn't have no money to buy a backdoor. Nailed the backdoor up, and I would get up every morning and go to work, and I'd take my hammer and open it and tell the wife, I said, "Well, I can tell you what. You can go in and out the back." And we made us a door for here. And she said, "Well, we's here."

White: You had one door that'd open and close, then, huh?

McDonald: Yeah. Now, I made it out of an old plank. By the grace of God we just kept on and kept on. And I, "Well, I just do what I have to do (inaudible) had to do what I had to do." (laughter)

White: Made a good home and raised a lot of children in it.

McDonald: All of my children raised, every one of them, (inaudible). My children tell me, “Daddy, why don’t (inaudible)?” I said, “I tell you what. I ain’t got but a few more years around noways. The Lord done blessed me to live this long. Ain’t none of y’all going to be here noway, and all of y’all got beautiful homes and what not.” So I—

White: Did you build your fireplace here?

McDonald: No. Guy McInnis(?) built that.

White: Guy McInnis.

McDonald: Guy McInnis, seventeen dollars. It’s seventeen foot high and a dollar a foot.

White: Charged a dollar a foot to build the fireplace and chimney. (laughter)

McDonald: A dollar a foot. Now, that wasn’t yesterday, now.

White: You can’t send him over to my house the same (inaudible).

McDonald: Well, I tell you; he dead. Yeah. He’s dead. See, it’s seventeen foot, a dollar. I had enough brick to build that large one, but he run out of time at night, and I never did get a chance to get him back over here. And so he died. (Inaudible), too.

White: Did he live pretty close?

McDonald: He lived over there in Hawpond Community.

White: Was he a white guy or black guy.

McDonald: He was a black guy, but he was a carpenter, bricklayer.

White: Did carpentry work and bricklaying, huh?

McDonald: Right, right. So I made the mortar, bought the brick. I think I give about a penny apiece for the brick (inaudible). Rented a truck from Ed Burra(?) to haul the brick; give him five dollars for the rent of the truck. (laughter) That’s been a long time, now. (laughter) Five dollars was to rent a truck all day.

White: That’s a pretty good rate, too. Would be these days, wouldn’t it?

McDonald: Oh, they wouldn’t let you crank it up for five dollars, (inaudible) rent it.

White: Well, how’d you get back and forth to Magee to work all these years? You always have a car?

McDonald: Well, I tell you what. Our survival by the grace of God, someday, somehow, we bought an old car. Then I turned around, bought an old truck, and then I learned her how to drive, and I'd take my old truck and go back and forth to work. And she kept the car. And all them things setting out there now, and I bought her that new one setting out there because when I started pastoring, every two year, I had to buy a new car.

White: Wear them out, huh?

McDonald: I'd wear them—a hundred thousand miles. When you put a hundred thousand miles on one, well, then that motor was gone. And the body be in good shape, but that motor would be gone. I'd leave from here. I'd walk out when I was a pastor down on the Gulf Coast, I'd walk out of here, and in an hour and twenty minutes, I'd be in North Gulfport. I was pastoring in North Gulfport. I'd be in North Gulfport in time. Seventy mile an hour was speed limit then. You could get on [Highway] 49 over there; you could tighten up at seventy mile and hour. And then when I got to Wiggins, I know where they would get you at in Wiggins. I'd brake my speed down. Just, I get out of the incorporation of Wiggins, I'd open up again.

White: Had a speed trap down there for a few years, didn't they?

McDonald: Oh, they would get you. You go through there, when you go through Wiggins, that truck stop down there, they'd get you quick. They would get you quick. If you was coming out of there with loads of whiskey (inaudible). That bootlegging country over in there.

White: Oh. I didn't realize that was part of the reason for that.

McDonald: Oh, yeah. That's the reason. Right. That's bootleg country. They'd pull you over so quick, it make your head spin.

White: Well, let's talk about a little bootlegging in Simpson County. There was some of that going on, too, wasn't there, when you were coming up?

McDonald: Down [Highway] 13 here, on Dry Ridge.

White: Did everybody know where to buy their bootleg whiskey?

McDonald: Yeah.

White: When you were coming up?

McDonald: They know where to go get it at. They called it the Creek. Down on the creek there, right at Old Man Fleet Berry(?). I know you heard them talk about Old Man Fleet Berry. Them Berrys, we stayed on they place like Old Man Dick. If you

stayed on there, the law ain't coming on there. No. The law didn't come on this man's place, here. If they done anything, they'd call him. He'd tell them, "Humph! Well, I'll bring them up there." And if they broke the law, and he was (inaudible), he'd pay for it. Say, "All right, boys, let's go." But now I can tell you what. They worked. And if you need him, he was right there. Black man or white man don't fool with (inaudible). Come to him; he'd do all right (inaudible). You broke the law or anything, and he think you did, he'd pay for it.

White: Sheriff came to the guy—

McDonald: Oh, he better come to his house. He better not come to pick you up. No, indeed. (Inaudible) "You stay out of the grave, and I'll keep you out of jail." (laughter) That was his words.

White: Stay out of the grave—

McDonald: "Stay out of the grave, and I'll keep you out of jail." (laughter) But he would. He would. No kidding. (Inaudible) We had some of the loveliest white peoples, some of them. And some of them was the meanest white people in the world. But now, some of them, ooh-whee, some of the loveliest people lived. I tell you what. They would pull the shirt off'n their back and give it to you. But now, don't fool with them. Tell them the truth. Work. You get sick, they be right there. You died, he'd go the last mile, the way he go to cemetery with you. That's far as he can go. But now I can tell you what. He had a big plantation, raised that cotton. Anything you wanted, he bought it for you. Yeah! If you want a new car, he'd buy it. If you want a new truck, he'd buy it. But go to the field and work.

White: Going to have to work for it.

McDonald: Oh, you going to have to work for it. And that's all right. There ain't nothing wrong with that. I believe in that. You want something, work for it.

White: Well, you obviously believe in work. You've always had two or three jobs at the same time, here.

McDonald: If you (inaudible) work for it. I still believe in it. I just can't do it, now, but I still believe in it.

White: Well, you say you're preaching some now, still?

McDonald: Yeah. I [preach] two sermons a month.

White: Where are you preaching?

McDonald: At Mount Mercy, down [Highway] 49.

White: That's between here and Prentiss? I'm sorry, [Highway] 49. I was thinking [Highway] 13.

McDonald: Between here and Mount Olive.

White: Between Magee and Mount Olive. And still enjoying it, I'm sure.

McDonald: Every bit of it. Just like (inaudible) just so and (inaudible).

White: Are you a good musician?

McDonald: No. I couldn't make no music at all.

White: You know, that's unusual, isn't it? Most ministers can and do, don't they?

McDonald: Well, some of them.

White: I don't know that my minister could make music, either. I don't think I've ever heard him sing, come to think of it.

McDonald: I can sing pretty good, but now, playing music, no. But now, singing, yeah, I can sing pretty good till that wind cuts me off. That wind cuts me off.

White: Yeah. Heart problems'll do that. They'll take your breath in just a minute, won't they?

McDonald: It don't take long.

White: Well, have you got anything else that you can think of that you'd like to pass on to your grandchildren or children or any future generations on this tape?

McDonald: (Inaudible) my children's always told me, "Daddy, you ought to write a book." I said, "I write so poor." He said, "I can tell you. You just analyze it. We do the writing." I, "Nah." (Inaudible) when all those girls there, they're very educated, very educated. And my son there, he's got all kinds of degrees, and he's got (inaudible), and I just thank God he has it. I said, "Y'all got something they can't nobody take away from you."

White: Made a good investment in the world with your children then, didn't you?

McDonald: Right. I'm proud of them, too.

White: Well, I appreciate you taking this time to talk with us today. I've thoroughly enjoyed it.

McDonald: I (inaudible) my son (inaudible) got two little, old girls pregnant at the same time. Wasn't but fifteen. And so I had this thirty-five acres of corn. I was working thirty-five acres of corn. Tractor, all the equipment setting out there, and he got them little girls pregnant. I told them—well, they called me. I said, "All of my children got clothes on." That's what they daddy and mama called me. I, "Uh-unh. But I can tell you what. He going to marry one of you. I don't care which one he marries. Don't make me no difference. I ain't got to stay with nary a one of them. But he going to marry one of them. You can rest for true with that." He didn't want that fat one. I said, "Nine times out of ten, she'll make you the best wife. You the one got to live with them." So he wanted to marry that Smith(?) girl. I said, "OK." He slipped—her daddy sent her to Brooklyn, and they had to make it up. Me and the wife was at church, and he pulled a trick on me. Went out there and he bought ten or twelve dollars worth of groceries to get the check cashed. He pretty smart. (laughter) They know me pretty well (inaudible). He cashed the check. He bought that groceries, and he figured sure, you know. Then he turned around and traded the groceries for money. He pretty—(laughter) I come in, and (inaudible). I said, "Well, you know. (Inaudible)" I come in that evening from work, corn up there like that. Tractor (inaudible). That corn needs working. I got out there and taken all them plows off'n that tractor, started (inaudible). It was a stalk of corn, and turn around and dirt in it. I got off'n the tractor, taken (inaudible) every stalk. Uh-oh! I backed that thing up and started taking (inaudible). And I finished that corn one hour and thirteen minutes (inaudible). He called his mama the next day. He done (inaudible). "Mama, if I had the money, I'd come home. I don't (inaudible). He couldn't get no job.

White: Was he in Brooklyn, New York?

McDonald: Yes, Brooklyn, New York. (Inaudible) No social security, no driver's license, nothing. That won't work. The next day (inaudible) I ain't going to send him no money. So woman know how to get to the husband.

White: Yeah, they do.

McDonald: She told me; she always called me daddy. Said, "Daddy"—we always called him Squirt(?). Said, "Squirt want you to send him the money." I, "No way (inaudible)." She said, "OK." So that next evening I come in from work. He calls me. I was sitting on the couch. He called, "Pop!" He always called me Pop. He said, "If I had the money, I'd come home." I said, "Oh, son, you ain't got nary a job?"

White: Rubbed it in, didn't you?

McDonald: "You ain't got nary a job." "No, Pop, but I'm going to look." I said, "You'll find one." Next evening he called me again. I said, "Well, I tell you what. I'm going to send you the money. (Inaudible) No, I ain't going to send you no money. I'm going to go and buy you a ticket. I'm going to buy you a ticket on the bus." "No. I want (inaudible)." "No, I'm going to buy you a ticket on the bus. Make you suffer." I bought him a ticket on the bus, wired it to him, and bought her a ticket.

And he got home on the third of July. I told her; I said, "Now, girl, you go home." The fifth of July, I said, "Well, I'm going to work. You take the car. You go to Mendenhall. You get your license. You marry her up there. Don't bring her here." "I'd like to." I said, "Don't bring them here. Marry her up there." I give him two or three or four dollars to marry her up there. Justice of the court judge married them. Come on home. He started working. I got him a job (inaudible). Told Pete Russums(?) was our mayor then over at Magee. (Inaudible) He worked there three or four months, and he told me, he said, "I could buy me a trailer if I had the money, but I ain't got no credit." I said, "Oh, (inaudible)." She told me one night, said, "Daddy." I said, "Yeah." "Squirt could get him a trailer if you go with him." I said, "I imagine so." (laughter)

White: You didn't rush into things, though, did you?

McDonald: I said, "I imagine so." In the morning I got up, and he didn't know. I told him, "Get ready. We're going to go see about your trailer." He, "What?" He said, "I done got it picked out." I said, "Where about?" He said, "In Jackson." OK, Jackson. (Inaudible) And at that particular time I was banking a little bit at People's Bank in Mendenhall (inaudible) day, but you know (inaudible) Day(?)?

White: Oh, yeah. I knew him. Yeah.

McDonald: And so he wanted my credit. I told him to call Jim Day(?). He called Jim Day, and Jim Day told him, said, "If (inaudible) want a trailer, let him have it." I got the trailer in my name. He paid \$500 down on it. (Inaudible) come on, and he wanted to move it over there at his daddy-in-law's. I said, "All right, but (inaudible), but if that's what you want, that's what you want." "Yeah, I'm going to stay over there, Dad." I (inaudible), "OK." He wanted over there, and he stayed over there about a month or two. He told his mama, said, "Mama, if I had the money, I'd move my trailer out there to the house." She come to me again. I gave him \$50. That guy moved it from out there, here. He stayed there almost a year. He was bad, and she was bad. (Inaudible) me \$6000, stuck, with a trailer setting out there. I said, "Now, I can't let my credit go bad." I'm crazy about my name. Still crazy about my name.

White: Your name means a lot. It really does.

McDonald: I'm crazy about my name. I went ahead. He went in the Army. She went back to her daddy. She called me. She waited (inaudible) till I paid the last payment on that trailer setting out there. "Reverend McDonald?" I said, "Um-hm." "Can I have that trailer?" I said, "Over my dead body." (laughter)

White: Because you'd paid for it then, huh?

McDonald: I said, "That's over my dead body." "Why?" I said, "I paid for it. Y'all walked off and left me with \$6000. I'm paying for (inaudible) car, (inaudible) truck, and a trailer and four kids in college." "Why?" I said, "Let it rot down." A lot of

people wanted to buy it. A lot of people wanted to rent it. They first wanted to rent it. “No. Ain’t going to rent it.” They wanted to buy it. “We pay you so much down.” “No. If you can’t pay it all down, let it set there.” “Going to rot!” I said, “It’s paid for. I finished paying for it.”

White: It was yours, then, wasn’t it?

McDonald: Yeah. I said, “Well, setting out there now.” And all the equipment is still out there (inaudible). For a couple of years I kept all the water on, the lights and everything. I told my wife, “(inaudible) me and you.” Kept the lights and water on out there. Sometimes me and her would just go out there and spend the night. (inaudible) been setting there (inaudible) time she get ready to buy something in here, she’d take it and put it up out there. It’s still setting there. People say, “(Inaudible)” “No, it ain’t for rent.” Same way with my (inaudible) car. I bought her that new car setting out there, and mine’s in the (inaudible) shed out there. (Inaudible), “Nah, it ain’t for sale.” “Price (inaudible).” I said, “It’s paid for. Every one of them paid for. Ain’t for sale.” So I ain’t got nothing (inaudible). Ain’t got a dime (inaudible). Yeah, I’ve got a dime, but I don’t owe nobody nothing.

White: Well, you got a good place to live, good land, and a good investment in children.

McDonald: Well, I don’t owe nobody nothing. Every night they always call me credit card and all this here. Last night they called again. I said, “Now, let me tell you something. Why you want to call me at nine o’clock at night, talking about a credit card?” I said, “I learned that credit is good, but I quit using credit. I try to pay as I go. If I ain’t got enough money to pay for it, leave it alone.” That credit will eat you up. Now, I’m a old man. You got to buying something on credit at these stores or whatnot, you fixing to get—unh-uh. (Inaudible) ain’t got it, (inaudible). I’m still that way.

White: Pay as you go, huh?

McDonald: Pay (inaudible). Say, “You old-fashioned.” I say, “Yeah, I’m old-fashioned. I’m proud that I’m old-fashioned because I don’t have no collectors running up here in the drive.” Never did believe in it. (Inaudible) it, and I won’t have it. I will not do that.

White: Well, I appreciate you talking with us here. We enjoyed it today.

McDonald: Well, I’ve enjoyed talking to you. But that’s the kind of person I am. I try to shoot fair and square. Jimmy Kline(?) can tell you fair and square, and I wouldn’t lie on you; wouldn’t lie for you. I don’t want you to lie on me and don’t lie for me.

White: Just as bad to do either one of them.

McDonald: Yeah, well, don't lie for me, and don't lie on me, and I will do you the same, identical way. I wouldn't lie on you, and I wouldn't lie for you.

(end of interview)