

# Mississippi Oral History Program

Simpson County Historical and Genealogical  
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Irene McLendon

Interviewer: Joe White

Volume 1217, Part 20  
2003

©2014

The University of Southern Mississippi

This transcription of an oral history by The Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage of The University of Southern Mississippi may not be reproduced or published in any form except that quotation of short excerpts of unrestricted transcripts and the associated tape recordings is permissible providing written consent is obtained from The Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. When literary rights have been retained by the interviewee, written permission to use the material must be obtained from both the interviewee and The Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage.

This oral history is a transcript of a taped conversation. The transcript was edited and punctuation added for readability and clarity. People who are interviewed may review the transcript before publication and are allowed to delete comments they made and to correct factual errors. Additions to the original text are shown in brackets [ ]. Minor deletions are not noted. Original tapes and transcripts are on deposit in the McCain Library and Archives on the campus of The University of Southern Mississippi.



Louis Kyriakoudes, Director  
The Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage  
118 College Drive #5175  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001  
601-266-4574

*An Oral History with Irene McLendon, Volume 1217, Part 20*

Interviewer: Joe White

Transcriber: Stephanie Scull-DeArme

Editor: Stephanie Scull-DeArme

## Biography

Bonnie Irene McLendon was born to Isom Brown Buckley and Tina Mae Fortenberry outside of Pinola, MS in April 1919. McLendon grew up with four brothers. Her mother died when she was eight years old. McLendon went to school at Stonewall, located seven miles from Pinola, through the sixth grade. From seventh through twelfth she attended Pinola School. Irene married Douglas Jefferson McLendon the morning after graduating high school in April 1938 – they celebrated their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary the day after the interview was recorded. Together they had two boys, one of whom passed away in 1991. Irene and her husband opened a service station in Pinola in 1956 and worked there for eight years. The McLendons own a farm of approximately eighty acres, producing cotton, cattle, peas, butterbeans, and corn. Irene worked at garment plants in Crystal Springs, Prentiss, and Hazlehurst. She retired from factory work in the early 1970s. Irene and Douglas reside in Pinola to this day.

## Table of Contents

Introductory information/parents' biography.....	1
Siblings, childhood, and life on a farm.....	2, 26
School.....	3, 5, 25, 31
Marriage.....	4, 6
Children.....	8
Garment industry.....	8
Owning a service station.....	10
Farming with husband and food/crops.....	11, 19, 24
Life and business in Pinola.....	17, 20
Moviegoing experiences.....	27
World War II-era.....	29
Pinola in the present.....	30

AN ORAL HISTORY  
with  
IRENE McLENDON

*This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi Simpson County Project. The interview is with Irene McLendon and is taking place on April 28, 2003. The interviewer is Joe White.*

**White:** My name is Joe White. Today is Monday, April 28, 2003. This interview is conducted under a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council as a part of the oral history project at The University of Southern Mississippi. Today we're interviewing Ms. Irene McLendon in her home in Pinola, Mississippi. Could you state your full name, please, Ms. McLendon?

**McLendon:** Bonnie Irene McLendon.

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

**McLendon:** April the twenty-sixth, 1919.

**White:** Were you born in Pinola?

**McLendon:** Well, I was born at the Crawford Place, the Estus Crawford(?) Place, about two miles from here.

**White:** Two miles outside of Pinola. What were your parents' names?

**McLendon:** Isom Brown Buckley and Tina Mae Fortenberry.

**White:** And where were they born?

**McLendon:** She was born at Stonewall, and my father was born at Old Hebron in Lawrence County. It was in Lawrence County at that time. Now, it's Jeff Davis.

**White:** It didn't move. The county line did, (laughter) I presume. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

**McLendon:** I had four brothers.

**White:** Four brothers. Do you remember all their names?

**McLendon:** Well, (laughter) Wilson, Noel, Guy, and Timon(?).

**White:** Four brothers. And I know you enjoyed growing up in a household with four brothers.

**McLendon:** Well, I did. I rambled over the woods with them in (laughter) in a pair of overalls. (laughter)

**White:** You were a tomboy, then, huh?

**McLendon:** I was. And when my baby brother got to be a year old, I took him back from my aunt, and I carried him and climbed trees with them. And if the bull got after us when we were down in the pasture, we'd get up a tree, and he would be going up there with us. I don't know how we made it.

**White:** Even at a year of age, huh?

**McLendon:** Um-hm. But my daddy promised that I could have him back. Mother died when he was six weeks old.

**White:** Is that right? You were what? About how old were you?

**McLendon:** I was eight when my mother died. She died the next month after I was eight, but anyhow, I cried so when they took my baby away until Daddy told me that I could have him back when he got to be a year old. And they had a time handling me, but I got him back. (laughter)

**White:** You didn't have to get rid of him, huh?

**McLendon:** Unh-uh.

**White:** Well, you obviously were raised on a farm then if you were—

**McLendon:** Absolutely.

**White:** —raised out of town here.

**McLendon:** Well, my daddy grew cattle and cotton, and he was prosperous most times. Of course during the Depression and so forth, he was not.

**White:** Can you tell us a little bit about growing up on a farm in Simpson County? What that was like? How early did you start to work?

**McLendon:** We started to work by the time we were about eight years old or less.

**White:** You did start in school before you started to work, then, huh?

**McLendon:** Yes, we did.

**White:** Well, that's good.

**McLendon:** And we walked to school at Stonewall.

**White:** Where is Stonewall exactly?

**McLendon:** It's about seven miles from Pinola, southeast (inaudible).

**White:** Southeast of Pinola.

**McLendon:** Uh-huh.

**White:** Yes, I think that's right. How far'd you walk to school?

**McLendon:** About two miles.

**White:** You know, I've heard that story before. Are you sure you walked two miles?

**McLendon:** I'm sure of it. (laughter)

**White:** I think my mother said ten. (laughter)

**McLendon:** And when the icicles was spewed up on the bank—I'm telling you the truth—you were not allowed to wear pants; girls were not allowed to wear pants to school. And we had our cotton stockings and had them up as far as they could go, and they kept us pretty warm, but not like pants.

**White:** Well, you didn't have too much heat in the school either, did you?

**McLendon:** No. Wood heat.

**White:** Wood heater.

**McLendon:** But we stopped at Mr. Sam Mullens(?), and he would always be standing out at the gate when we got there. And he said, "You children come on in and warm up before you go on." And he would let the boys stand in front of the fireplace and turn around and around, getting warm. But he would take me on his knee, and he would have Miss Sally to bring some warm water, and he had a hot towel. And he did my hands. They would be red as a beet when it was real cold. But he was a wonderful person, and she was, too.

**White:** How many grades did they have at Stonewall?

**McLendon:** I really don't know way back, but anyway, I never did know if it was a high school or not, but I came to Pinola in the seventh grade. I had the seventh through twelfth here.

**White:** And graduated at Pinola (inaudible), huh?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh.

**White:** What year did they close Pinola School? Do you remember? Midseventies, wasn't it?

**McLendon:** I believe it was [19]76, 1976 when it closed.

**White:** Somewhere along in there. I'm just trying to remember the old school. But until you graduated from school and everything, you still lived out on the home place. Is that right?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** And your folks never did move out of Simpson County?

**McLendon:** No. And I tell you what. Dorothy Lee was my best friend, and we promised that we would finish high school before we married. Well, Doug and I married the next morning. (laughter)

**White:** Oh, after you graduated, or after—

**McLendon:** Yeah, after we graduated.

**White:** Well, I thought maybe it was the next morning after you promised her you were not going to (laughter) marry till you graduated from high school.

**McLendon:** You have to keep me straight, (inaudible).

**White:** Now, what year was that?

**McLendon:** Thirty-eight, 1938.

**White:** OK. I thought maybe you promised her and then went out and got married the next day. (laughter) You did wait. (laughter) Dorothy Lee, who were her parents, now? Was that your next-door neighbor or just your best friend at school?

**McLendon:** Oh, no. They lived down at Bush Town.

**White:** OK. She was your best friend in school, then.

**McLendon:** Yes. What was his name? Ellis Lee.

**White:** Ellis Lee. At some point or other you got a school bus or wagon or something to carry you to school at Pinola, didn't you?



**McLendon:** Yes. It wasn't many years before we had a school bus to carry us to Stonewall, but—

**White:** Oh, is that right?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh, but in the beginning that's what we did, I think maybe a couple of years or something like that.

**White:** You don't remember how many grades—about how many students did they have at Stonewall at that time?

**McLendon:** I never knew.

**White:** Is the old school building still there or anything?

**McLendon:** Oh, no. The church is still there, and its original building.

**White:** That's the Baptist Church?

**McLendon:** Yes. Stonewall Baptist Church. And Bobby Jones from Mendenhall is the pastor, and has been thirty—

**White:** He's still pastor there.

**McLendon:** Yeah.

**White:** I knew he had been. I didn't know he was still pastoring over there.

**McLendon:** He's still pastoring. Miss Ebbie Mullens(?) got him there, I think. (laughter) He married her granddaughter.

**White:** And just kept him there then.

**McLendon:** Well, they can't afford (laughter) to get anybody else as long as he'll stay for that price.

**White:** Can't afford to get three assistant pastors they can't afford, huh?

**McLendon:** I believe that they tell me there are about twelve members there, now.

**White:** You did mention this fellow that you married the day after graduating.

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** What was his name, or what is his name? I should say.

**McLendon:** His name was Douglas McLendon.

**White:** And still is, huh?

**McLendon:** Yes. And I was salutatorian in my class.

**White:** Is that right?

**McLendon:** And he was sitting right down in those seats in front of me when I was doing my little—

**White:** Oh, he went to school with you here at Pinola, then, huh?

**McLendon:** No. He didn't.

**White:** Oh, he didn't?

**McLendon:** Oh, he was just sitting out there with my family the night that I graduated, and I looked down at him, and he grinned real big, and I just about forgot my speech. (laughter) Oh.

**White:** Well, did your parents know you were going to get married the next day? That's my next question.

**McLendon:** Well, Doug asked for me the next morning. He followed Daddy up and down the row behind old mules.

**White:** When he was out plowing, huh?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh. And finally Daddy stopped to where he could ask him. Sat down on the plow stock, and Doug said he asked him for me, and he said, "Well, all I ask is that y'all marry at my house." And so (laughter) we did not. (laughter)

**White:** Oh, really?

**McLendon:** But we went to Mendenhall and got our license and drove on out to Goodwater and married. Hollis Benton(?)—

**White:** Hollis Benton was the pastor out there?

**McLendon:** Yeah. Well, he was mine and Doug's pastor. I don't know what he was doing there. He probably was going to give one of us up. (laughter)

**White:** One or the other, huh?

**McLendon:** Yeah. We were halftime church.

**White:** And Mr. Douglas, y'all been married, I understand, almost sixty-five years.

**McLendon:** Tomorrow.

**White:** Sixty-five years tomorrow. That'd be April the twenty-ninth. Well, that's good. Congratulations to you.

**McLendon:** Well, thank you.

**White:** By the way, Mr. Douglas, what's his full name?

**McLendon:** Douglas Jefferson McLendon.

**White:** Douglas Jefferson McLendon, that's a good name. When was he born?

**McLendon:** He was born December the thirteenth, 1914.

**White:** You doing better than I am. I never can remember my wife's birthday (laughter) or our anniversary. (laughter) And where did he go to school if he didn't go to school at Pinola?

**McLendon:** Well, he went to school at Goodwater, Macedonia, and where else, Doug?

**White:** All around, huh?

**McLendon:** Yeah. Mendenhall Agricultural High School. He went different places. When he'd finished a certain grade, he'd go someplace else. Mr. Stanley Berry(?) his teacher once.

**White:** Stanley Berry was almost everybody's teacher once, I think.

**McLendon:** Yes. (laughter)

**White:** He was 104, I believe, or right at, when he died here a couple of years ago.

**McLendon:** That's right. And a wonderful person.

**White:** He certainly was. You and Mr. Douglas had a couple of children that I seem to remember. What were their names, and when were they born?

**McLendon:** Douglas Jefferson [McLendon] Jr., and we called him Jim. And he died in 1991. And we had Joe Michael McLendon, and he's still living and got a bunch of offspring.

**White:** A bunch of offspring. I like the way you say that. (laughter) Sound like some of my family.

**McLendon:** Well, we love all of them; I tell you.

**White:** Where do they live?

**McLendon:** They live at Stonewall where Doug and I raised them, mostly.

**White:** Is that right?

**McLendon:** Um-hm.

**White:** Well, that's good. Is it on the home place or close to it?

**McLendon:** Yes. It's almost where we had our house, but they've got a trailer out there.

**White:** Now, over the years you have worked outside the home, I understand.

**McLendon:** I have.

**White:** I know you worked inside the home, too.

**McLendon:** I guarantee you.

**White:** What all have you done on the outside to make a living all these years?

**McLendon:** Well, I worked at the garment plants at three different places, but I didn't stay any place long. With the garment plants, I was allergic to dye, and I kept going, trying to find where they didn't use that kind of dye. (laughter) I worked at Hazlehurst at Edward Hyman(?) Company, and I don't know what that shirt factory was. At what, Doug? Crystal Springs. And then I went to Prentiss and stayed down there about six months. And that was Edward Hyman, too, I believe.

**White:** And then eventually you decided you'd had enough of that.

**McLendon:** No. (laughter)

**White:** (Inaudible) the dye, is that what it was, or did they just open a plant up here in Simpson County or something closer to home?

**McLendon:** Well, in other words, when I left Prentiss, I went to Universal Manufacturing on [Highway] 49.

**White:** Between Mendenhall and Magee.

**McLendon:** Um-hm.

**White:** Let's see. That plant opened in 1960?

**McLendon:** Well, I went to work there, I think, about a year after they began, and I worked fourteen years there.

**White:** Mid-1960s is when it opened. Did you like it?

**McLendon:** Well, it was hard work, and it was so hot in there.

**White:** They manufactured electrical ballasts, I think, at the time.

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** Something like—what kind of work did you do there?

**McLendon:** Well, I did about three different things.

**White:** Working with machines?

**McLendon:** Yes. I did what they called twisting mostly. (laughter)

**White:** And it wasn't a dance, either, was it?

**McLendon:** That was lamination.

**White:** It wasn't that dance, the twist, either, was it?

**McLendon:** No. No. It was twisting wires around little posts on ballasts.

**White:** When did you retire from there? Do you remember what year it was?

**McLendon:** I'm thinking about, probably about [19]71 or [19]72.

**White:** And I know you're into genealogy. What are your other hobbies now that you've quit working outside the home?

**McLendon:** Sitting. (laughter)

**White:** Just sitting. (laughter)

**McLendon:** Can't do much else, but I do still strain at reading, and that's my main hobby, reading and genealogy.

**White:** Well, you collect a lot of genealogical material.

**McLendon:** Oh, yes. And a lot that's not genealogy, but I like pretty well all interesting readings. And I'll cut things out of the paper that most people would burn. (laughter)

**White:** And save them in files, huh?

**McLendon:** And save them. But I enjoy rereading them all the time.

**White:** You might need all that information one of these days.

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

**White:** Well, when did you guys move to Pinola?

**McLendon:** In 1956.

**White:** Nineteen fifty-six. And why did you move down to Pinola?

**McLendon:** Well, we were planning to build a house in Stonewall, and we opened up a service station here, Cary McCaskell's(?) Service Station. We stayed there six months.

**White:** That's on the, is that the east side of town?

**McLendon:** Yeah. And so Snoot, your Uncle Snoot(?) White, he closed his station down, and so we preferred it over where we were, and we moved there. And we worked there eight years.

**White:** And the old service station building is still up here on the corner.

**McLendon:** Yes. It's still standing.

**White:** It's closed right now.

**McLendon:** Has been for years, but anyhow.

**White:** Well, what was it like, running a service station in Pinola?

**McLendon:** It was a lot of hard work. (laughter)

**White:** I bet it was a lot of hard work. Did you just pump gas then? What all did you do?

**McLendon:** We pumped gas. He fixed tires, and the boy that we hired helped with it. And we had groceries, not a great deal of groceries, but we had a supply, mostly for paper wood haulers. And we had our Coca Cola box, of course, and ice cream. In other words, we had dip ice cream, put it on a cone, and everybody enjoyed that. And we also had a pool table in there. (laughter)

**White:** I think everybody in this end of Simpson County had a pool table at one time or other. (laughter) I remember when I grew up around here. Mr. Douglas, didn't he farm for a couple of years, several years?

**McLendon:** He farmed for a long time, about—

**White:** That's before y'all moved into Pinola and Stonewall. After you married, is that what Mr. Douglas was doing, was farming?

**McLendon:** Well, he started working at the gin, also, in the fall of the year.

**White:** Here in Pinola?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh. And I brought most of the cotton to the gin. He carried some as he went, but I did carry most of it. In other words I'd pull a trailer behind the tractor and carry it to the mill.

**White:** Oh, pulled a tractor in instead of the pickup; used the tractor to pull it into the—

**McLendon:** Tractor, um-hm.

**White:** Well, who was doing the cotton picking?

**McLendon:** Well, we had a group of blacks that we always used the same ones. They were very good help.

**White:** Every year, huh?

**McLendon:** Yes, sir. Duke Burkett(?) and his wife and children, they did most of it, but we did hire some extra.

**White:** Did they live fairly close to you out that way?

**McLendon:** Yeah. They lived about two miles from us.

**White:** Did he farm some, too?

**McLendon:** Yes, he did.

**White:** In other words, he had his own cotton and everything?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** And also worked other folks' fields and stuff, too.

**McLendon:** My daddy, when they were picking cotton for us one time, when I was about twelve years old, my daddy had told us that he was going to give a nickel to the one that beat picking cotton. And Duke Burkett the black man, the head of the family, he was a *good* worker, and he helped with the weighing of the cotton and so forth. But he did not hear what my daddy said: he was going to give a nickel to the one that picked the most cotton. And that afternoon when we weighed, I had beat him, and that just hurt him so bad. (laughter) Oh!

**White:** Maybe he should have listened up a little bit then, shouldn't he?

**McLendon:** Well, I think so, but—

**White:** How many acres did you and Mr. Douglas farm?

**McLendon:** What? About eighty? Eighty acres.

**White:** Mostly cotton, huh?

**McLendon:** Cotton. We had cattle.

**White:** Raised corn?

**McLendon:** Cattle and corn.

**White:** Did raise cattle.

**McLendon:** And plenty of peas (laughter) and butterbeans.

**White:** What size garden did you have?

**McLendon:** Oh, I suppose about at an acre, something like that, most of the time.

**White:** And did you do a lot of canning, like everybody else did in those days?

**McLendon:** Well, we did for a while, and then we froze most of it after a few years.

**White:** Was it easier to freeze it than it was to can it?

**McLendon:** Yes. And it was better food, but we were proud when we got electricity and got a freezer.



**White:** Well, when was that? What year did you get electricity out that way? Do you remember?

**McLendon:** I really don't know, but I know we had the house wired about a year before we got electricity.

**White:** Just getting ready for it, huh?

**McLendon:** Yes. And our oldest child was just very small, but we would say, "Jim, what is that?" Pointing to the light bulb up there before we got the electricity. He said, "It'll be a light someday." (laughter)

**White:** He knew what it was going to be.

**McLendon:** Yeah. (laughter) But anyway, we were proud of that electricity.

**White:** Well, you heated mostly with what? Wood stove before that?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** And fireplace?

**McLendon:** Well, we did right on. We didn't ever use gas until we came up here.

**White:** Until you moved into Pinola, huh?

**McLendon:** Till we moved to Pinola, uh-huh.

**White:** Well, who did the wood-splitting?

**McLendon:** My husband if he could quit bird hunting (laughter) long enough.

**White:** Bird hunting? I thought he was supposed to be farming. He liked to bird hunt, too, did he?

**McLendon:** He did. And he mechanicked some in the wintertime, and in the summer. He was a jack-of-all-trades.

**White:** And then farmed and then worked at the gin, too, huh?

**McLendon:** Well, he worked at the gin twenty-five years.

**White:** Is that right?

**McLendon:** He started working there not long after we moved here. We lived out at his daddy's one year, and then he started working at the gin the following year.

**White:** Well, did you buy that land out there, or did you inherit?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** You bought the eighty acres or whatever.

**McLendon:** Yeah. We bought forty acres. My daddy put up some acreage for us to be able to borrow the money.

**White:** Yeah. I believe you had to have collateral those days as well as these days, too.

**McLendon:** Uh-huh. And by the time that fall rolled around and we got our cotton picked, we had enough paid off though, till we could release his land.

**White:** Well, that's good.

**McLendon:** But it was my dad's brother that he borrowed the money from.  
(laughter)

**White:** Well, you still had to have that collateral. He probably—

**McLendon:** Amen! (laughter)

**White:** Well, there wasn't a lot of bank-loaning going on back during that time, either. After the Depression, I think the banks were pretty leery about (inaudible).

**McLendon:** We paid my Uncle Onus Buckley(?) 6 percent interest on that, but we paid for that first forty in three years. Then we bought forty from my daddy, and we paid for it in three years, but we did a lot of doing-without, too.

**White:** I tell you what. It'd be pretty hard to do that these days, to buy forty acres and try to finance it and pay for it in three—

**McLendon:** But there're not many people that would do without like we did, either.  
(laughter) So now they think—

**White:** Live at home and work at home, huh?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh.

**White:** And you raised most of your own food, I'm sure. Probably had to come into town and buy something, though, didn't you?

**McLendon:** We had plenty of chicken, and we had plenty of pork, but we bought our rice, sugar, and flour, things like that, but we didn't buy a lot other than that.

**White:** Did you come into Pinola to buy it?

**McLendon:** We went to New Hebron.

**White:** New Hebron.

**McLendon:** My father being raised down at Old Hebron, he wanted to go to New Hebron instead of Pinola.

**White:** Well, how far was New Hebron from your farm there, roughly?

**McLendon:** I imagine about ten miles.

**White:** What kind of merchants, what kind of stuff did you buy, merchandise did you buy at the store, then? You mentioned a couple of things.

**McLendon:** Well, that was the majority of what. We bought sugar, coffee, and tea, but we had our own milk and chickens and hogs of course.

**White:** And eggs probably.

**McLendon:** And eggs, yes.

**White:** Did you have a smokehouse?

**McLendon:** Yes, we did. We smoked meat in it, and the sausage and the ham and the bacon, you know, and it was so much better than you get, now.

**White:** Well, can you tell a little bit about what hog-killing time was like? Carrying stuff to the smokehouse. What part did you play in that?

**McLendon:** Well, I helped to cut the meat up mostly. But I cooked for the gang, whoever they were. Neighbors would come in and help with the hog-killing. Then we would help them, and we—

**White:** Didn't you kind of wait till cold weather?

**McLendon:** Yeah. You had to wait till it was pretty cold, or you wouldn't be able to keep the meat. But you always salted the meat down, put a lot of salt in it in the meat box, let it stay there for a while, and then you would hang it on a hanger and smoke it with hickory smoke.

**White:** What'd they have, a fire going in there?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** At all times?

**McLendon:** Yes, you had—

**White:** Who tended to that? Who put the—

**McLendon:** My husband.

**White:** Put the chips on it.

**McLendon:** Douglas.

**White:** Kept it raked a little so it'd just smolder and smoke in there.

**McLendon:** Yes.

**McLendon:** And it was so good. But we smoked sausage in there and ham and bacon, and it was so much better than we get today.

**White:** Did you eat much beef?

**McLendon:** No. I don't know why, but we didn't kill many beef to eat. But we just depended on our pork and chickens.

**White:** You probably sold the cows at certain points, didn't you?

**McLendon:** Yeah, we did. We did.

**White:** It might have been a little more economical to sell them than it—

**McLendon:** But we didn't have very many cattle.

**White:** Did you sell any of the hogs?

**McLendon:** No.

**White:** Just grew it mostly for—

**McLendon:** We just ate them.

**White:** For food, huh?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh.

**White:** There's not a thing wrong with that; I'll guarantee you. I love country-cured ham.

**McLendon:** Amen.

**White:** Sure is good. I don't know how good for us it is these days, though.

**McLendon:** Well, it is good.

**White:** What do you remember mostly, after you moved to Mendenhall, about the stores and things here. I know you were busy in your own—

**McLendon:** To Pinola, you mean?

**White:** In Pinola, I'm sorry. What was it like when you moved here? What was it like moving to town from the country?

**McLendon:** Well, for one thing, we had a bathtub (laughter) where we had always—

**White:** That does make a difference. (laughter)

**McLendon:** We had a zinc washtub out at Stonewall.

**White:** A zinc washtub.

**McLendon:** Uh-huh.

**White:** And you fill it with hot water.

**McLendon:** And we bathed in that, yes. Well, I believe the Bushes had the store out here by our house.

**White:** That's J.W. and Charles Bush?

**McLendon:** J.W. and Charles, and this—

**White:** Y'all moved here, you said, 1950?

**McLendon:** Six.

**White:** Six.

**McLendon:** Um-hm, at Christmas, on Christmas Day. And Mr. Guy Grantham(?), Mr. Charlie Allen(?), Mr. George Allen(?).

**White:** They had general merchandise stores.

**McLendon:** Um-hm. And I don't remember what year—

**White:** Willie Little(?), I believe had a store down there.

**McLendon:** Yes, he did. Did I say Charles Allen, George Allen?

**White:** Yes, you did. Yes.

**McLendon:** OK.

**White:** And the post office was here on Main Street.

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** And was in the old building here, which—

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** We've since had a new post office built here, nice, brick building.

**McLendon:** Yes, and it's much bigger than the one we had down there. But anyway, we had a restaurant here. Mrs. Lily Moore(?) operated the restaurant.

**White:** Pretty good lunch?

**McLendon:** Doug enjoyed it. We didn't get any of that. (laughter) But he enjoyed it when he worked at the gin. But you know Mr. Luther; he just ate his Ritz Crackers.

**White:** Luther who?

**McLendon:** Mr. Luther Brown.

**White:** Oh, he did?

**McLendon:** That owned the gin.

**White:** He didn't indulge in a large lunch, then, huh?

**McLendon:** He just snacked on Ritz Crackers, didn't he, Doug? (laughter) Probably some coffee with it, something. But he was a fine man.

**White:** Was the pickle shed still going here in [19]56?

**McLendon:** Yes, I think it was.

**White:** Oh! I meant to ask you earlier. Did y'all ever raise any cucumbers and bring them in?

**McLendon:** We did. We did for a year or two.

**White:** When you were farming out at Stonewall?

**McLendon:** But that was tough on your back. (laughter)

**White:** Well, it's tough on your hands, picking cucumbers, too, if I remember rightly.

**McLendon:** It certainly was.

**White:** They're pretty heavy load (inaudible).

**McLendon:** But we had them about two years was all, wasn't it, Doug?

**White:** And brought them in here? I've forgotten the name of that pickling shed, if it had a name. It was—

**McLendon:** Doug, what was the name of the pickling shed? Can you remember?

**Doug McLendon:** No.

**White:** It was run by the Bushes.

**McLendon:** Somebody from Laurel, wasn't it?

**White:** Yeah. And Henry Bush, it was close to Henry Bush's place down here, and I think he worked there or managed it or something.

**McLendon:** He managed it.

**White:** But it was part of, if I remember rightly, it was part of Brown and Miller (inaudible).

**McLendon:** Our son Joe worked there.

**White:** During the summers?

**McLendon:** Some. I don't know how many summers that he did work there.

**White:** It was open just in the summer, but I mean, the pickles, they kept the pickles in the brine there. I think the railroad cars came and picked them up or something,

didn't they? After they'd been there so long, but pretty tough work, growing cucumbers, huh?

**McLendon:** And we did have a automobile. In other words sold automobiles, new automobiles, Mr. Henry Albritton(?) over there.

**White:** Here in Pinola?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh.

**White:** I didn't know that.

**McLendon:** And somebody had some foreign cars here. What kind were they, Doug? I keep asking him. I shouldn't.

**White:** I didn't realize there was a dealership here.

**McLendon:** I guess that's what you call it.

**White:** Back during the [19]50s?

**McLendon:** I don't know what year it would have been. It was not too long after we moved here, I don't—(End of digital file named tape one, side one. Beginning of digital file named tape one, side two.)

**White:** —dealership was here in [19]56. Where did you say they were on display?

**McLendon:** On the left side of the street down there.

**White:** Mr. George Allen's store, close to Mr. George?

**McLendon:** Was Mr. George store gone then? I guess it was between Charles Allen and him, somewhere in there. Anyhow, they displayed them here on the highway, on the left side of the road.

**White:** Well, there's an empty lot or two down through there. Was the blacksmith's shop still going here when you moved in?

**McLendon:** Yes, it was.

**White:** Do you remember coming into the blacksmith's shop when y'all were farming or anything? Did you keep horses or anything that you—

**McLendon:** Doug did.



**White:** Probably had to have a few horses shoed there or some shoes made and things like that. You didn't have any business much at the blacksmith's shop, though, huh, Ms. Irene?

**McLendon:** No, I didn't have any there. (laughter)

**White:** What was the man's name who ran that? Mr. Albritton(?)?

**McLendon:** Yeah, he was Albritton, but what was his name, Doug?

**White:** You can answer that, Doug, if you remember it. Jesse(?) Albritton. I happened to remember it all of a sudden.

**McLendon:** Yes, you did.

**White:** I went in there when I was a child here. I used to be fascinated by that.

**McLendon:** And Doug would go around there and help him some, and he told Doug when he died that that blacksmith shop would be his, but he didn't tell anybody else. (laughter)

**White:** So it just sat there, didn't it?

**McLendon:** In other words, it stayed in the family.

**White:** Well, there was a lot of pulpwood business going on—

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** —then, too. Y'all never did cut any trees?

**McLendon:** No.

**White:** Or anything like that out there?

**McLendon:** Not then. We did later, but anyway I don't know what year we sold our first timber, but it was way later.

**White:** Oh, on your farm out there?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh.

**White:** What was it like being a merchant in Pinola? There wasn't a bank here. Where'd you do your banking business?

**McLendon:** At People's Bank at Mendenhall.

**White:** In Mendenhall. Had to drive to Mendenhall to do your banking business for the store.

**McLendon:** Yes. We brought our money home at night.

**White:** Did you do a credit business?

**McLendon:** Very much so. (laughter)

**White:** How did you end up when you finally closed your store and sold out? Did you end up pretty—

**McLendon:** Well, my husband kept letting more and more people get stuff on credit.

**White:** Don't mention any names. (laughter) In other words, all the bills didn't get paid when you closed? Is that what you're saying?

**McLendon:** No. Somebody would come in and say, "I'll pay you. I would like credit for this week, and I'll pay you when this, end of this week." And so forth, but a lot of them never did pay, but—

**White:** When did y'all retire and close out the store?

**McLendon:** I don't remember what year. Do you, Doug?

**Doug McLendon:** No, I don't.

**McLendon:** But we were there eight years is all I know. But Doug just loved to give it to some people. (laughter) No. Very often somebody would call us and tell us, "Unless you want to lose it, don't let so-and-so on your books," is the way they put it. (laughter) And I'd say, "Now, Doug, so-and-so called me." He stayed on the farm a lot. And said, "Don't let so-and-so have credit unless you want to lose it." Sure enough he'd let them, and he lost it.

**White:** Somebody was speaking from experience, there, I think.

**McLendon:** Yes. (laughter)

**White:** Well, what was the town life like during the [19]50s and [19]60s and even the [19]70s around here? The school was still going up until the mid-1970s

**McLendon:** Seventy-six, I believe was their last year. Was it?

**White:** A lot of kids came into town, I would imagine, for school, and might have done a little bit of shopping around here.

**McLendon:** Well, I tell you. When we were living out there; I was a kid. In other words we came to the gin with my father, and on the first bale of cotton that he carried to the gin, and he always bought us a little dime box of marshmallows (laughter) and some ice cream. But it would be so cold. He would leave home about two o'clock in the night, carrying cotton to the gin, trying to get ahead of a lot of them because it was pretty slow to gin.

**White:** Yeah. You'd have to sit here all day if you didn't get earlier.

**McLendon:** But I remember seeing my daddy go from Mr. Guy Grantham's to Mr. Charlie Allen and Mr. George Allen's stores. They bought cotton, and he was trying to get the best price.

**White:** All three of them bought cotton.

**McLendon:** Uh-huh.

**White:** I didn't realize there was that much—

**McLendon:** Yes, there were—

**White:** It wasn't a lot of competition, wasn't a lot of difference in the prices, was there?

**McLendon:** No. (laughter)

**White:** Do you remember what cotton was selling for per bale or pound when y'all were raising it in earlier years?

**McLendon:** I think about the cheapest we ever sold it, it was about \$40 for a five-hundred-pound bale.

**White:** A lot of hard work went into that bale, didn't it?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** How many pounds could you pick in a day when you were picking? Do you know?

**McLendon:** I didn't pick, after I married, too much. (laughter) I had my hands full.

**White:** I imagine so.

**McLendon:** But anyhow, I could out-pick most anybody.

**White:** You had said that, that day. That's the reason I was curious if you ever knew about how many pounds you picked.

**McLendon:** I think I picked more later on. In other words, one year I decided I wanted me a sewing machine.

**White:** Had to have a reason, huh?

**McLendon:** Yes. And so I went out after we would get ours picked, and pick cotton for Oliver Lee or Mr. Bud Lee, his father. I don't know which it was. And I could pick as much as 300 pounds in a day, and that was more than most men could pick.

**White:** That's pretty good (inaudible).

**McLendon:** But I dragged that sack out, and it was just stuffed, about a six-foot sack, just packed till it, you could bounce on it.

**White:** Well, that sewing machine probably looked pretty good after picking that much cotton.

**McLendon:** Well, at that time you couldn't buy a new one. You had to buy a used one if you had one, and—

**White:** Was this after the war?

**McLendon:** I guess it was. But anyhow, I paid \$75 for that used one, and I don't remember what I got for picking cotton. But that's why I was picking for other people, trying to get me a sewing machine.

**White:** Well, you learned enough on that that you got ten or fifteen years work at a sewing factory out of it. (laughter) You might have regretted buying that sewing machine before it was over with. I don't know. Did you make your own clothes?

**McLendon:** Not much. I was older by the time that I got a sewing machine, and I was working, didn't have time to do that. But anyway, I just didn't ever make many garments. I just did my mending and such as that.

**White:** Well, we were talking about the school. Who were the principals or teachers that you think made an impression on you during your years coming up through schools?

**McLendon:** I think Miss Idouma Bishop(?) had more impression on my life and most everybody else's that I knew of.

**White:** Here in Pinola school?

**McLendon:** Um-hm.

**White:** What did she teach?

**McLendon:** Well, she taught a little of everything. She taught science, and I know I took typing. They just had typing one year while I was going to school, and I took typing under her, and I did twice as many words as the average person could in that one year. But I didn't ever use that experience. (laughter)

**White:** You didn't ever go to work as a typist, huh?

**McLendon:** But Miss Bishop taught people that no matter how pretty you were or anything like that, you could get ahead if you got an education. But she had a grave impression on people.

**White:** There are always a couple of real good teachers. You mentioned Mr. Stanley Berry(?) earlier.

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** He was a very good teacher (inaudible).

**McLendon:** Mrs. Charlie Allen was a good one, too, but she didn't try to encourage you as much.

**White:** You had to work on your own in there, huh?

**McLendon:** Uh-huh. But I didn't go to school to her. My children did. But she was a good teacher.

**White:** I would imagine the town has missed the school since it's closed.

**McLendon:** Oh, yes, very much so.

**White:** Has it made a difference? How has it made a difference in the town?

**McLendon:** I don't know. It just being there was one thing. But the kids would go to town to get refreshments and such, too. I know we bought whatever we could get the most food (laughter) whenever we would go to town, when I was going to school here. We would get a Baby-Ruth or a Stage Plank or something like that.

**White:** And try to stretch it?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** Miss Maggie Garret(?) I think owned a store here (inaudible).

**McLendon:** Yes, she did.

**White:** (Inaudible) those years, too. I was trying to think of who else might—

**McLendon:** Her father owned a drugstore down there, did he not?

**White:** I really can't remember. I think so.

**McLendon:** Before we moved up here.

**White:** I believe that's right.

**McLendon:** But one time my dad carried the men that worked for him on the farm. In other words he paid for them to have an ice cream cone, and there was one of the men that was a sharecropper there that he had never eat ice cream from a cone. And when he finished his, he carried his little cone back in there and said, "Lady, here's your little bowl back." (laughter)

**White:** Wasn't much of a bowl, was it?

**McLendon:** And my uncle was a wage hand, I think they called him, and Howard Presswood(?) was, and they had the most fun over that. My goodness. (laughter) They were there. Daddy'd set them up, too.

**White:** Well, tell me about the picture show. Did you go to the picture show much when the movies, when you were growing up?

**McLendon:** Well, we went to see *Gone With the Wind*, and that was about it that I seen.

**White:** Where did you see that? Where was that shown?

**McLendon:** At the Sanatorium. We went out there on a school bus.

**White:** Was it still a tuberculosis sanatorium then?

**McLendon:** Yes, it was, uh-huh.

**White:** And the public went into the theater when it was still a tuberculosis sanatorium? I didn't realize that because I thought most people had such a fear of the spread of tuberculosis. (Inaudible) sanatorium down between Mendenhall and Magee, but it was open to the general public when it was still an active sanatorium?

**McLendon:** Um-hm.

**White:** I guess—

**McLendon:** Yes, it was.

**White:** The treatment had gotten a lot better, and people were probably not nearly as afraid.

**McLendon:** Well, I had a first cousin that was down there with TB, and that was Minnie D. Lee(?), Robert Lee's wife. And I think she just worked so hard and got herself all run down and wound up with it—I feel like—when her baby was little. And she didn't get much sleep. He had colic all time, and I think she just got so rundown, and that hopped on her.

**White:** But I know there was a picture show out of the back of the service station that you operated one time.

**McLendon:** No, we didn't—

**White:** You didn't go to that one. You didn't go to the tent show?

**McLendon:** In other words, we went to it a time or two, didn't we, Doug? But that was after we were—our kids came along.

**White:** Yeah. Well, I can't remember—

**McLendon:** But that was a pretty open place. It was cold in the winter, but they had a big crowd that went there.

**White:** The tent show, you're talking about.

**McLendon:** No. That was in the building behind where the store was.

**White:** Oh, the one in the store, we're talking about now.

**McLendon:** Uh-huh, yes. I don't remember him having a tent show here.

**White:** He had a tent show.

**McLendon:** I know, but not here.

**White:** It wasn't here. He carried it to Rockport and all and around. I know because I had to work with him some. (laughter) We had to put that tent up.

**McLendon:** Well, Billy Chapel(?) worked with him some. I remember.

**White:** I had forgotten that, and that was J.E. White, called Snook(?).

**McLendon:** Yeah. Snook White.

**White:** But when you operated the service station in that building—

**McLendon:** It was not there anymore.

**White:** —you didn't operate the theater.

**McLendon:** No. We kept tires back there.

**White:** Oh. It had been sold out. All the seats and everything had been moved then, huh?

**McLendon:** Yes, um-hm.

**White:** Yes. I do remember that when I was growing up. That was a pretty cold place sometimes.

**McLendon:** It was. But later on we carried our kids to New Hebron to the movies. Every Saturday evening we went down there, and we got their hair cut about every two weeks, and then we would go to the movies after that. We'd get us a hamburger for supper.

**White:** You went to the movies with them, too.

**McLendon:** Um-hm. And we enjoyed it.

**White:** That was the night out, huh?

**McLendon:** That was a pretty nice place for it. They had a movie theater.

**White:** Well, what are your memories of the World War II era? What were they like around here? Did the war affect your lives very much?

**McLendon:** Well, they had rationing, and that affected us a lot.

**White:** The sugar and stuff that you bought.

**McLendon:** You couldn't get but one pair of shoes a year unless you ordered them from Sears Roebuck, and if they wore out on you, you could send them back and get a new pair. (laughter)

**White:** Really?

**McLendon:** Yes. (laughter)



**White:** That was the only place you could get another pair.

**McLendon:** That's all I knew about, but anyway, I don't remember us sending any back, but I knew it was being done.

**White:** Any of your relatives and friends go off to war?

**McLendon:** Well, Doug got by, and my brothers, I believe Guy went, but he didn't stay in there long. They sent him back home. He was not very well, but none of our close family was in that war. I was afraid Doug was going to have to go, but him farming and being a father, too, it got him by. But he would have had to go if it had stayed on any longer.

**White:** And you wouldn't have enjoyed working at that gin in his place, I don't imagine. (laughter)

**McLendon:** No, I don't think I would. I don't think I could have done that.

**White:** Well, what's Pinola like today?

**McLendon:** Well, it's a warm, little town, but they just very few people here.

**White:** Very few children since the school closed.

**McLendon:** None, hardly.

**White:** They travel probably either to Union to schools; some go to Mendenhall. I don't know exactly where the school district line is.

**McLendon:** Well, in other words, they go to Simpson Central that is—

**White:** That's the one in Union?

**McLendon:** —in Union or Mendenhall, Magee.

**White:** Just depends on where they live, out from Pinola.

**McLendon:** And what age they are, what grade they're in.

**White:** Well, did you go to the Pinola reunion yesterday?

**McLendon:** Yes, I did, and I enjoyed it.

**White:** I was not able to go. Can you tell me about it? How many people were there? What went on?

**McLendon:** Oh, I don't have any idea how many there were, but they was a nice crowd.

**White:** This is an annual reunion every year, even though the school is closed down.

**McLendon:** Absolutely.

**White:** There's something open for every class.

**McLendon:** It's been going on for years, but it's very impressive. And I tell you; that Joe Cone(?), he speaks near about every year. And he needs to get paid for his comedy. (laughter) He just—

**White:** He's a good speaker, huh?

**McLendon:** He's a real comedian.

**White:** You wouldn't have a guess as to how many people come back?

**McLendon:** I surely wouldn't.

**White:** Was it an auditorium full?

**McLendon:** No. It's more than half full, though.

**White:** Are they at the Indianola High School Auditorium this year?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** What kind of condition is it in?

**McLendon:** Well, the ceiling is beginning to drop in one place, but other than that, the interior is pretty good. They've been able to keep it up with donations pretty well, but they got a grant from the government.

**White:** I had heard something about that yesterday.

**McLendon:** I forgot just what, two hundred and, was it seventy-five thousand? I believe or something like that.

**White:** That ought to pretty much restore that building.

**McLendon:** It ought to.

**White:** Is that what they plan to do with it, restore the building?

**McLendon:** I can't remember just how much it was, but they do plan to restore it.

**White:** Well, that's good. You hate to lose all the landmarks around here.

**McLendon:** Well, I just hope that it will be kept there for a long time. There's a lot of sentimental value in that building.

**White:** Well, I certainly enjoyed visiting with you and happy anniversary to you tomorrow, I believe it is.

**McLendon:** Well, thank you. (laughter)

**White:** Thank you very much. (brief interruption) I did want to ask you one more question about education, though, both about Stonewall and about Pinola, if you had any special memories or anything you wanted to say about the schools. Who graduated with you at [Pinola]?

**McLendon:** Pinola? Verna Albritton(?), Luther Blackman(?), Annabelle Brown(?), Irene Buckley, which is me, Bessie Bush(?), Gladys Bush(?), Truitt Bush(?), Ray Chandler(?), Redus Chandler(?), Wilmer Kline(?), James Donald(?), Gwendolyn Grivvy(?), Catherine Lee(?), Vivian Love(?), Maudie Parker(?), and Dorothy Slay(?). They was thirteen of us.

**White:** Thirteen in the graduating class.

**McLendon:** Yes, in 1938.

**White:** What about Stonewall School? Did you have any, do you remember some of your classmates from there? (laughter)

**McLendon:** I don't think I—

**White:** You had said something earlier about Mr. Whitfield. What connection did he have with Stonewall?

**McLendon:** Well, now, he was there long before I was.

**White:** Was he a principal or something?

**McLendon:** He was, and I tell you. I had a picture of him that was taken at Old Westville, and I knew who he was on that.

**White:** Was he from Old Westville originally?

**McLendon:** Yes.

**White:** Did he teach over there?

**McLendon:** Well, I don't know if that was originally or not, but his father lived there. But I don't know how long. But anyhow, that was not in my day. That was when some of my older aunts and uncles were there. When I kept looking at him, trying to figure out who that teacher was—see, none of these teachers had names on them. You just have to try to find out who they are, and it's not easy because most all of them are dead, that went to school there at that time. But I kept looking at that man behind the group of students, and I said, "Well, he just looks so familiar." So one night about two o'clock, all of a sudden I waked up, and I said, "Henry Whitfield!" (laughter)

**White:** And he later became governor.

**McLendon:** He favored himself enough even at a different age probably.

**White:** Was he principal, or was he just a teacher at Stonewall?

**McLendon:** I don't know for sure, but he was with my oldest aunts and uncles of the Fortenberry family; he was teaching.

**White:** And then he later became governor.

**McLendon:** Uh-huh. And I think that his father had been a principal before he was over there.

**White:** At Old Westville.

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

**White:** Oh, at Stonewall, you're talking about.

**McLendon:** At Old Westville, but Whitfield was at Stonewall, and he might have been at Westville, too.

**White:** Well, Old Westville pretty much died out about 1900, didn't it? When they moved the courthouse.

**McLendon:** Oh, yes.

**White:** That courthouse burned (inaudible).

**McLendon:** See, I don't remember anything about it.

**White:** No, no. I know you wouldn't remember that. I was just trying to—for the archives (inaudible).

**McLendon:** It did. When the railroad came through here, that's what killed Westville.

**White:** And that's when Pinola started growing a little bit, and Edna(?), which later became Mendenhall started growing.

**McLendon:** Absolutely. But anyhow, the people from around here hated to give up, they said. Of course I just don't remember that.

**White:** Well, you remember how much they hated to give up the school here in [19]76.

**McLendon:** Well, I read about it.

**White:** No, I mean the Pinola school.

**McLendon:** Yeah, absolutely.

**White:** And you're still expressing regret over that.

**McLendon:** We were expressing ourselves then, but it didn't do any good. (laughter)

**White:** Well, I do appreciate you talking to us. Is there anything else you'd like to say about education in Simpson County?

**McLendon:** Well, if he hadn't have come along, I probably would got a better education.

**White:** Mr. Douglas, you're talking about?

**McLendon:** Yes. (laughter) Yeah. But anyway, I just got my high school education, and that's it.

**White:** Well, I appreciate you talking with us, once again. Thank you.

**McLendon:** Well, thank you.

(end of interview)