

# Mississippi Oral History Program

Simpson County Historical and Genealogical  
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Mary Maude Spell

Interviewer: Joe White

Volume 1217, Part 28  
2003

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*An Oral History with Mary Maude Spell, Volume 1217, Part 28*

Interviewer: Joe White

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## Biography

Mary Maude Spell was born to George Washington Spell and Lu Ella Shorter between Braxton and Harrisville in January 1908. Spell was born in the house built by her great-grandfather in 1833; where she has remained to date at the time of the interview. Spell is one of seven children, including three girls and four boys. Her oldest brother died during a cyclone in 1921. She has lived her entire life near Braxton and Harrisville, with the exception of the winter of 1924 when she stayed with her aunt in Jackson and worked at Kennington's department store. Spell went to New Zion School until the ninth grade, and then to Braxton, before finally graduating from Harrisville High School. Due to her mother's poor health, Mary stayed home to tend to her after graduating high school, instead of moving to Memphis, TN with a friend.

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AN ORAL HISTORY  
with  
MARY MAUDE SPELL

*This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi Simpson County Project. The interview is with Mary Spell and is taking place on August 4, 2003. The interviewer is Joe White.*

**White:** (brief silence on recording) My name is Joe White. Today is Monday, August 4, 2003. This interview is conducted under a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council as a part of the [Mississippi] Oral History Project directed by The University of Southern Mississippi. Today we are interviewing Ms. Mary Maude Spell at her home between Braxton and Harrisville. I believe that's actually a Braxton mail route, but she went to school for a number of years in Harrisville. Ms. Spell was born January the sixth, 1908. I'm going to stop this tape. (brief interruption) You weren't born in Pinola, though, were you?

**Spell:** Born right here in this house.

**White:** Born right here in this house—years old?

**Spell:** I don't know exactly how old this house is.

**White:** Don't know exactly when it was built.

**Spell:** They settled here (inaudible) 1833 (inaudible).

**White:** Eighteen thirty-three? Was that your grandfather, your great-grandfather?

**Spell:** My great-grandfather was the one that built here. I can go back and name my grandfather back to the fifth generation behind me.

**White:** Let's do it. Let's do it just for fun. Can you, really? (laughter)

**Spell:** (Inaudible) (laughter) I don't remember—I remember their names, but that's all I remember (inaudible).

**White:** Just whatever you can remember. When were you born?

**Spell:** I (inaudible) if I knew you was going to ask. I had it already on record, but I don't know where it's at.

**White:** Well, we'll dig that up. When were you born, Ms. Spell?

**Spell:** Nineteen hundred and eight, January the sixth.

**White:** January the sixth. And you were born here, in this house, huh?

**Spell:** I'll be ninety-six years old this coming January.

**White:** And doing right well, it looks like, too. (laughter)

**Spell:** That's what everybody says.

**White:** I think you're doing right well. Have you visited with all those politicians whose cards I see out there in the hall? Do many politicians come by here and talk to you?

**Spell:** I hadn't talked to a one of them. They just left the cards.

**White:** Is that right? Well, that's a smart thing to do.

**Spell:** They going to have elections tomorrow.

**White:** Right.

**Spell:** I don't know none of the candidates.

**White:** Is that right?

**Spell:** (Inaudible) two or three of them, and that's all.

**White:** Well, two or three is probably about all you really need to know, isn't it? (laughter)

**Spell:** That's the one I'm going to vote for, too. (laughter)

**White:** Well, let's get off elections and back to your house and family here. You were born in this house, literally, huh? What was your dad and mother's names?

**Spell:** His name was George. Well, George Washington was his really long name, but we always just called him George Spell.

**White:** George W. Spell. And where was he born? Right around here?

**Spell:** He was born here, too.

**White:** Born in this house, too?

**Spell:** (Inaudible) this house first was right out there, built right out just as the hill goes to go down like that. It's right out there, and that's where it was first. Well, I

guess he was born there. Of course all the older kids was, but he was down the line, towards the (inaudible).

**White:** He was one of the younger ones, huh?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. And he don't remember nothing about being (inaudible), but my oldest uncle said that he remembers them moving that house from there out here.

**White:** Well, I'll be. Why did they move it?

**Spell:** Dawsey(?) Spell that lives in Georgetown, owned that big store down—well, him and my daddy owned the store first out here, and he married; he didn't marry for a long time, and when he married, him and Aunt Vera(?) went to Georgia, Harrisville, and put them a store up, and he sold Daddy his part out here in this one, see? They had stores all out, and (inaudible) was right up here. I could talk to them from here, near about it.

**White:** Is that right?

**Spell:** They had a store out there and a store out here.

**White:** The store here was pretty much across the road here, wasn't it?

**Spell:** It was right across, right over there, right where this road turns and goes up through that—

**White:** That's what I was thinking. What was your mother's name?

**Spell:** Lu Ella, she was Lu Ella Shorter.

**White:** Lu Ella Shorter. You remember when she was born? Or when they were married? I'm sorry. I asked you the wrong question there.

**Spell:** I don't know nothing about that. I don't remember when Mama was born. (laughter)

**White:** Well, I didn't mean to ask you when she was born. I wouldn't have remembered when my mother was born, either. (laughter) I had it on this biographical sheet that was filled out that they were married September 21, 1897, so you must have looked up that information earlier. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

**Spell:** Uh-huh.

**White:** Can you name them?

**Spell:** I had four brothers. Let's see, now. They was three girls, four boys. We had seven children in the family.

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

**Spell:** Well, the oldest one was Willie(?). The next one was Wilbert(?). And the next one was Barnard(?). And then the next one was me. Did I name four boys? And the next one was Bea(?), and the next one was my other sister Hallie(?).

**White:** Hattie?

**Spell:** Hallie O'Dell(?).

**White:** Hallie O'Dell. I think we left a boy out there somewhere. I believe there was another. Who was the youngest boy?

**Spell:** Estus(?) come along about fifteen years behind me.

**White:** Estus. Yeah, you didn't mention him. I thought I was counting. Fifteen years after you, huh? (laughter)

**Spell:** He was way down the line.

**White:** And you've always lived on this place here or somewhere close to it, huh?

**Spell:** I've always lived right here.

**White:** Well, somebody told me when I was riding over here to interview you, that you got away from here one time for a short period of time and lived somewhere else.

**Spell:** Oh, I went to Jackson to see my aunt and them and worked up there in that new outfit, the Kenningtons had built from New York down here.

**White:** Kennington's?

**Spell:** I was about sixteen years old then.

**White:** Let's see, sixteen years old, that would have been about 1924?

**Spell:** And I just worked out one winter.

**White:** What kind of place was it? Kennington's?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. In that big balcony he had built up there.



**White:** Was that at the department store, Kennington's Department Store in Jackson on Capitol Street? Is it on Capitol Street?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. Kennington's Store was six stories high, right on the corner there, and the first block, coming down from the Capitol, the Old Capitol.

**White:** That's a pretty building, a real pretty building.

**Spell:** And that balcony was built, the first floor, way up high, and then you went on up (inaudible). And it was built about halfway, not hardly halfway, back, and the elevator was back there. And the elevator run up like that, and they built that big thing up there. And you could see all out there on Capitol Street.

**White:** What made you decide to go up there and work?

**Spell:** I didn't decide that. My cousin that moved from here up (inaudible). We stayed together all the time. And when they moved up there, she wanted me to go stay with her every week. And we just might near stayed together. And when she come up there, and they was putting out the things for workers, they already had some started working there, and they needed another one. And they put out something, "Come in and (inaudible)," for that. And I just happened to be up there. And I said, "I don't want that job. I can't do that." I never had worked at nothing. (laughter) And she, "Yes, you can. You smart enough to do that. You can do that." I said, "I ain't smart enough to do that. That come out of New York, and I ain't smart enough to be up there." (laughter) And she (inaudible).

**White:** You did it, though, huh?

**Spell:** I went with her up there to satisfy her and registered for that job that morning. Well, when we got up there, one of those boys was a doctor, and that's the one we went to to register, you know?

**White:** One of the Kenningtons?

**Spell:** Um-hm. (Inaudible) Kenningtons was (inaudible). He said, "Well, it's not eight o'clock yet, and they's already been fifty-two that put they application in." (laughter) I laughed, and it wasn't funny to her too much. I laughed, and I said, "Well, good. (Inaudible) be putting no application in. And I said that, and I ain't nothing but a young'un. That probably was people older and been doing that kind of work no telling how long. But I went on and put it in anyhow. I said, "Let it go. Whatever (inaudible). I ain't going to get that job no how." And I was tickled (inaudible). I had already got my clothes ready to go to school in Johns(?). I was going out there to school. And Buford(?), that's his uncle, (inaudible); he was going out there, too. And she begged Mr. Fiddleford(?), and she'd had a serious operation on her head. I said, "She might not live to go through anymore, so I better just go ahead and do it, if I get it. I ain't going to get it no how, but she can't say nothing if I

don't go like this." So when I got back up to (inaudible), she had a little pattern shop she worked in down there under that thing. And before we could get that down into that little pattern outfit, that phone rung up there, said, "Tell Miss Spell to come back to the office." And I said, "Oh?" (laughter) And he was just a young'un and wasn't nary another young'un there, and the rest of them was all big folks and older. So I went back up there and Mr. Roberts said, "You got it." (laughter)

**White:** Didn't take them long to decide, did it?

**Spell:** Just time I went up, come down. But I made pretty good. I got to be on the one where they made his store picture, you know like a theater, showed all of his businesses? I got to be the main one in that (inaudible).

**White:** Is that right? Was that right when they opened up here? Were they already open before you went up there?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. They done started to working there. They just wanted another hand.

**White:** How much money did you make? You remember? (laughter)

**Spell:** I remember that well. (Inaudible) forty dollars. See, they expected you to get tips and things.

**White:** Forty dollars how often? A month?

**Spell:** That was your salary for a month.

**White:** For a month. I had an aunt who started school-teaching about the same time, about 192[6], and she made forty dollars a month school-teaching then, too. Said she had to pay twenty-eight of that to live with somebody while she was school-teaching. But she enjoyed that twelve dollars a month she had left. I guarantee you. (laughter) Well, you talked about some uncles and stuff. You named your brothers and sisters. How many brothers and sisters did your mom and dad have? Do you know?

**Spell:** I can think back and get them, maybe. My mama's—Carrie(?) may have to help me name them. (laughter)

**White:** Just the ones you can think of.

**Spell:** Well, Uncle Charlie, Uncle Dutch(?).

**White:** This is your mama's brothers?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. The oldest one was Uncle Charlie, I think, and Uncle Dutch, and Uncle Johnnie(?), and Uncle George, and Uncle Jesse(?), and Uncle Doc(?). Did that

get them all? That was the brothers. And the sisters was Aunt Fronie(?), and Aunt Mary, and Aunt—what's Edna's mama's name?

**White:** Aunt Fanny(?)?

**Spell:** Yeah, Fanny.

**White:** Fanny? Well, what about your dad? Did he have brothers and sisters?

**Spell:** Who?

**White:** Your daddy's brothers and sisters?

**Spell:** Yeah, he had. They was twelve in that family.

**White:** Ooh! (laughter)

**Spell:** But two of them died when they was just about two years old or three, had some kind of disease, come through. They didn't know how to do them things then like they—but his oldest brother was Uncle Aaron(?) Spell, and Uncle Doss(?) Spell, and Uncle Bob(?) Spell. Did that get them all?

**White:** That's three.

**Spell:** Uncle Aaron Spell, did I call him? Is that all of them?

**Unknown voice:** That's all the boys, yeah.

**Spell:** I think it was four boys, and then there was Aunt Jane was the oldest one, and then Aunt, one that lived out at Braxton in that big house they's talking about. What was her name?

**Unknown voice:** Matilda Butler.

**Spell:** No, that was the second; that was Aunt (inaudible), wasn't it? But that was Aunt Ted(?) that lives outside of Braxton. Let's see; there's eight. Aunt Jane and Aunt Ted and Aunt Lu(?), and Aunt Fan(?). That's four of them, ain't it? I got two more of them. Aunt Lil(?) and Aunt Bet(?).

**White:** We pulling on your memory strings today, aren't we? We making you remember some folks today, aren't we?

**Unknown voice:** Aunt Ted was Matilda, was her name.

**Spell:** Yeah, Aunt Ted, that was her name.

**White:** Do you remember hearing what your grandparents' names were? Do you remember your grandparents?

**Spell:** Mother's (inaudible) was named John, no. It was John or Sean(?) one; I can't think of his name, but they was one named Joseph, one named Josiah(?), and that was my granddaddy.

**White:** Your granddaddy was Josiah.

**Spell:** And (inaudible) was his daddy. I guess this other one come on up ahead of them, but I can't think of his name.

**White:** That would be the fifth generation. Was it John?

**Spell:** Something like that.

**White:** You had mentioned John earlier. I think that must have been it. Do you remember your grandparents?

**Spell:** My grandpa?

**White:** Right.

**Spell:** My grandpa on my daddy's side died when my Uncle Johnnie on my mother's side was born, that day.

**White:** Really? Same day, huh?

**Spell:** And (inaudible). (laughter)

**White:** You remember your grandmother?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. My grandmother on my daddy's side lived with us.

**White:** What was her name?

**Spell:** Mary Magdalene(?) I reckon. (laughter)

**White:** That's what y'all called her, anyway, huh? Mary Magdalene.

**Spell:** Her name was Mary. I don't know if it was Mary Kathleen or Katherine.

**White:** Mary Katharine.

**Spell:** But anyway, it was Mary.

**White:** What did y'all call her, just Grandma? Or did you have a special name?

**Spell:** We called her Grandma. Grandpa, I didn't know (inaudible). I never did—we kept his picture till one of his grandyoung'uns swiped it and carried it to Jenner(?), Louisiana, and I ain't never got that little gal to bring that picture back here. (laughter)

**White:** That's a bad thing about family, isn't it? They'll take pictures off sometimes when they ought to make copies of them.

**Spell:** Yeah. We've got pictures of him on that picture, sitting on tables, you know? On different tables, where they take pictures, and they have family out there, and that picture'd be on there. And that's the only one we got of him.

**White:** Well, I'll be.

**Spell:** But this past year when I had a birthday, about two years ago, ain't it? I think. They brought me a picture of my grandma and grandpa that I'd never seen or heard of.

**White:** Well, did you steal it back?

**Spell:** No. (laughter) The girl that got a hold to it, she don't know how her niece had got that picture from somewhere. She said, "I don't know where in the world she got that picture from, and we ain't never heard of it before." Well, she's the one come up with the picture, and this girl, my cousin, she got that picture negative from her and had her one made. Then she had me a big enlargement made.

**White:** Well, good. That's the way to do it, now. Make copies of them. That makes it a lot easier. You were talking about remembering your grandma. She lived with you when y'all were small. What was she like?

**Spell:** What was she like? (laughter) Just Grandma. (laughter) She's kind of a heavyset woman, not too heavyset, but kind of built on that order.

**White:** Did she play with y'all any?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. Played with all the young'uns, and all the family's young'uns come here.

**White:** This was the home.

**Spell:** This was old home. This was Old Spell Home, and they all come here, and they used to come here and spend the nights, sometimes a week at the time.

**White:** Is that right?

**Spell:** (Inaudible) some of the family.

**White:** Did y'all have a sleeping porch then? (laughter)

**Spell:** No. We just had, just sleep wherever you—I guess they had a—

**White:** Wherever you could put—

**Spell:** —pallet, I guess, wherever you could put them.

**White:** Wherever you could put them, huh?

**Spell:** They had enough beds.

**White:** Who did the cooking? Your mama or your grandma?

**Spell:** Mama did. Mama done all of that.

**White:** She a pretty good cook?

**Spell:** Yes. (Inaudible)

**White:** What did she fix that was good?

**Spell:** What did she cook that was good? (laughter) I guess me and my brother both would always (inaudible) biscuits that was cooked in a certain biscuit pan. (laughter) She had to heat that pan, and whenever we'd go to eat breakfast every morning, we'd get about where we could go get that biscuit when it come out of that pan. I guess that biscuit best (inaudible), about the main thing.

**White:** You probably still remember what it tasted like, don't you?

**Spell:** Near about it. (laughter) And they's always somebody staying here, boarding.

**White:** Is that right?

**Spell:** And they didn't ever pay for it. They just stayed here. (laughter) And so.

**White:** That's the way folks used to do. Wasn't much money going around, was there?

**Spell:** Not much. But they was always somebody staying, come in, stay at night. They'd come in for dinner most of the time. So Mama was a good cook. She'd cook anything she wanted to, too.

**White:** You always had lunch and supper, probably.

**Spell:** And she could sew. She could go by a window and see a dress in a store window. She could come home, cut that dress out without a pattern or anything, and set down there at that machine and make it.

**White:** Is that right? What kind of stove did she use? Was it a wood stove?

**Spell:** We had a wood stove until we got these others coming in, great, big, old, wood stove.

**White:** Who cut the wood? It wasn't the girls, was it?

**Spell:** I guess the boys kept the wood cut all the time.

**White:** I like the way you said, "I guess." That means you didn't do it. (laughter)  
How young were you when your mama started teaching you how to cook?

**Spell:** My uncles all said I cooked just like her.

**White:** Is that right? That sounds like a good compliment. You must have started helping her when you were pretty young then, in the kitchen.

**Spell:** I started helping her do everything, and my daddy'd take his Coca-Cola and stayed in a wooden case, then, you know?

**White:** Right.

**Spell:** And my daddy set that case down there and fix it where it'd be high enough up that I could reach up, wash dishes.

**White:** Oh, you stand on it. (laughter)

**Spell:** Wash dishes or do something another like that.

**White:** Well, did y'all have a electric pump or a hand pump for water back then?

**Spell:** We didn't have no hand pump. Our oldest brother had a hand pump at his place he lived at at Braxton, but we didn't have one out here. We just (inaudible) a well. They had dug-wells, and they had them kind you pull up with long bucket, like that.

**White:** Right. I remember those buckets. We had one of those wells off the back porch, and then we'd go out there and get water for cooking with.

**Spell:** Most everybody'd have a little, old porch kind of run out. Now, where they built this room onto this porch out here, the porch used to go all the way across, and out at the end of it, they had a little place out there, and they was a well on it.

**White:** That's where you got your kitchen water?

**Spell:** I reckon so. And out from it, off out there, was, used to be a big, old, dug-well. That thing still sinks. Kevin knows that. (laughter) It still sinks.

**White:** What did that water taste like? Pretty good?

**Spell:** Good. It was good water.

**White:** Everybody I've ever—

**Spell:** You'd cross over the road out here, they had a big, old—my daddy had built a big, old, long trough, about twice as long as this room, big, old, thick lumber about that big, and the cows and things run out in the piney woods around, and everybody had cows. Everybody had sheeps and goats and things. And they'd come out here to that well for water, out there across that road, right out here.

**White:** Wasn't too many fences then.

**Spell:** Smelled like polecats. (laughter)

**White:** About like polecats, that's a good description.

**Spell:** That's what it tasted like, too. (laughter) You couldn't hardly drink that water, but them horses and things, they loved it.

**White:** When you were little, and people would come up to the store over here, they probably came on horses and in buggy wagons, didn't they? Did they have a hitching rail and all that stuff out front?

**Spell:** I don't remember no hitching rail. There's plenty little trees out there that they could tie to, you know?

**White:** Yeah.

**Spell:** A lot of oak trees run up and down that side of (inaudible) then, and it was about forty was in that grove down there.

**White:** Is that right? What was that road like out there, then? I know it wasn't paved.

**Spell:** Mm-mm. It was just a dirt road.



**White:** Wasn't gravel either, huh?

**Spell:** Unh-uh. They graveled it a long time after then, but I can remember when that road was gravel.

**White:** What was the first car y'all got? Do you remember when you got your first car or truck?

**Spell:** The first car we had, it wasn't a older one. It was something sort of like that.

**White:** Well, Overlands(?) must have been pretty popular. We were interviewing a lady yesterday who said that her brother, I believe it was, had bought an Overland. Said he was a rich guy. He had a plantation up in the Delta, so he didn't drive a Ford. He drove an Overland. I guess a store owner was pretty well-to-do back then compared to most folks. There wasn't a lot of money anyway, though, was there?

**Spell:** No. They had mules and wagons and go get that stuff they (inaudible) in that store. They had to go to Jackson. Well, that was a big swamp up there then. A little, old road went around that way, and it was kindly blacktopped, the first blacktop that I knowed anything about. That little, old curve that went around that—(brief interruption)

**White:** Well, did y'all go to Harrisville and up to Jackson? Where did the road go? Was it over toward Harrisville?

**Spell:** No. It was this out here at Braxton.

**White:** Where [Highway] 49, Old [Highway] 49 is now.

**Spell:** Um-hm. Went on to Jackson up there.

**White:** And the swamp was north of Braxton.

**Spell:** That big, old swamp was right up there at Jackson, over that river.

**White:** Oh, the Pearl River you talking about, right at Jackson.

**Spell:** Yeah.

**White:** I bet that was a swamp to get across.

**Spell:** That was a swamp, and all these men that had these stores out, that had, they had clothes; they had hats and shoes and cloth to make clothes out of, and all kind of food to eat. And they had all kind of candies and all kind of stuff like that for kids. It was everything they had in the other stores, but they had to go to Jackson to get it, and

they's a place out there they called—I can't think of that man's name, but he had a big store up there that he sold it to. And Daddy and them would go up there, and they couldn't make it all day, in one day. They'd have to go and camp out that night. They'd all meet at one place, tie up their horses, and feed. They carried their feed with them. And they'd stay there that night. Then they'd get up the next morning and go over in Jackson, (inaudible) load up their things and come back out there.

**White:** Well, they bought from several stores, then, didn't they? They had a couple of stores then, didn't they? Or did they just have this store right over here?

**Spell:** They just had that big one over here.

**White:** Just one store over—

**Spell:** Now, Uncle Monroe(?) had one right at the road there, just about a quarter of a mile out there.

**White:** You had mentioned that. Did he go up with them, too?

**Spell:** I don't know. I never did hear of them say whether he did or not.

**White:** But they used the wagons and horses to go up with, huh?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. And all men from different parts around in the country where they had them stores, they'd go to that one place, and then all camp out there.

**White:** A wholesale, probably bought wholesale from Jackson, too. Where was the place they camped out? Do you know? Did you ever hear them talk about it?

**Spell:** I heard them talk a lot about that place up there, that swamp where they all went.

**White:** Well, they'd make it almost to Jackson then, where they camped out.

**Spell:** Near about right there. But they went into Jackson and bought their stuff the next day and come back out. It taken them three days to go up there and back.

**White:** It probably was on the Rankin County side there—

**Spell:** It was.

**White:** —at what they call the Gold Coast area now, or used to call the Gold Coast area.

**Spell:** What did they call that little, old, first little, old road out there? Some of my folks (inaudible) up there. Georgianna(?) lives up there around that place somewhere.

**White:** Well, I'm going to stop this tape. We're almost at the end. That'll give you a chance. Maybe you'll think of that road while this tape's stopped. (End of digital file named tape one, side one. Interview continues on digital file named tape one, side two.)

**Spell:** —where Charlie come back on them wagons.

**White:** Took the same time. Probably took longer loaded down to come back.

**Spell:** Yeah. See, they went and loaded up that day, and they come back the next day.

**White:** What was the store like back when you were growing up? They have kerosene lamps?

**Spell:** They had everything in there, just like these other stores do.

**White:** No, no. I mean, what kind of lights did they have in the store? They didn't have electricity in the store then, did they?

**Spell:** Unh-uh.

**White:** Coal-oil lamps?

**Spell:** I don't remember what kind of lights they had. (laughter) They might not have opened up past (inaudible). After six o'clock they might have closed.

**White:** Probably did, come to think of it. They wasn't a lot of folks out at night back then, you know? I hadn't even thought about that. That makes a whole lot of sense. How old were you when you started working in that store over there? Or did you work in that store over there?

**Spell:** Every one of us went in there, worked. (laughter)

**White:** I kind of had that idea. (laughter)

**Spell:** I don't know. I wasn't very old when I could go out there and wait on people. A lot of the people thought I was a nurse. (laughter) I'd be out there working in the store, and they thought I was a nurse. And I wasn't even grown. (laughter)

**White:** Were you already started to school when you started working out in the store?

**Spell:** Out in the store, I imagine so, but I went to school. I didn't go to school till I was seven years old.

**White:** Is that right?

**Spell:** They wouldn't let me go. I was six years old in the middle of the time that school started, and they wouldn't let you go if you wasn't right there the first of school. So I had to stay out, and then the next year I got to start back to school.

**White:** Where did you start school?

**Spell:** Up here at New Zion.

**White:** New Zion? That was close to the church, wasn't it?

**Spell:** Um-hm. Now, they call this place New Zion, and they call it Touchstone(?). That's (inaudible) was Touchstone.

**White:** Touchstone, that's what I've heard it called.

**Spell:** And the Touchstones had the thing at they house.

**White:** The voting precinct?

**Spell:** Yeah. It was up here on this road, going through to that other road over there.

**White:** Oh, I've heard of Touchstone Community. I didn't realize that was the people's name who had the voting precinct there. That was their family home. Their name was Touchstone, huh? And you went to school—

**Spell:** (Inaudible) Touchstone, that Touchstone that lives up here and my uncle, my grandma's sister married him. He was (inaudible). And him and this Touchstone man that lived up here, died and was buried. That was the first funeral that I went to, double funeral, that I remember, and I was so little, Amy, my cousin Amy, she always had me over. I was just a little young'un, and she's grown up. And I remember my first preacher there, that he preached that funeral. And we went in, set in the church, (inaudible) Amy in the corner. They had three over on one side, and three over on the other side. Three rows going down through the church, and it was pretty big. But up there on the front, Amy picked me up and set me up there where her and the preacher were sitting up there on that seat. And my feet wouldn't touch the floor. Now, that's how little I was, when I remember that double funeral.

**White:** That was at New Zion Church?

**Spell:** Uh-huh.

**White:** Was that where you always have gone to church?

**Spell:** Uh-huh.

**White:** You remember when you joined the church there?

**Spell:** I was eleven years old. I got a picture of that, me being baptized.

**White:** Y'all wasn't baptized in the church either, probably, were you?

**Spell:** We were baptized in the creek.

**White:** That's the way they used to do it, I hear.

**Spell:** Uh-huh. Well, one while we had a pool up there. Of course, that was before my time when they baptized in that pool, and it was right down from the schoolhouse.

**White:** They didn't do much baptizing in the winter, I bet, then, did they?

**Spell:** I don't imagine they did.

**White:** Were a lot of you baptized at once?

**Spell:** I think they was seven or eight when I was baptized.

**White:** That's a pretty big crew. And how long did you go to school up there at New Zion?

**Spell:** I went to school at New Zion till I was in the ninth grade.

**White:** Well, they had that many grades there, huh?

**Spell:** Um-hm.

**White:** And after that, you went where?

**Spell:** After I left New Zion, I went to Harrisville. No, I didn't. I went to Braxton and then to Harrisville.

**White:** Went to Braxton a couple of years and then to Harrisville. You graduated at Harrisville.

**Spell:** Right. When I come back from—see, I went to Braxton and went up there, with her, to please her.

**White:** To go to work at Kennington's?

**Spell:** Yeah. And when I come back, I went to Harrisville, and I went two years and finished there. That made me skip a year in school, after I got into high school.

**White:** Is that right? What do you remember about New Zion School? Who was your best buddy when you went through school at New Zion? Did you have a good friend?

**Spell:** We had a lot of them.

**White:** Who were some of your buddies at school? I'm going to dig in your memory box here today.

**Spell:** What were some of my grades?

**White:** What were some of your friends when you were young in school?

**Spell:** Just about everybody was friends then, and most of them's all dead and gone. I don't know if I could remember them now or not.

**White:** You can probably remember a couple of them while we're talking anyway. What was the school room like?

**Spell:** Our first schoolhouse that I can remember, the part that was the main high school part, was built up high, and the doorsteps went from one side of it to the other side, long doorsteps like this, and high, up to that place. And the teacher had his desk right in front of the door, and they had a place open, one side. They had the big, old cooler for water. And all of them could get water, up over the door, porch there. Ms. Alma Morgan(?), I don't know if y'all ever heard of her or not. Boy, she was a teacher, and she taught me my algebra.

**White:** Did she?

**Spell:** And I learned mine. (laughter) And when I went to go to Braxton to school, Warner(?), my brother, we had to go to school in our car, ourself, because they wouldn't let you ride the bus or nothing. So when I went out there to school, Warner went out there to school, and he played ball on the ball team. I'd go down there in town and stay at some of them stores, some of them women I knew out there. Ms. Barbara(?) was the main one. I just loved her. She had been superintendent of that school out there. It was a pretty big school then, and she'd been (inaudible), but she was working in that store where her husband owned. I'd go down there to stay with her, and she helped me get my lessons up. I (inaudible) I had a good friend there, and algebra was pretty hard, that second-year algebra. And I studied second-year algebra, but they wouldn't let nobody but Lawyer Jones(?)—y'all might remember him.

**White:** Lawyer Jones.

**Spell:** And Addy Jones(?) was his wife.

**White:** Was this at Braxton or Harrisville?

**Spell:** They was at Braxton. (Inaudible)

**White:** Braxton. I thought you were talking about Braxton. I just didn't follow you there.

**Spell:** Yeah, they was at Braxton, and that's where I went out there and studied that algebra. But Ms. Morgan had already taught me first-year algebra. And all them people at Braxton, they was twenty of them had had that first-year algebra, but Mr. Jones stepped in the picture. He give us about three days' tests. We come in there over that first algebra, and Braxton(?) come in there with the first algebra. If you could pass it, you went on in the second-year algebra. And he really had a bunch of them working. And when he got through with the test, that three days, he said, "Well, me and Curtis Wells(?)"—he was from Bell Pine(?). He was with that mill crew up there. And me and him, we was the second-year algebra students. All the rest of them was put back because they didn't know nothing. They had to go back and get that first-year algebra.

**White:** There were just two of you in that class, huh?

**Spell:** Just two of us. (laughter) We was just as scared of Lawyer Jones as if he was a bear. He married my cousin. But he looked like a big something, you know, setting over there. He'd sit over there, side the wall, or his chair would lean back. When he was giving you the examination, you didn't come—we was upstairs, and after the house burned, the school burned. And he'd sit there, propped back, upstairs. We'd come upstairs, if you didn't have a piece of paper in your hand, he'd give you a piece of paper to take that test on. And that's the way he kept you from cheating because everybody cheated that could, (laughter) you know. (laughter) Mary and me and Curtis, he sat him in one corner, me way up yonder in the other one. He didn't keep us from helping one another, though. When we'd have recess, it'd be such a long examination, when we'd have recess, we'd be down there on the stair step, tell the other one if he didn't know something about one of them, we'd tell him. We didn't have to have a piece of paper. We'd tell him. He'd go up there and do it.

**White:** Get that figured out, huh?

**Spell:** I just helped him out, and he'd do me the same way. If I didn't understand some of them problems or something, he'd tell me. (laughter) But when we went and set down, (inaudible) paper he had in the desk, and I'd be setting way up here at this end of the house, and he at the other end down there, and he set midway, propped back. (laughter) I got so tickled about that lots of times. Me and Curtis had more laughs about that.

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

**Spell:** Uh-huh.

**White:** How'd you carry your lunch, and what did you carry with you, usually?

**Spell:** (laughter) Now, I had my lunch mostly fixed out of the store.

**White:** Oh, did you? They cooked over there? They cooked at the store, too?

**Spell:** Um-hm. So I'd go to school, even when I was going up here, I fixed mine out of the store. Most of the time Mama would. A lot of it, she'd cook something and put in there, too, but it was mostly little canned goods, a little something that young'uns really want. (laughter) I'd get to school, and they'd try to see which one was going to get to swap lunches with me that day. (laughter) And they'd swap me out of my lunch every day.

**White:** You probably came up with some pretty good swaps, though, too, didn't you?

**Spell:** It was good to me because I could get that store business, if I wanted it, anytime.

**White:** And the rest of them couldn't.

**Spell:** Unh-uh. And man, they liked that. They liked to be the one that got lunch that day. Sometimes some of them would get one part of it, and some of them, the other part (inaudible).

**White:** Did you ever carry any of your mama's biscuits to school with you?

**Spell:** Um-hm.

**White:** What did you put in yours, sugar or molasses or anything?

**Spell:** Sometime we would punch a hole down in it, and fill it full of syrup. And then it'd go all, every which a way, and a little butter down in there where it'd melt while it was hot down in there.

**White:** Sounds like you know how to eat a biscuit. That's the way we used to do it, too. (laughter) What did you do after you graduated from Harrisville High School, now?

**Spell:** That's when I was fixing to go to John's.

**White:** You were going to John's. What was the name of that institute over there?

**Spell:** Harrisville?



**White:** No, at John's, the one you started to go to.

**Spell:** I guess it was John's. I don't know.

**White:** John's Institute or something like that. And you didn't go on over there when you went to Kennington's and went to work for—

**Spell:** Um-hm. When I come back, I went to Harrisville to school. And two years after Harrisville School, when I finished, I was signing up to go to Memphis, me and my girlfriend. Well, I had two girlfriends that was special. All of them's my friends because I always made friends with all of them, but—

**White:** You remember the name of the two you were fixing to go off to Memphis with?

**Spell:** The one I was going to Memphis with was Myrna Rarey(?), and she went on ahead. She said, "I ain't going to take none of them courses like you. You going to take a course. I ain't going to do it. I'm just going to get a little, old clerk anyhow. And I'm going to go up to Sears Roebuck." That's when they first moved down, up there, you know? She said, "I'm going to go to Sears Roebuck and get me a job there at Sears Roebuck, and I'll get us a place to stay. And I want you to live with me. Me and you going to live in the same place." I said, "All right." But I was going to take a course and take me three years to take it, to be that nurse, but I'd be staying with her and then going to the hospital there.

**White:** That's why you were thinking about Memphis because you were going to nursing school in Memphis, huh?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. And when I started to go up there, my mother, in later years, she got real bad sick. Well, she was bad sick when I was born, and I was the only kid they raised on a bottle. The rest of them—and they passed me around all eight and all (inaudible). (laughter) They kept me going all the way around with them, and my Uncle Johnnie and Aunt Mary, they would get a horse out at night when I was staying down there with them. And I reckon I learned it just all young'uns learn things. I was just a little baby, and Aunt Mary'd get on that horse and she'd hold me and pick that guitar, and Uncle Johnnie, he'd pick the guitar. No, it was Uncle Johnnie that got on a horse, and Aunt Mary walked along beside of him, picking the guitar, singing, and they both sang. And they'd bring me home whenever I cried to come home. I'd want to come home. They'd bring me home. They (inaudible) able to say nothing. They'd go right out there and hook that horse up and get on that horse bareback. Up the road, we'd come.

**White:** Sing to you the whole way, huh?

**Spell:** Yeah. And when they'd start back home, they'd get, both of them would get on the horse, take off down the road. I've had some times. (laughter) And I was the only kid they raised on the bottle.

**White:** But your mama was pretty sick by then, huh?

**Spell:** Yeah. And she was sick for a long time. She'd just have spells of being sick like that, and I tended to her. Well, I had a friend that was a nurse that lived here close by. And her mama come over here a lot and helped me out.

**White:** Is that the reason you decided to be a nurse because your mother was so—

**Spell:** No. I was already on that deal, and so the reason I didn't go on, my dad told me, he said, "Now, I can't tend sick people. I don't know how. I'm just not gifted to it. All the rest of them, they got out and gone out on little, old jobs or married or something. You said you wasn't going to marry. You going to make a nurse, and you was going to make a living for yourself, and you didn't care a thing about that. It's too many of them separated." (laughter)

**White:** You decided pretty early you weren't going to marry, huh?

**Spell:** I didn't ever marry. And I said that wasn't in my line, no how. I wanted to do something, and that marrying wasn't in my line. (laughter) And after Mama would have them bad spells like that, I learned how to treat her and how to tend to her, and she told Daddy that she wished that I wouldn't leave. She wished that I'd stay at home. So Daddy told me, said, "Mama wants you to stay at home with her. She is more used to you. Says you'd be better than a nurse was with her, and she wanted you to stay at home with her." And so the young'uns told I better go on out and get me a job. Daddy said, "Don't you tell her to go get a job, not another time because her mama wants her. She needs her to see after her. And I got enough money to take care of her. I got enough money to buy what she needs and when she needs it. And she don't have to go out there and pick up little, old jobs like that." Back then, they wasn't nobody had jobs that was women unless you was a graduate of something another and got maybe a job, something like that. But the (inaudible). That was about the biggest good job they could get. Well, when it filled up, nobody else couldn't get one. There'd be that many in there, so many in there, and the rest of them was just little, old clerks, and everybody didn't count that very much, being a little, old clerk and working in them cafes and things. That was just a little job.

**White:** You didn't make a lot of money to live on then, did you?

**Spell:** So Daddy said, "She don't have to get out there and (inaudible) on some of them little, old jobs." So they didn't ever bother me no more about it. I stayed, taking care of Mama and Daddy.

**White:** Well, you still thinking about going out and going to work when you grow up? (laughter) Or you just decided not to do it, huh? Kind of like getting married, you decided not to do it, huh? (laughter)

**Spell:** That's right. A lot of people on about that time, they used to would fight if they'd fall out with another, and I said, "I don't want none of that kind of stuff." And they just didn't get along, and they'd separate, and one go his way, and the other one, the other. So I said, "I don't want none of that. I'm doing just"—anyhow, I just didn't want it. And I wanted to be something. I wanted to be a nurse or something. Now, they counted them high up, being nurses. You had to go to school three years after you come out of school. You had to go to that nurse school three years, then make a nurse. I don't know what you have to do now.

**White:** Well, did your friend stay up there in Memphis, after you didn't go?

**Spell:** Yeah. She was already up there, waiting for me. (laughter) And I told her; I explained it to her and told her. And she stayed up there, and she married a boy that was from—she said from the boondocks, way out in the country in Tennessee somewhere. Said, "Lord, they was twenty-five or thirty years behind us down there." (laughter)

**White:** Found out Simpson County was pretty modern compared to that, huh?

**Spell:** Yeah. And she made him come back down here with her. And they come back down here. They had two kids, and she didn't ever go back. (laughter)

**White:** Just stayed when she got back down here, huh?

**Spell:** Yes.

**White:** Well, we talked a little bit about nursing and doctors. What was medical care like back when you were growing up? You didn't see too many doctors, did you?

**Spell:** Doctors would go down in the country, then. They'd go, like one would have a certain territory. And then another one would have another one. That's the way it was, and they'd go out and see their patients. When they'd be in the bed or something, they'd go out and—

**White:** What doctors came by here to see your folks?

**Spell:** Dr. Neely(?) and Dr.—what was that doctor's name in Braxton?

**White:** Both of them from Braxton?

**Spell:** No, Neely was from Harrisville.

**White:** Neely was from Harrisville.

**Spell:** And he was at Braxton, and they was another one from—they was two out at Braxton. And if you used either one of them, (inaudible) use. Just whichever one you called and got first, I reckon that's what you used.

**White:** Well, they didn't have a hospital there at Braxton, did they?

**Spell:** Unh-uh.

**White:** And you and I had talked about earlier, you had mentioned that my grandfather, Dr. J.L. White out of Pinola—

**Spell:** He come out of Pinola then.

**White:** —down in Pinola would come through the school. So you must have seen some doctors at schools. What did the doctors do at the schools?

**Spell:** That's what they mostly done was kindly examine the kids and kept up with what they had wrong with them. And I guess if they found anything wrong, I guess they'd treat you.

**White:** Probably the county health nurse—

**Spell:** Uh-huh. That's what it was.

**White:** The county health nurse would probably travel with the doctor sometimes, too, huh? Did you ever work—

**Spell:** I think he was a county doctor.

**White:** He might have been. I just didn't know that about him.

**Spell:** Well, he was a doctor for wherever he went, but that was—

**White:** Had that job, too, huh?

**Spell:** Um-hm. That was his job because he was the one was driving that buggy, and he was the one that done most of the talking when they got where they was going.

**White:** Well, I've kind of heard that about him, anyway, that he liked to talk. (laughter) I might be kin to him that way. I'm not really sure. (laughter)

**Spell:** Everybody liked him.

**White:** What was your neighborhood like back when you were growing up along here? Who lived up and down this road? You mentioned your uncle down the road here had another store. Who were some of your neighbors?

**Spell:** The Owenses(?) was neighbors and kin to me, too, and the Shorters(?).

**White:** And the Shorters are kin to you because your mama was a Shorter. Isn't that right?

**Spell:** Crockems(?) and oh, I could name a lot of them off. I can't think of them right now. (laughter) They was a good many of them.

**White:** Well, where did most people get together back when you were coming up? Was it church?

**Spell:** They'd just go to church, and then the young people'd have little parties that they'd have, just little parties at home. And it was always people in the community. There was a Brown boy and Walker, two of them. They played the music, swing band, that music, and a lot of them had music talent, that played music here. And they'd just meet at people's houses, have music, and dance.

**White:** What kind of dancing was it? Was it mostly square dancing or other kind of dancing?

**Spell:** They square-danced and they round-danced and whatever they call it.

**White:** Whatever they call it. Had a good time.

**Spell:** They danced, uh-huh.

**White:** Did they have a picture show at Braxton or at Harrisville?

**Spell:** They'd have little picture shows come in here at Harrisville and put up little tents and have shows.

**White:** Did you ever go to that?

**Spell:** I never did go to but one out there (inaudible).

**White:** You were over at the dance, having a good time, huh?

**Spell:** I can dance. (laughter)

**White:** Can you really? (laughter) You enjoy dancing, huh?

**Spell:** I enjoy dancing. I even had one of them big teachers out there, teaching in them schools in Jackson, dancing school. We's up there one day at Jackson and went by one of them places where we'd go to that a whole bunch of us'd go up there together and dance. And everybody danced with their own crew, and when we'd go up there and dance, and wasn't but one or two of us went up there that time. We just stopped by a one where we'd been going in one of them big dance places. And we was dancing. They was a strange band was setting over there, a table; they had little tables setting around, and everybody'd stop to rest. They'd get them a Coca-Cola or a beer or something and set down and drink it and rest a little bit and get up and go again. And I was at (inaudible). I drank Coca-Colas. I never drank none of that beer. I'd get me a Coca-Cola and set down there and drink it. And he never did get up and dance. He'd set at that table. So he caught me at the table by myself. He got up and come to that table, and he said, "Could I ask you, would you give me one dance with you?" (laughter) I said, "I'll try." He said, "I'm not afraid I couldn't dance with you." I said, "OK." So when they started the music, we started out to dancing and got about twenty feet out there, and that (inaudible), he said, "Where'd you take your lessons for dancing?" I said, "I didn't have no lessons for dancing." (laughter) I just going (inaudible). (laughter) I said, "I didn't have no lessons." And he said, "You could fool me." And he said, "You can't fool me. I *know* you been to dance school, and I just thought maybe you might have—which one of these schools up here." They was two in Jackson. And he said, "I just thought maybe you might went to one of them. I want to know which one. And I know you're a wonderful dancer." I just thought he was just saying that just to make me feel good. He said, "I ought to know because I am one of the instructors out here at Murray School." I said, "Oh, Lord. I'm going to step all over your feet now." (laughter) And he laughed.

**White:** Murray School, that must have been the Arthur Murray School of Dance they had up there.

**Spell:** Uh-huh. And that's where he was a teacher. That's the reason he hadn't been dancing. He just looking people over out there, you know?

**White:** Well, have you quit dancing yet, or are you still dancing?

**Spell:** I don't dance no more. That was another story that was so funny. (End of digital file named tape one, side two. Beginning of digital file named tape two, side one.)

**White:** How did he die?

**Spell:** That was the oldest one that had been (inaudible). He died in that storm.

**White:** What storm was that? You need to tell me about it because I don't know anything about—

**Spell:** It was a cyclone.

**White:** Cyclone?

**Spell:** Cyclone is different from a storm. It dipped down, down here, way down below here Shorter's(?) Town, down in there, at Johnson Shorter's(?) house. It took his back porch off, and that's where it started. And it went right straight on through and hit Braxton, and it was just a half a mile wide, they said, going through that big timber at the mill down here at D'Lo cut. And that timber, Mama and Mr. Bankston(?), he got caught away from home. He was here at our house, and him and Mama would walk that—that hall was a big, old hall. We've closed it in since then. And it went clean through to the back end of the porch, and he was scared to death. His wife lived up here in Uncle Monroe's(?) old home, (inaudible) after he went to Braxton and built.

**White:** They could hear the storm, huh?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. And she was up there, her and her kid, and he was scared slap to death. He couldn't get there because the trees was falling down everywhere, and lightning just blinking and dark as Egypt. Man, she wouldn't let us get off there. And they went out on the back porch. It was so dark they couldn't hardly see. They'd go out there and back, back to see about us and back out there, hearing that racket. And that racket was just one mile across there, too. That's how much it missed us. And right in that drift of it, they said it went like it was frying, like you frying something in your frying pan, just hundreds of them at one time, making that racket. The trees, when a cyclone comes, it just takes it flat as it goes. It's no curve in it. It just goes straight, and it went till it went through Braxton, got on the other side of Braxton. It hit the woods over there. It went up, and nobody has ever traced that storm, since.

**White:** It didn't hit again, after that anywhere close, huh?

**Spell:** It went up in the heavens somewhere.

**White:** What year was that?

**Spell:** Twenty-one.

**White:** Nineteen twenty-one.

**Spell:** Now, they got a picture of that down at D'Lo in that, whatever they keep them in, down there.

**White:** And your brother was in Braxton when he got killed. Is that right?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. And he had a friend. They was studying Masonry in his daddy's store, but he come out when it was so dark and black. He had come by the house. All of them was in the field but me, and I had the baby; that was my little brother. And he

was seven months old, and he would just have a fit when he'd see Willie, and Willie, he just loved him to death. And he stopped and played with him about a hour every day, going around to these mills. And he'd jump. You had to hold him to keep him from jumping out of your hands, and he'd jump, just have a big time when he'd see that brother coming in that car.

**White:** But he went on over to Braxton that day.

**Spell:** He went on. It was about eleven o'clock, I guess. He went on to Braxton, and him and this boy was studying to be a thirty-third degree Mason, and they was back in the store, studying that. But I don't know how they got it back there because whenever he come out this side of Braxton. After he saw it was so bad, he was going to try to make it home, and he kept—I don't know if it was a colored man or if it was Mr. Henry Slater(?). They got in that car, and they come out where the Imperial(?) Place—you might have heard of the Imperial Place.

**White:** Right.

**Spell:** They come out to there, and that fire was just playing on it everywhere, just lightening on the ground; that's how close. And I don't know how they got by without getting struck with that lightening, but they say if you in a car, the rubber tires keeps it off of you. But they turned around. It was so bad, they thinking it might be worse. So they turned around and went back to Braxton, and I heard Uncle Henry tell that, and he said out there, fire looked like it was just going up and down the rails on that path. And they crossed it and went to that store where this boy was. And my brother went back there and set down, and they was going to study Masonry while all that was going on. And it wasn't but a few minutes going on because it takes it about three or four minutes, coming through a place. And when it got out there, and that thing began tearing up Braxton, they wound up, these two men—that man had two children. My brother didn't have none, but he had two, and his wife, and they was up there somewheres in this line of this storm. And when that storm went through, got over it, it rained, just hailed. It was dark as Egypt, and when it got where they could see them, it's just stacked out there, all in that road and everything was just stacked with lumber. They had caskets out there in this boy's store, and some of them be floating around out there. They had these two was going, trying to get to one another out there, and that other boy's face, something had hit him and just cut all of his face down, hanging down. And he was bloody, all down. And my brother was going to him. He didn't have a sign on him. They was getting together. And they said that when they noticed them, they just locked up when they met one another, just locked up with one another. And they got a hold of (inaudible). And they carried them all to D'Lo. Well, my brother thought he wasn't hurt too bad. He knew he was hurt, but he didn't think he was hurt too bad. And they said when he got down there, Dr. Gibson(?)—that's who was doctor at Braxton.

**White:** Dr. Gibson.



**Spell:** I don't who the one was at D'Lo, but they was down at this big building there. And when they went in there, they had them things fixed, to give shots. And my brother was laying close to the doorsteps where they went in, and there were some doorsteps went in this place where they put them, just lined them up in there. And this boy that got killed, my cousin, his sister was in that bunch that was wounded. And she was broke up, her legs and arms and all. And she was hollering, "Somebody tell me how Willie is. Somebody tell me how Willie is." That was my brother. She never asked about her brother. She never asked about none of it but him. And she just begging them to tell her about Willie. She knew he was hurt, and she wanted to know how bad he was hurt. And when the doctor got started, he went to Willie first. Willie was right there at the steps, and he said, "Well, I'm going to start right here." And he said, "Doc, I'm not hurt as bad as some of them others. You go help them, and then you can come help me." And the doctor told this after the end. He said, "Well, I tell you, they so many of them hurt here, we just got to take them as we come to them because by skipping about and about, you miss some of them. We just take them as we come to them, and I'm just going to start with you." He knew he was about the worst one, he said, hurt because he wasn't saying nothing. And said he reached down and picked him up in his arm. He said, "I'll give you the first one because you the closest to me, and we'll just start with you." And just when he picked him up in his arms, he didn't get to give him a shot or nothing. He was gone. He said he quit breathing when he picked him up. And we asked him what was the matter. He said it cut that big jugular vein that come to the heart, up, and it had cut it in two, and it was bleeding inside. And when he picked him up, it moved that blood; it went in on his heart. Said he was gone just like that.

**White:** That's the reason he didn't know he was hurting on the outside so much, huh? A lot of folks—

**Spell:** This other boy, he didn't live either, and his wife didn't live, and the babies didn't live. They had a (inaudible). They said when they found her, had a (inaudible) went through her head, down into that baby some way or the other, and that killed them.

**White:** That just about wiped out Braxton, didn't it?

**Spell:** It wiped it off. It wiped it off up to that house y'all was talking about that Carlie Albritton(?) lives in. Now, just a little of the front of that house—I can remember that much—was left standing, like they just tearing it down to that part. And they put a few of them in there. Wasn't very much room there to put them. They could put a few of them in there, but had to go on to D'Lo with all of them. And when they got up there to that curve, like you go up to the old highway now, and you turn, and that new highway wasn't (inaudible) by then. It was just that one down there that come out by the corner up there.

**White:** Two lane, Old Highway 49.

**Spell:** Uh-huh. And when they come down across there, that store, that house, that big, white house that stood there after the storm was my aunt's house. And it was right there in that little corner, and from there, back through the town of Braxton and right through the main part of (inaudible) people back on them little street place, it was just half a mile wide. It went right through them, just got that whole (inaudible). But up there where my Aunt Ted lived, it didn't tear her house up, and it didn't get all the buildings up there from there towards D'Lo. The store was back that way from it, behind her house, back towards Braxton. It come right by them churches and got them, right through that way. It went right on up where my uncle lived up there, right in the path of it. And he had doorsteps to his house come up about far as, high as this wall, this (inaudible) down. And he made concrete, solid concrete doorsteps slap down to the back. And his two girls run up under that concrete. That's what saved them.

**White:** Blew their house away?

**Spell:** That was the worst thing.

**White:** What was your uncle's name that owned that house?

**Spell:** Oh, the one that owned that house?

**White:** Right.

**Spell:** Elliot Kelley(?) was one that that one tore down, had them doorsteps, but Butler was one that—

**White:** Butler. Well, you mentioned later, taking care of your younger brother, too, and him being here on your hip that day. He was seven months old?

**Spell:** My little brother?

**White:** Right. He was born a little bit later than the rest of them, you said. I think what, fifteen years?

**Spell:** Of me.

**White:** Yeah.

**Spell:** He was about fifteen years younger than me, um-hm.

**White:** You kind of helped raise him, didn't you?

**Spell:** I raised them all, raised a lot of young'uns. (laughter) Near about all of them's young'uns I was raising. I just raised them. Just let them come to my house, and I just raised them. (laughter)

**White:** A lot of them that grew up here, and a lot of them that grew up around here you raised, huh.

**Spell:** Yeah. Ms. Bridges(?), she's that girl is named after me, is going to church up here now. She went to Holly Grove. She built on her mama's land (inaudible) in Holly Grove. She went and built her house out there on that road. Well, whenever her and this man left here, he was already a deacon up here, but they moved out there where that house was. So they went to Holly Grove Church, but they come back home to church.

**White:** You were telling me a little bit earlier about your younger brother. You said he started to college somewhere, didn't you?

**Spell:** He went to college up here at Clinton, before he ever went to Army.

**White:** Mississippi College? And then he went in the Army. Where'd he go in the Army? Was that during World War II?

**Spell:** Um-hm.

**White:** And what'd he do when he got out?

**Spell:** Stayed at home.

**White:** He came back here? He helped you think about going to work? Is that what it was? (laughter)

**Spell:** No. No, he just didn't want to do what little jobs around here like these other boys he was running with. And I said if they hadn't been that type, he might have made something out of it. (laughter)

**White:** Well, he was a good roommate, wasn't he? He lived with you a couple of years here, I think, didn't he?

**Spell:** Yeah. Just me and him, but he helped raise his sister's young'uns we had here as kids. They's all crazy about him.

**White:** How long did he live here with you?

**Spell:** He died about six years ago. Didn't he?

**White:** Well, he's like you. He kind of liked this house where he was born, then, huh?

**Spell:** Yeah. Me and him, we done some of it, the hall, closed it in.

**White:** I was going to ask you a while ago. Who closed in the dog-trot hall? We used to call them dog-trots in the middle. Y'all did that, huh? It probably got kind of cold going across that hall on winter mornings to the bedroom over there, didn't it?

**Spell:** Well, my mama and daddy always had this room for their bedroom, and I was across the hall because I stayed with my grandma, slept across the hall. And she died. I still had that room over there across the hall. Well, when Mama was so sick, and I went at night or in the daytime, we set both doors open, this door and across there. And I stayed across doors. I put my bed up beside that door, and they had they bed up bedside this door.

**White:** So you could hear, huh?

**Spell:** So I could hear. And Daddy said he never remembered a time that if they made one little sound, I was right there side of that bed. And that's the way they wanted it. But when it'd get real cold, that's when it was cold to come across the hall. So Daddy had big, old double doors at the front. He had big, old double doors there, and he had him a thing fixed where he could drop a big two-by-four over behind that iron things he put up there. And them doors solid.

**White:** And just block it off, huh?

**Spell:** Um-hm. That knocked the wind off of it. And I could go backwards and forth when it was so cold back then.

**White:** Well, did y'all use the chimney? Is that what you heated with? Fireplace?

**Spell:** We had three fireplaces going, right here, one straight across, and one in the back.

**White:** You talking about, you say in the back. In the kitchen? Was the kitchen always hooked onto this house, or did it used to—

**Spell:** No. First it was out from that house, over here on this side, over there, had a back door back there to it. And Grandma always went from that back door a little way out there, and there was a kitchen out there, built off to itself and dining room. All that was off by theyself.

**White:** They used to build them separate because of fire. They worried about the fire getting out, burning the whole house down.

**Spell:** They moved that one off out yonder where you see a little, old house now. They moved it off there side the fence, and they'd put cotton bales in it. That was—

**White:** In the old kitchen?

**Spell:** Uh-huh. And they built this here before I was born. They built it when my brother, older than me, was crawling, and that's when they got that kitchen and dining room. They made him go over to that hall, hooked it onto the house. It was just like it was made with the house. Went straight through.

**White:** Made it a lot handier, too, didn't it?

**Spell:** Uh-huh.

**White:** When did y'all quit using your fireplaces?

**Spell:** Whew! Them fireplaces warm, too.

**White:** You don't use them anymore, do you?

**Spell:** Done done away with that. Mr. Lee Bridges(?) built that chimney back there, but we didn't ever use it. We took it down and took all that stuff. We had a big fireplace fixed here, and they took it all down, and Mr. Davis, his granddaddy, he was a carpenter. And he fixed it, closed it up.

**White:** Well, I was asking you about those pretty stained-glass windows up in the upstairs part of your house here, which make it really unusual. You said they been there long as you can remember, huh? It's quite—

**Spell:** I had to have one of them fixed. That little casing around the thing kindly went out. I guess it ruined. It kindly rotted around it, and let them glasses slip out, and two or three of the little glasses slipped out, and slipped onto the ground, and they got broke. And you couldn't get that stuff here, not the age of that. So I took it to this place where they do stained glass, and he said that they didn't have none as old as that glass was. And he'd have to send it to Texas. There's one place in Texas he'd have to send it to and get one the age of it. So he sent the window out there to be made. He made that window out there and sent it back, and it cost me \$112.00.

**White:** Well, they must be about as old as the house, then. This has been a comfortable house, raising a lot of generations of people, hadn't it?

**Spell:** It sure has. See, my daddy's daddy was the one, I think it was, that had the— what do you call them things? Kavis(?) has got one Mama had of her daddy.

**White:** Hold on. Tintype pictures? The old pictures y'all—

**Spell:** We have some of them, too. But this is what I'm talking about. It's where they—

**Unknown voice:** She's talking about deeds, land deeds.

**White:** Oh, land deeds, papers on the house and land, yeah.

**Unknown voice:** Yeah, got the original ones back to 1833.

**Spell:** They call it something, though. What do you call it?

**Unknown voice:** Where they patent the land.

**Spell:** Yeah. What you call the land.

**White:** Now, 1833 goes back pretty early in Mississippi Territory history here, for sure. Did you ever hear about any Indians living anywhere around here, close on this property, or any Indian mounds or anything like that?

**Spell:** I don't know whether they ever lived on this property, or not, but it'd been before my time if they did. But right over yonder next to the graveyard, the first graveyard, was—if you start on that, now. (laughter) The first graveyard was right—you could get out here on our back porch and look straight at them graves over there in that graveyard, right over the fence, from where Papa had his hog fence. He owned all that back in there then. And that graveyard was kept up until Daddy went and let Aunt Fanny and her husband have that place. And he kept it up pretty good, but whenever that boy married one of them girls, that Deare(?) boy up here, they just let it go rotting. And you can't get in there to it, I don't reckon. Can you?

**Unknown voice:** Not hardly.

**Spell:** And it's right on the bank of the creek.

**White:** Still some tombstones back in there?

**Spell:** They's two tombstones, was all that was ever put up in that graveyard, and it's just a little, old graveyard, about like this yard out here, both sides of this yard, and about that much more back this a way, where the house is. And it's just kind of a small graveyard.

**White:** Family graveyard.

**Spell:** That's where it started, and they was a road, they said, come by there. And that old road, still a trace of it, going through there. And it come by there, and that's where the church house was, where it come out to the road, right out here side of my house that goes to Braxton?

**White:** Right.

**Spell:** Well, it come out to that road over there, and that's where the church house was. And Mr. Lee Bridges, he went to church in that church house. He was a (inaudible), sort of.

**White:** You don't remember that church house, though, do you?

**Spell:** I remember him. (laughter)

**White:** You got a good memory. I been meaning to tell you that, too. (laughter)

**Spell:** I love Mr. Lee and his wife. He said he went to that, and the fire they had, it was a dirt chimney, and the house was a log house, I guess. And they had that chimney built there with that dirt. It stayed over there. I can remember going, finding that dirt chimney where it went down there.

**White:** Could still tell where it was, huh?

**Spell:** But after all that sawmill business come in there, they just messed it up so you can't hardly find where it was at. But Mr. Lee wanted to build a little, concrete church house like he remembered it and put it up on a thing. And one of the preachers that was here then wanted to put that up on something and fence a little place in and have that where the first church house. And all these other churches sprung from it.

**White:** Nothing like a good country church to spawn a bunch of other churches.

**Spell:** Yeah. And they moved that church from over there, over here, where it's at.

**White:** Well, I appreciate you talking to us. I don't want to wear you out today. We'll get together to talk about some more memories one of these days. (laughter)  
Thank you very much.

**Spell:** You welcome for what little bit I know.

**White:** You know a lot!

(end of interview)