William Jefferson Clinton History Project

Interview with

Marie Russell Baker
Hope, Arkansas
22 February 2002

Interviewer: Michael Pierce

Michael Pierce: This is Michael Pierce with the [William Jefferson] Clinton History Project. I'm here with Marie Baker at her house in Hope. It is February 22, the year is 2002. Mrs. Baker, I first want to ask you about yourself. Can you tell us when and where you were born?

Marie Baker: I was born in Bodcaw, Arkansas, on November 15, 1925.

MP: Who were your parents?

MB: My parents were Otha and Mildred Russell.

MP: Were they farmers?

MB: Farmers, hunters, fishers and [unintelligible].

MP: The Cassidys were from Bodcaw?

MB: Yes.

MP: Have you known the Cassidy family all of your life?

MB: Well, yes, I have. First, Eldridge Cassidy—Virginia's dad—and my dad were first cousins. They lived in the—my Grandfather Russell was a widower and Eldridge's mother was a widow. They spent time together, raising their families. As far as I know, Aunt Lu had older children, but Eldridge is the only one that I ever knew.

MP: What was life like in Bodcaw at that time?

MB: Do I have to tell you? [Laughs] It was hard on all of us in the [Great] Depression. In 1929, when the Depression came along. It really was hard. When you asked what my family was doing, I named several things. My daddy hunted and fished. We had game. We raised chickens. We raised watermelons and that's how we lived. We just didn't have a lot, but it didn't make any difference. We were happy enough. If we could keep our bills paid and [have] the things that we really needed, we were happy enough.

MP: Can you tell us about Eldridge's mother?

MB: Yes. Listen, Aunt Lu is my favorite. I have a picture of Aunt Lu that you're going to see before you leave.

MP: Okay. By they way, I'm sure that the Clinton Library [William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum] up in Little Rock would appreciate copies of any the pictures that you have.

MB: I don't have an extra, but I'm going to show it to you and I'll try and get you one if you want it.

MP: Okay, that would be wonderful.

MB: She was a short little lady. I have wondered about her the last few years because Aunt Lu was always a fixture around. She would visit us and—have you met Florence Tatum? Florence Tatum. Surely, you know Florence Tatum. She worked Bill Clinton's campaigns and everything.

MP: I have so many names. way, back to Aunt Lu. I'm glad you asked me because I got to thinking the last few years, how did Aunt Lu live? She was a widow. Back

in those days, as far as I know, there was no Social Security, no welfare or any programs like that. She lived with Ms. Tatum's mother. That was with her daughter. She would come down in our area and spend some time. She might spend a month down there, just going from—my daddy had brothers and sisters down there—she would just go from one house to the other. I said, "Mother, how did Aunt Lu live? How did she get clothes and things like that? Things [we assume are?] out there in the world." Mother said, "Well, somebody would have a new baby and she'd go stay with them and help them out. They'd buy her something and somebody else would give Aunt Lu something." I remember when I was a child, I was thrilled when Aunt Lu would come because I got to sleep with her and I loved it. Mother said, "She stayed two weeks with me when you were born." [Laughter] I just picked that up from talking to Mother about Aunt Lu. She was lovely. I loved her.

MP: When you were born, Eldridge had already left Bodcaw. Is that correct?

MB: I'm not sure because I know that Edith got Eldridge away from down there and in Hope when Virginia was small. I might have been born, but I was very small. You've put me to thinking. I was thinking the other day about how Edith got Eldridge out from down there. It took Mother sixteen years to get Daddy out from down there because I was sixteen years old when we moved to Hope. [Laughs] My daddy, he just didn't want to move at all.

MP: Did you know the Grishams?

MB: Oh, yes.

MP: What were they like?

MB: Fine people.

MP: Fine people?

MB: Fine people. Oren—I don't know—Oren was a fixture in the community.

MP: That's Buddy?

MB: They called him Buddy, but I never heard him called Buddy until Billy became Governor of the state of Arkansas. They were nice people. He would tell me, every time I saw him, "I remember when you were born. It was cold and it was frosty. We were up on the side of that hill, pulling corn, and, somebody, I don't remember who," he said, "came up there and told us that Otha and Mildred had had a little girl." [Laughs] He was a funny man, just a naturally funny man.

MP: Do you remember any of the other Grishams?

MB: Oh yes.

MP: Do you remember Edith's parents?

MB: Wait just a minute. Edith's parents, yes. Mr. Grisham was a tall man and kind of a heavy set man. Edith—if you ever saw a picture of her—had black eyes. Certainly not like Mr. Grisham—Oren's daddy and Edith's. He was a blonde man. I remember him. Of course, he was old then. You can imagine then—but I do remember him well—In my mind I see him. Also, his wife—I remember Mrs. Grisham, too.

MP: Do you have any specific memories of stories of him?

MB: I just came to one about him coming [unintelligible], but I can't think of any stories of them. I remember them. I know that my mother used to take me when we used to go visit them. I don't really remember a story other than that . . .

MP: What was the Grisham house like?

MB: What was it like? It was one of those old boarded up houses. You were doing the best you could. [Laughs] I know where it was and I can see it in my mind, and it was just a plain house like everybody else's. I'm trying to remember whether or not it had a hall in it—those halls that used to go right down the middle—but I can't remember. It was just a house like anybody else's in the neighborhood. I can remember Mrs. Grisham, Oren's wife, Mrs. Grisham. Not Oren, I mean his mother. William was Oren's daddy's name. I can remember her sitting in a rocking chair and rocking.

MP: You said you moved to Hope at the age of sixteen.

MB: Yes.

MP: Did you go directly to work for Southwestern Bell at that time or . . . ?

MB: No, I still had two years in school. See, my mother sent me to my grandparents to live in Hope and have a grocery store—my mother's parents. My mother sent me up to live with my grandmother and granddaddy and [to] go to school out here. That's how she got Daddy out of Bodcaw. [Laughs] She would have never gotten him out of there if she had not sent me. My mother shrewdly did that and I had the privilege of telling her, years later, that it was so hard on me to leave home and come live with them and go, but that she definitely did the right thing. I'm so glad I got to tell her that.

MP: You're what—how many years younger are you than Virginia? A year or two?

MB: How old would Virginia be now? Can you tell me?

MP: I think she was born in 1923.

MB: I was born in 1925. They left down there, Edith and Eldridge—Eldridge was

Virginia's daddy. They left—I don't ever remember them living down there. Of course, you're going to find out later on that I lived next door to them here in Hope for about four years, I guess.

MP: Do you remember Virginia in high school?

MB: I don't think I ever went to school with Virginia in high school. She was always up here. I didn't know a whole lot of—well, I knew enough to tell you—but she was up here. She graduated—remember I just did two years up here—before I came up here and started. I went to school in Bodcaw until I finished the tenth grade and came up here in the eleventh. Virginia is about a couple of years older than I am, so she had already finished, if I'm remembering correctly.

MP: Coming from Bodcaw, what was Hope like?

MB: It was different than what it is now and it wasn't hard because my grandmother and granddaddy had lived here for a long time. I knew the layout. It was just a little old town then. It wasn't like it is today. Hope has grown so much in twenty-five years.

MP: Do you have any memories of coming to Hope, things that were different here than out on the farm? In other words, I'm trying to catch the flavor of Hope in the early 1940s.

MB: In the early forties—I graduated from high school in 1944. I came up here in 1942 and started school.

MP: It was right during the war [World War II]?

MB: Yes, it was. It was—I don't remember whether it was. I guess the war had probably already begun. I know when the proving ground [The Southwestern

Proving Ground was an airfield for bombers and an artillery testing ground during World War II from 1941 to 1945] came here.

MP: How did the proving ground change Hope?

MB: We had nowhere for people to live. I remember that there was an old, great big two-story building across the street from my grandmother and granddaddy's grocery store. They curtained that off. That's how the families lived. They were in here working, building this proving ground. Hope was not really set up to take care of them in the way that they would have liked to have been taken care of and we would have liked to take care of them. We just didn't have the means. Of course, people had a way of building houses and what have you. My granddaddy had the store. My granddaddy was a character. He would sometimes, for his preferred customers—he kept stuff back for them and there was a blue law. Do you know what the blue law was? There was also a shortage of a lot of things. Granddad had preferred customers.

MP: You can't sell on Sunday.

MB: On Sunday. My granddaddy never failed to open to open his door on Sunday if somebody came and needed something. He would do it in spite of his faith. They never got him for it. He was never arrested, pressed charges, or anything. He had this little meat market and grocery store; and lived in the back of it. It was, well, it was just a—they had a bedroom and a bath and kitchen. Then, another little room that was probably an afterthought. They lived in the back of that grocery store.

MP: Where was Eldridge's grocery store?

MB: Granted, this was years later . . .

MP: This was years later?

MB: Yes, this was quite a bit later. I'm trying to think of something that I wanted to tell you. The Suttons—Buddy Suttons' folks, do you know them?

MP: No, I don't.

MB: He was a prominent lawyer in Little Rock. The Suttons lived up the street, on the opposite corner from the grocery store. He was sheriff here, Buddy's father. He had an option bond down the street, on down, two or three blocks from us. We used to play with the kids. There was Roxy—Roxy Lawrence, and Sue. Roxy and Sue, and Buddy, he was another one that came along later. Those were the three. We played around in the neighborhood, from one place to the other. It was different for me because I had always lived in the country. I was an only child. The only thing I had was my mother and father and a bird dog. [Laughter] It was different for me. I did get homesick. By the way, the teachers—the Yerger Middle School, have you ever heard of Yerger?

MP: Yes.

MB: Professor Walker lived catty-cornered across from my grandmother's store. Professor Glover lived right down in the next block. The Yerger sisters lived by the—I think that would have been the colored town in the [unintelligible]. But the colored town was different back then than what it is now. All of these people taught at Yerger School.

MP: What was it like then?

MB: Well, that was before integration and all this. My granddaddy never mistreated

one of them. They came to his store. They got credit. I remember one time one of the old colored ladies came and she wanted some snuff. She didn't have any money, so my granddaddy gave her half a dock of snuff. I guess she was afraid of it. She brought it back to him. [Laughs] He got along well with them. He was good to them. Of course, the professors traded with them. They were close with him. You probably don't know this Walker—his last name is Walker—a black guy in Little Rock. He had written articles on Hope. This Professor Walker was his grandfather. He was born in Hope, this Walker boy. He's prominent in Little Rock. I can't think of what his first name is.

MP: I'll find out.

MB: Hick's Funeral Home, they were right down the street from—right behind Professor Glover.

MP: Where was Eldridge's grocery store?

MB: You want Eldridge. You want me to go back to Eldridge, don't you? How did you come into town? Did you go by Rose Hill Cemetery?

MP: No, I didn't.

MB: It's on that street where Rose Hill Cemetery is.

MP: Did you ever go into Eldridge's grocery?

MB: Probably some, but not often.

MP: Not enough to remember what it was like?

MB: I know what it was like. Yes. It was just a little grocery store. He had—as grocery stores were—you're so young you don't remember what they were—but, he had groceries. Virginia said he had something in the bottom of the apple

barrel. Everybody in Hope knew that [laughter] because Hope went dry about the time I came to Hope 1944, 1945. I want to say it went dry in 1946, really, but it might have gone earlier. Eldridge was an ice man for several years, too. Then he ran a liquor store for a man.

MP: Do you know who he ran it for?

MB: Robinson, Buddy, I don't know. It's Robins or Robinson or something. When Hope went dry, that took all the liquor stores out of Hope. One or two, I think. That shut them down. Then, Eldridge goes out here and has this little grocery store. He just had groceries. It was just a little, small grocery store with groceries and fruits. I don't know whether Eldridge had meat or not. I really don't. My granddaddy still kept his store open until he died. He was ninety-one when he died.

MP: After high school, you went to work for Southwestern Bell?

MB: Southwestern Bell, yes.

MP: Did you have much contact with Virginia or the Cassidys at that time?

MB: Yes and no. I came back when I started talking to you. I had to go back and remember. Now, Virginia and I were never close and we were never personal friends. Virginia was from school. I'm talking my head off here, but I was timid and shy. We didn't have a lot in common. When we moved to Hope—I don't know whether this is exactly right or not, but I know it's right enough. When my folks moved to Hope, we moved to—have you been to the Clinton birthplace?

MP: Yes.

MB: Ok. Her rose garden.

MP: Yes.

MB: There was an old house there that we moved into. At that particular time, the people who owned it lived in one side and we lived in the other side. It was right next door to the rose garden.

MP: And this was on Hervey?

MB: It's on Hervey, yes. On the corner of Hervey and Division, where the underpass is at. That's where we moved, and, of course, we were next door to them [the Cassidys]. I don't remember a lot until Billy came along. Of course, I went my way and Virginia pretty much went her way. But we were kinfolk, and we were neighbors. We were still—regardless if we were not that close—we were still family.

MP: Yes. Virginia writes that she had some problems with her mother.

MB: Who didn't? [Laughs]

MP: What do you mean by that?

MB: She gave really everybody such a hard time. She was just kind of high-strung and Virginia was hard to manage, I'm sure. [Laughs] You can imagine. She didn't manage her either. Virginia did exactly what Virginia wanted to. She [Edith Cassidy] was kind of high-strung. Everybody always said it was the Indian in her. She had those black eyes and dark hair and dark skin. She was just high-strung. I guess that's the word that you would say; and full of Eldridge. [Laughs] Eldridge and Daddy were first cousins and they liked each other. On Sunday mornings, Eldridge would come over to Mother and Daddy's. In the time between this, these people moved, that were on the other side, and my mother and daddy had

one side of the house. My husband and I had the other. I had married. Eldridge would come over and drink coffee and visit with Daddy. They had a Sunday morning visit. Daddy didn't approve of some of the things Eldridge did, but it wouldn't keep him from loving him.

MP: In fact, Bill Clinton and Virginia Cassidy say that there was no one that was—no one didn't get along with Eldridge.

MB: No, no. There wasn't. He was a good man. He was a nice man.

MP: Did you ever meet Virginia's first husband, William Blythe?

MB: No, I didn't. I can tell you, as I told you, I think, on the phone, that I answered the call on the switchboard.

MP: Can you tell us about that?

MB: Maxie Fuller was another cousin of ours. She and I were on the switchboard that morning. [Laughs] I was on this board that you get the incoming calls, the outgoing calls, the directory assistance calls. You get all that stuff and she was down a couple of boards from me doing this call. I answered what was an inward, public signal. This operator told me, "We want the Eldridge Cassidy residence in Hope. We have an emergency for it." I turned around to Maxie and I said, "Oh, my lord, Maxie, something has happened. I'm getting an emergency call for the Eldridge Cassidy family." The cop—I guess it was the cop on the other end, in Missouri—said, "It's a death message." He told me something else, but we knew it was Virginia's husband because we knew that he was supposed to come back and get her. I gave it to them and rang it for them. Maxie got up and went down to the Cassidys, just to be there. She and Virginia were closer than I was to either

one of them. She got up and went down there and I stayed and manned the switchboard by myself until somebody else could get in there to help me. That's how it came through the system.

MP: How far is it from the Southwestern Bell office to the house on Hervey Street?

MB: The old office was over on Second Street, up there.

MP: It wasn't very far from the Hervey Street house?

MB: No, it was about three or four blocks. She could run that.

MP: It was what, four or five months after you received that Bill Blythe—Bill Clinton—was born. Do you remember his birth?

MB: Not a great deal because I didn't pay that much attention.

MP: You didn't think he was going to be president of the United States? [Laughs]

MB: No, no. I didn't know it. [Laughter] I do know that she had a hard time and that they did have to do a cesarean section. I know that. When they got home with him, they'd keep bothering him because that's Edith's grandson. [Laughs]

MP: You're laughing about this. What did Edith do?

MB: They brought him home and they were going to put him on a schedule. Well, they did. Back then, women were nursing their babies. They were bottling their babies more, really. They had a schedule set up for him. They fed him at such and such a time. They put him to bed at such and such a time. You didn't see him very much, or, I didn't see him very much. Of course, I didn't make an effort to see him that much. I did hear him cry.

MP: Was he a crier?

MB: Yes, he was a crier, but you would cry, too. [Laughter] It was hot then. These

were things people couldn't help. Do you remember attic fans and window fans?

MP: I actually do.

MB: Good, good, because they had a great big attic in the end of that building next to where I lived. They would come in to bed, and he just cried. He wouldn't sleep for hours. He lay there and cried. That's because it was hot. They basically did what they thought was best, but I didn't think so. I wanted to get him and rock him.

MP: Just after he was born, or soon after—about a year after he was born, Virginia went down to New Orleans to go to nursing school again. So Edith kept him. Do you remember anything about Edith raising young Bill Clinton?

MB: I'd have to say she did a lot more raising Bill. I do remember that he cried a lot, and I do remember that Eldridge was just miserable because Eldridge wasn't going to go upstairs and get that child. He was afraid to.

MP: What was the relationship between Eldridge and Bill?

MB: I moved before I knew very much, but I feel like it was good. I really do. I feel that Billy Clinton understood his grandmother. I feel like he understood his family. His family was a little bit different than just momma and papa and the kids. I feel like he did understand. I'll tell you something else, too. I think Virginia loved her daddy. I think that she really did and I think—now this is what I think—that she did love her daddy because, in her book—if you've read it—she talked about getting up in the morning and going downtown with him and drinking coffee. I remembered, when I read that, I could hear her at least going out that front door saying, "Momma, I'm going with Daddy." She'd go

downtown with him. I think she just really wanted to spend time with him and maybe not get in Edith's way. [Laughter] I don't know. Now, Edith was a good person. Don't misunderstand me. She was a good person, but she was just Edith. [Laughs]

MP: Do you remember Roger Clinton?

MB: Oh, yes. Everybody remembers Roger, surely, surely. [Laughs] I did not personally know him. He married Virginia and they moved across the street into that house. When she married Roger and they moved over here, I had married and I had a baby. When I was in the hospital having this baby my mother and daddy and my husband moved us across town. In the meantime, Virginia married Roger and moved over here. That's kind of it. From then, I just heard sketches. Then, Virginia, of course, moved to Hot Springs. From there, I didn't hear very much. In the summer—when I was talking about the baby crying so much—we had put out in our backyard. Edith was usually working and my husband was working. There [under the pine trees] was my mother and daddy and sometimes Virginia and Maxie or one of her friends. We'd all sit out under those trees and talk. I was thinking—yesterday when I was thinking about this—and this kind of threw me a bit. I thought, "Were those the pine trees that we were under or something else? I'll ask somebody." It hit me square in the face. I am the only living person that sat under those trees. That'll kind of hit. I thought, "My gracious, how did this happen? How did this happen?" I heard from Virginia through relatives and friends. I knew she lived in Hot Springs and I knew that she had married . . .

MP: Roger Clinton?

MB: Yes, but I thought she married somebody else from there, too.

MP: Oh, [Jeff] Dwire.

MB: Dwire, yes. I knew that just as [unintelligible] she died. I remember that. One day my daughter came in. She was living in Hot Springs and had married a boy from Hot Springs. She came in and she said, "Mother, I met somebody today. Her name is, I've forgotten." She said, "Virginia." I said, "Virginia Dwire." She said, "Yes, her husband cuts my hair." [Laughter] Then, I was beginning to hear things again. By that time, Billy was in politics and all that. That's kind of what I know really, but it was an interesting thing.

MP: What did people in Hope think when he entered politics?

MB: The kinfolks were really tickled to death. Now this is just me, of course, I haven't gotten out a lot. As I told you, you're the first person I've talked to about any of this. I wish my daddy would have lived. I would have loved to have heard my daddy's opinion on that.

MP: What do you think he would have thought?

MB: I don't think he would have agreed with Billy on anything. I didn't always agree with him. I didn't get out and press the pavement for him, as I've already told you. I didn't do that. But, I always voted for him. [Laughter] He's family, even if I disagreed with him on some things.

MP: Have you talked with [him]?

MB: Who, Billy?

MP: Yes.

MB: Billy would not even know me. That's how close I kept with it. I kept up with it in the background, but he might. If they told him who I was, he would. We are definitely not close. Now, Margaret [Polk] knows him. Of course, they lived across the street [from each other], and Margaret's different. I am a quieter one, I guess. Of course, I've talked two hours here, but I've talked about things that are interesting to me. I think people in Hope are proud of Billy, most of them. Some of them are not, naturally. I think most of them are.

MP: Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to mention?

MB: Eldridge's father. I don't know whether you've heard anybody say anything about Eldridge's father. He went back to Alabama, I think—wherever we came from. [Laughter] He never did come back and we never did hear from him. One of the granddaughters, I think, found out that he died and they buried him out there. Aunt Lu didn't even know what had happened to her husband.

MP: Lu's husband just got up and left?

MB: Yes, well, he was just going for a visit. He wasn't leaving. He was just going for a visit, I guess. [Laughter]

MP: And . . . ?

MB: He just disappeared. It was just a strange thing.

MP: How long did it take for Lu to find out that . . .?

MB: I don't know. I just remember my parents talking about it. If there's something you'll catch and hold in your mind, you'll catch something like that and hold it in your mind. So, I don't really know that much about it. I just know that's the answer I got from my mother when I asked where Aunt Lu's husband [was]. So, I

don't know.

MP: Oh, you have your notes. Do you want to go over your notes?

MB: The house that I lived in [on Hervey Street]—they keep saying they tore the house down—it was one of those with the real wide hall. They tore it down and built the house that they tore down to build the rose garden. That's how old that house was. [Laughter]

MP: The house that's now the Visitors Center—who lived there?

MB: I'm familiar with the Visitor Center house, too. A Mrs. Henry—the Henry Hotel—there was a Henry Hotel here. Mrs. Henry lived in that brick house alone. Of course, back then, women didn't live alone much. She told my daddy, when they moved there, "If you here me blowing a police whistle anytime during the night, you get up and come see me." [Laughs] The Fosters lived—Vincent Foster—they lived in that neighborhood, too. I can remember—of course, it's a sad thing really [the suicide of Vince Foster]. If that ever happened, it's sad. They had two little girls and then they had Vince. Vince was probably between eighteen months and two years old, I guess. Those little girls would run down the alley and here came Vince, just a-hollering and a-crying, trying to keep up with them. Just a diaper on, no shoes. I remember those children playing in the neighborhood.

MP: Was it Sheila Foster Anthony?

MB: Yes, that's who it is.

MP: She served in the Clinton Administration.

MB: Yes.

MP: She also married Beryl Anthony, who was a congressman.

MB: Yes, I believe so. She used to run up and [down] the alley behind my house. [Laughs]

MP: Do you remember Mack McClarty?

MB: Oh, who doesn't remember Mack McClarty? I just have a lot of respect for Mack McClarty.

MP: Do you remember when he was young?

MB: Yes, pretty much. Some things, yes.

MP: Like what?

MB: Like one day I was in Crescents Drug Store and he was this little boy, probably eight years old. I was at a table by myself and the drug store was crowded. He got his Coke and came over there and sat down with me. [Laughs] He was—of course, he probably doesn't remember that, but I thought it was nice. I guess that's the only thing. I've always liked him, always thought he was good. You don't ever hear anything to the contrary.

MP: Do you remember his parents?

MB: Yes, yes.

MP: What were they like?

MB: I was not personally acquainted with them, but they were nice people.

MP: Ran the Ford dealership?

MB: Ford dealership, yes. In fact, they still have the Ford dealership. Mack McClarty—if I'm not mistaken—still owns a hunk of that, stock or something.

MP: You say Hope was crowded during the . . .

MB: Oh, yes. During the time they were doing the proving ground thing, it was crowded.

MP: The neighborhood on the other side of Edgewood where Virginia and Roger Clinton built, was that built after World War II or was it . . .?

MB: I believe so. I'm trying to think. There are things you've asked me that I haven't thought of, but yes. It was built after the war.

MP: And so those were new houses?

MB: Those were new houses, but they were after the war.

MP: Is there anything else in your notes?

MB: I stopped and told you about the rose garden. I talked about all that hot weather.

MP: In fact, I've read in a book that the summer Bill Clinton was born was one of the hottest on record.

MB: Yes. We lived right there next door. There's two years and two days. Bill Clinton lacks two days being two years older than my daughter. That's when we moved from there was when he was two years old because we moved the day that she was born. From there, I didn't hear or see as much of them.

MP: One of the things one of the biographies of Bill Clinton talks about is that the issue of race was the most prominent issue in Hope in the 1940s. Can you agree with that?

MB: Well, it might have been, but I didn't see it because I was right there at that grocery store. I would say that a large percent of my granddaddy's customers were black people. Of course, you grow up and they're black and you're white. I didn't think it was bad. We treated them like you would want to be treated. He

treated his customers, black people—and my granddaddy was a stuffy old man—but he did, he was good to his customers. Now, they stayed in their place. Professor Walker traded there all the time. I don't remember Mrs. Walker coming in there, but Professor Walker traded there all the time. There was something else I was going to tell you about. Of course, I wanted to tell you about Liza. [Laughs]

MP: Who's Liza?

MB: Liza was the cook. Liza was my grandmother and granddaddy's cook. She was quite a character.

MP: Was she black?

MB: Oh, yes, yes. She was black and she cooked for the Suttons. Times were hard then. Well, the Suttons went somewhere one day—one Sunday or maybe a weekend. Liza came by the store and she—I feel like it was Sunday—said something about lunch. Granddaddy said, "You just go in there and cook us something." This is on Sunday. He got us something out of the meat box. Of course, the meat—anything that she wanted—was right there. She fixed us lunch. We all ate. Monday morning, Liza came back and granddaddy said, "Liza, aren't you going up to the Suttons?" She said, "No, Mr. Marsh, I think I'm going to work for you." Because there was that big meat box. He said, "Whatever you think." Grandmother said, "Yes, that'll just be fine." Liza never missed a day, I don't think. She would come in the morning and the first thing Liza did, when she came, was cook breakfast. Then she'd clean that kitchen up and she'd fix lunch for the family. While we sat at the table, Liza never waited. She sat over at

the cabinet, on a stool, and she ate. She was just a member of the family. We talked and we laughed and we ate. She got up and she cleaned up the kitchen. Then, in the afternoon, she went home. Sometimes she'd take something and sometimes she wouldn't. I had thought about it just then. Liza found her a good place to cook and to eat. She did well with it. She helped them. They loved her. We all did.

MP: What was Liza's last name?

MB: Lee. Liza Lee.

MP: Liza Lee?

MB: Yes. She had two daughters, if I remember right, and a grandson or one daughter and two grandchildren. Anyway, she had Mary Alice and Bell. They were her two grandchildren.

MP: Was she a good cook?

MB: Yes, she was a wonderful cook. Meat loaf and steak. Listen, we just ate well. [Laughter]

MP: Thank you, very much. I've really enjoyed this.

MB: I hope so. I hoped that I helped. I'm thankful for the questions. That makes me think.

[End of Interview]

[Edited by Rebecca Willhite]