

Ervelia Holcomb Jordan
Interview 84a
December 10, 1985
Marie Davis, Interviewer
Retyped by Courtney Lawrence

Abstract: A native of Houston County, Texas, Mrs. Ervelia Jordan's family was connected to Southern Pine Lumber Company for several generations. She married Willis Jordan and followed him from logging camp to logging camp and finally to Diboll in 1941. Her family lived at Fastrill, Bluff City, and out on "94" in a boxcar house. When her daughter Pat was a small child, several cars left the track, slamming into the boxcar house and amputating her arm. Mrs. Jordan also worked in a boarding house and remembers Dave Kenley, Paul Durham, Mae Ballenger, and Claude Welch.

Marie Davis (hereafter MD): I am talking to Mrs. Ervelia Jordan, she lives at 704 Ashford, Diboll, Texas. Today's date is December 10, 1985 and my name is Marie Davis. Where were you born?

Ervelia Jordan (hereafter EJ): Augusta,

MD: Where is Augusta?

EJ: It's three miles from Liberty Hill.

MD: And that's in?

EJ: Houston County.

MD: Houston County –

EJ: And the county seat is Crockett.

MD: Okay and when were you born?

EJ: September 14, 1907.

MD: Okay, what were your parent's names?

EJ: Arthur Holcomb and Annie Holcomb.

MD: Whom did you marry?

EJ: Willis Jordan.

MD: Okay, and what are your children's names?

EJ: Billy Holcomb Jordan, Jimmy Elizabeth, Patricia Ann and Julia Faye

MD: Okay, tell me something about your grandparents. You seem to love them a whole lot.

EJ: Well, they were the parents of seven boys, one of them died. I did because I – my mother and daddy had a little girl two years younger than me who was premature and because so much of their time taking care of her until I stayed with my grandparents most of the time.

MD: Your name is a different name, how come them to name you –

EJ: There are only two people that I know of, my great grandmother dreamed this name in the night, she got up and lit the candle and wrote the name down and when her first granddaughter was born she named her Ervelia, she was Ervelia Singletary. And I was the first great granddaughter born into the family and they named me Ervelia after her. If anybody else is named that, I don't know, I've never heard of it.

MD: I haven't either.

EJ: Ervelia, she dreamed that. It could be that she married somebody and moved to Port Arthur but she died about two years ago, oh, she was real old and she didn't know anything, in Rusk in a nursing home, But I didn't know she was there, in fact, I was sick and I don't think she would have known me if I'd gone over there to see her. I knew her when I was growing up.

MD: You were telling me something about the day you were born.

EJ: My grandfather sold all the timber on his land to Southern Pine Lumber Company –

MD: And you didn't know you would be associated with Southern Pine Lumber Company for the most of your life, did you?

EJ: I didn't think about it until I started to school and the children told me but one of my little friends told me "You were born with a silver spoon in your mouth." I said "Oh no." She said, "Yes, don't you know your grandfather sold his timber to Southern Pine Lumber Company and he got \$50,000 for it, and we don't have that kind of money." I couldn't wait to get home, I ran home and I asked my parents about it, "Why did I have a silver spoon in my mouth?" They said "You don't have a silver spoon in your mouth." And I told her who told me and she said "We're just people, your granddaddy did that." "And you tell her that you didn't have a silver spoon and you still don't have." They didn't let me know that it – that he had more than other people. Because, see, he was a preacher and he built the first church there, furnished the lumber, the men furnished the land, no, I believe his uncle gave the land and he furnished the lumber and the people in the community did the work, first church.

MD: And what was your grandfather's name?

EJ: Henry Holcomb.

MD: Henry Holcomb, okay and what was your grandmother's name?

EJ: She was Amanda Singletary and she was born in Mississippi, Vicksburg.

MD: I believe you said Mr. Kenley visited them sometimes and spent the night with them?

EJ: Oh, real often, he came through, he'd be buying land, checking on the timber. That's what he did, you see, to see that nobody was cutting the timber and it was being taken care of. And I guess he'd go through Kennard and Ratcliff and cut across because it isn't too far over to where we lived. And I'm sure that's what he was doing and he would spend the night with them. But it didn't – really mean very much to me until they put this railroad track from Fastrill over to our land. Of course, the children, our neighbors, had never seen a loader or skidder and work in the logging, they didn't know about it. And one Saturday afternoon I had a friend visiting me, she was older, and we went down there where they were working, it must not have been Saturday, must have been one day through the week because they weren't working on Saturday. But, anyhow, Willis was on this locomotive and he, of course, I was almost sixteen and him nineteen, I think. So we were all walking around, looking at everything and he was backing the locomotive up because he had come after the men that worked in the woods. So I go over, he got off the train and came over and talked to us a little bit and asked me if I wanted to ride on the train. He was going to back it up but he didn't tell us that because I wanted to see how the train looked on the inside and this friend of mine, she was really my mother's step-sister but she was a lot – about four or five years older than me. And she said "You can't do that." I said "I can't, I'll show you I can." So I go over and get up in the locomotive, he got up there, too. He was pretending to show us so he backed off about, nearly out of sight, and came back. And she said "I'm going to tell your mother." I said "What are you going to tell her?" "About riding with a strange man." I said "No, he wasn't strange because he was going with a girl in Alto when I was in school." I had just got out of school. In Alto I stayed with an uncle and aunt but I didn't pay any attention to him. I liked my boyfriend better because his parents had died and left him a drugstore. That was a better place to hang out and he hung out at the other drugstore where the girls, her daddy owned the drugstore. So we ignored one another, we didn't let on, he just wasn't in my group. But anyhow, we talked a little bit and I got a letter from him the next – sometime next week, and they were going to have a company picnic at Plane and everybody was going down on the train. But he had a new car, all trimmed in chrome and an angel on the hood and everything else. He asked me did I want to invite my girl friend to go. I left my step-aunt out of this. And I said "Yes." He said "Well, there's a young man who boards with us who would like to go with her." So he came after me and we drove over to Plane because it wasn't too far away from my home, it was in Houston County and they were coming down for the picnic. After that he was over there real often

and we went together. Well, I was seventeen and he was twenty when we married. I didn't like much being eighteen and him twenty-one. But we had to ask Mamma to go with us. We went to Rusk to get our license – Melvin Sessions was county clerk. He said "Ervelia, you are not old enough to get your license." He asked Willis how old he was, he knew me. Well, Willis, too, but anyhow, so we had to go back and my Daddy was a line rider for Gulf Oil and we had – a telephone was just like a loud speaker, just like TV now, you know. And Mamma said "I'm not going with you because your Daddy isn't here," but when he called in, he called in every two hours, he had a telephone with him, he rode horseback and so when he called in she told him we wanted her to go to Grapeland to get our license and I was supposed to go with them on vacation and Willis begged me to not go, "Let's get married" he was going to work in Poppa's place, Mr. Durham was over Fastrill, you know. And my Daddy's boss had borrowed Willis to work in Poppa's place and then go to Elkhart and work in everybody, all the pumper's place, the engineers, everybody's place, I think it was about six months of that. So we slipped and and – oh yeah, Poppa called in finally and my mother asked him and he didn't say anything for, it seems like, thirty minutes but it wasn't that long, it was just me. He said "Well, if she is determined to get married and doesn't want to go to college, that's what I've always planned for her to go to college, if she doesn't want to go to college, well, tell her she is making her own bed, she can sleep in it. Well, I slept in it for fifty years and, let's see, almost fifty-one years.

MD: Okay, and after you got married where did you move?

EJ: Well, we just boarded in Elkhart after we got married, Willis wasn't happy, he just didn't like it. We left there, Mr. Durham, he was just borrowed and Willis was afraid he wouldn't get his job back if he didn't go on back. So a man from Chester came over and Willis showed him how to do everything, it seems he had worked in Lufkin or somewhere. They had a pump station there and one in Elkhart. So we went home and in the night we heard the telephone and they said that Willis's boss was there, it was really Poppa's boss, it had rained real hard and a bridge had washed out and they drove into it and both of them were drown. So, of course, I think my Daddy was real disappointed in Willis for coming home but he – then he was real happy he didn't stay because he would have drown. The next summer the thing happened, only he didn't work in Poppa's place, he went back up there and worked. Mr. Durham sent him, you know, work was getting kind of scarce.

MD: Was this at Fastrill?

EJ: Fastrill – and see, Elkhart is not too far from Fastrill and we were just seven miles from Fastrill. So he worked just, oh, about a month that time and he decided he wanted to go back to Mr. Durham. He liked Mr. Durham, he was so good to him.

MD: Now that is Mr. Paul Durham?

EJ: Yes, he was the best when it comes over the woods and that sort of thing. So we went back over there on Sunday and he talked with Mr. Durham and he said "Well, come

on back, I need you.” So we went back to Elkhart and some other man on the job took Willis’s place and he was painting a – he was new but he was learning from the bottom down and he went up on one of these high tanks and slipped and fell and broke his arms and legs. So that time Willis said he wasn’t going back up there to help out any more. That’s the last I know of it. We didn’t leave there any more, we stayed. That was just borrowed time. We didn’t quit

MD: He was still working for the company?

EJ: Well, this Mr. Lockland and Mr. Durham were real good friends, that’s what it was. Because he was just talented when it came to machines and they liked it and Mr. Durham did, and he was the loader man. When Bill was born in 1929, in October ’29, well, Willis was the loader man then. You see, Mr. Ingram had broken a leg, I believe he was the loader man. Willis was making real good money and at that time, then he drove the first skidder, oh yes, he worked on the skidder, too. He would – he could drag in those logs but he didn’t like that, he liked loader work and I don’t know how long he worked at the loader. Anyway, they decided to buy trucks and Mr. Durham had left there and Mr. Getzman was foreman then, and he put Willis on the first truck they had there and he drove two weeks and they put him over the truck shops and then when they started to move Fastrill, which was the biggest mistake I think they have ever made.

MD: Who do you think it was?

EJ: Well, honey, they sold the railroad track and nobody ever knew, I don’t think anybody ever knew, what went with the money. It was sold for scrap. And it wasn’t company people – I’m not going to say – I don’t know, I haven’t told anything about that.

MD: Okay, you said – did you and Willis live in the hotel?

EJ: Oh, yes, we had a room there, I worked – it was a two-story building and there were thirteen rooms upstairs and there were from two to five beds in a room. I didn’t like to get up early every morning and that was my job because Vinie and Mrs. Jordan and Richie would fix breakfast. I cleaned up there and I had a colored man that helped me because back then there was nothing that would kill bedbugs. They had men out of the country that would come in and you could open their suitcase and there would be bedbugs and it kept us busy. And this colored man –

MD: What did you do for them?

EJ: Well, gasoline, put gasoline in a No. 3 washtub, put five gallons at a time, put two or three bags of mothballs and he would hold the mattresses up and we would wash them off and then they would put a B-brand powder all in there.

MD: How often did you have to do that?

EJ: Once a week. And Mrs. Jordan had two women that would wash every Monday if it was pretty weather – if it wasn't she sent the laundry to the laundry in Palestine and had it done. And downstairs they had this long, long kitchen, with long windows – a dining room with a lot of windows in it. They had two long tables in there that would hold twelve men. Well, if anybody ate at the end they had fourteen men but twelve men anyway, two at the other table and at the end they had a buffet and on each side of the buffet were two tables that held six men each. And then in between the dining room and the kitchen was a dish room, we called it. The linen closet was in there and there was a sink. It was a homemade thing, made of tin and it was about as long as this table. It had a board up here, you put the dishes up there, you'd scald them. We had hot water, we had running water, you scalded the dishes and put them up there and then when they were dry there was a big cabinet up there, stack all the dishes up there. Of course, it was thick boarding house dishes, I don't know, it was real heavy stuff. And then at one side, that was on one side and on the other side they had the closet to keep all the towels, sheets and linen in. Then a big refrigerator that they would have to put about 100 lbs. of ice in every morning. Then you go on into the kitchen, when you walked in the kitchen there was a long, long table and a pantry, just the other side of the door from that and this huge cook stove, it must have been, I guess, it was about the size.

MD: About five feet long?

EJ: Yes, it was a huge thing. Largest bread pans I have ever seen, there would be two big bread pans going at one time.

MD: Did they make cornbread and biscuits?

EJ: Oh yes, and light bread, we had to slice it then though.

MD: Oh yes, and they made their own light bread?

EJ: No, they got it out of Palestine. They had a big commissary there then, you know, and everything in it. Mr. Hunter was there when I went there and then it was somebody else – Mrs. Sherwood something.

MD: Burch?

EJ: Burch – he was there and Aden Johnson worked there, Clevey Hines and Mr. Hunter.

MD: Do you remember Mr. Hunter's name, his first name?

EJ: No, I don't. His wife was Mrs. Tinkle's sister and she had been married before she married him, and – Eleanor – she was a good friend of mine, she was younger.

MD: You lived in the boarding house for about ten years?

EJ: Yes, we moved out, Bill was born there and Jimmy there and she was three months old when we moved out.

MD: And then where did you move?

EJ: We moved there in Fastrill.

MD: In a house?

EJ: Yes, Mr. Waltman died, he was a store manager, I believe, no, he worked in the woods. And we lived there and we had a four-room house with a big porch built on one side and it had a shower on the back. I let the principal, I don't know his – his wife taught there, the Thomases, and he drove the bus to Rusk and carried the high school kids. They had two rooms at my house. We had a picket fence, had a sycamore tree, it had a big garden with a potato bed in it where you put your sweet potatoes every year. They had a smoke house where you'd, well, it was an outhouse, but they called it a smoke house, if you had hogs you put them in there. Of course, we had a hog, we had cows and we had chickens and a chicken house, a cow pen and a storage cellar. Everything that went with it and anybody that wanted all that, you see, all you had to do was just build it on. They just built four rooms to start with and you added on what you wanted to. And Mrs. Jordan had the boarding house.

MD: Okay, tell about what they were going to do?

EJ: Have a banquet – all the places were coming in for this banquet – Texarkana, Diboll, Pineland, everywhere. So we – I can't think – twenty-four and twelve would be thirty-six and they added some tables. But anyway, Mrs. Jordan was real sick with the flu and I had never planned a meal or anything. But she called me in the room and she said "Evelia, what kind of pie do you know how to make?" I said, "Lemon." And I was going to make the pies. At first Vina took the flu, ill, both of them couldn't hold up their head and I had a dishwasher, her name was Lizzie, that's all I remember about her. So I went back to Mrs. Jordan's room, she was going to have chicken instead of turkey because it was easier to get. I asked her what else I must do. She said "Well, we have to have a salad." I said "I know how to make perfection salad." So that was easy, you know, you use the gelatin and everything. And this colored woman, and of course, you had to pick the hens and get them ready for all this and you had to make all the cornbread. I don't think if it was Horace Warren's mother, I believe it was Horace Warren's mother, but I believe it was Minnie Bell and she made all the cornbread and we saved all the lightbread, and she – we got the chickens and got them all dressed and fixed and I fixed string beans and creamed potatoes and I did all this by myself. I had some girls to help me, fix the tables and we sent the curtains to the laundry to have them done and it looked real pretty although it was just whiteboard floors and the walls, it wasn't painted or anything on the inside, but I got so many compliments that night, I felt so smart, I felt like _ "Oh, I've made it, I'm grown."

MD: About how old were you?

EJ: I think it was 19, because it was before Bill was born, I was 22 when Bill was born but –

MD: That was a lot for a 19 year old, wasn't it?

EJ: Yes, but I had been watching them, I had always watched my mother and Mrs. Jordan was a good cook, so was Vina. So we had the nicest meal, and we had the cranberry sauce and the giblet gravy and fixed it real nice. And Mr. Durham told the man, I was staying kind of hid, I stayed in the lobby most of the time, after I got it all on. He told the men about it and he called me and they all stood up and clapped, you know, and thanked me for fixing such a good meal. Boy, did I feel great? But an awful thing happened when I was there, I used to have nightmares real bad. We first lived upstairs and but Ora, one of Willis's sisters and her husband moved out in a house of their own, well, I moved downstairs. The bridge crew was out there working, you didn't see much of them, they would come in, leave early and come in late. Charlie Bateman and the other men were staying upstairs and it was, there was deep sand around the hotel and he had a nightmare and jumped out from upstairs and ran into chicken wire and scratched himself all up and had to go back to the lobby to get in. But the lights went off at 10 o'clock, it didn't make any difference if anybody saw him. He sneaked upstairs and went to bed. But they all teased him about that. Well, did you know, in about – I don't know whether it was the next night or the next one, if I didn't have a nightmare. Our bed was iron bedsteads, you know, these little rods in it, I jumped up and knocked the screen off of our window, we were sleeping there, it was so hot, you know. Knocked it off and I had a nightmare and ran into the fence and had to go back and ran into this – what kind of little rose, pink – it has a name – it's a running rose.

MD: Sweetheart rose?

EJ: No, it was something else – I can't think right now but anyhow if I didn't scratch myself all over.

MD: Were you upstairs or downstairs?

EJ: I was downstairs, I didn't have but about six feet to jump.

MD: And Charlie was upstairs?

EJ: Charlie was upstairs but he jumped in the sand bed and it didn't hurt Charlie like it did me, I think he was drinking too much. And I got back and my door was locked and I thought "Oh, how am I going to wake Willis up?" I didn't want him to tell anybody about it, I wanted to get back in the bed. We had one window but the door and just happened we didn't lock that window. So I eased in that way and I got to bed and the next morning he gets up, the lights come on. He would always get up when the lights would come on because they had to leave so early. And there I was, just bloody all over, just scratched. So he goes down to breakfast and he says "Charlie, you and Ervelia got your dates mixed

up.” He was teasing Charlie, and we had only been married, I guess, a year by then. I was still real young, I didn’t want to come out, I stayed in bed, pretended I was sick.

MD: Now when did you start following the woods crew?

EJ: It’s about – I think it must have been about ’37 or ’38 that we moved out...and we moved – oh, let me see –

MD: The first place you lived was where?

EJ: It was called Buggerville – Mr. Reed was the section foreman there and they just called it Buggerville because it was on the Neches River, real close, right on the river, that was in Cherokee County. Then Judy was born there but we didn’t live there but about a month and they moved us on to White –

MD: Bluff City?

EJ: Bluff City – and we started there until Judy was about six months old.

MD: And when you were at these other camps?

EJ: Now this was the second round, I’d already lived all these places, oh, wait a minute now.

MD: What kind of houses did you live in?

EJ: House car on the railroad tracks.

MD: Okay, tell me about them, what it looked like, about your house.

EJ: Well, it looked like a plain old boxcar until you walked inside. The kitchen had built-in cabinets. We had a bath on the back, although it was a washtub. We had wood heaters, we didn’t have to pay any rent, the water was in a tank next to the steps at the back of the house. Two cars had a porch in between them and wherever the shop was is where we moved to. There were several families lived there with us and worked in the shop but they lived in these little long cars that they built out of lumber that came from the houses in Fastrill because they were moving everybody away from Fastrill. They were on stilts and when they got ready to move they would back a truck under there and put them, raise those – let the house drop down on the truck and move wherever they were going and then they would raise the stilts and the trucks would drive out and that’s what the people lived in. They had two of these with a little porch in between them. There was one other family, Mrs. Getsman’s daughter, that lived in another one, house car, on the track next to us, but it was because he stayed down there a lot, wherever we moved.

MD: Whenever you got ready to move what would they do?

EJ: This section crew would come in, I'd put my dishes in the sink and I'd put a sheet in there, a tablecloth, put my dishes down in there, wrap them up and fasten up the sides of the cabinet doors so they wouldn't come open and the section crew would do that, the men came in to do that. We'd tie the beds down, take the rollers out from under the beds and they couldn't roll around, the furniture couldn't move. They would tie that down. I'd walk out and get in the car and go where I wanted to and spend the day. Sometimes I'd go home sometimes I'd go back into Fastrill. A lot of times the other women and me would go shopping until they got moved and go back and everything would be in its place; I'd walk in the house and that was the end of it. Now I don't know how the other people did about their – those little houses they lived in but I'm sure it was fixed so everything could be tied down. But I don't remember – I don't know about that because my cars were built different.

MD: Did they put siding inside, did they, you know –

EJ: No, my house was sealed – I had linoleum on the floor. I had two beds in one room. Then instead of having a chest of drawers, I had shelves and Willis's shelf was the top, one for all his work clothes and my shelf was the next one, and Bill's the next and all the way down we had shelves. They would slant to the back so they wouldn't slip out and had a little board thing and curtains over it. You couldn't see it, it looked like window curtains because they matched the curtains in the house. They didn't slip and slide around. You didn't have to worry about the drawers falling out or anything like that. Although I did have a bedroom suit in one room, and when we moved to Diboll when the cars wrecked – we broke the legs off of it. It knocked the chairs down and it turned over the chest of drawers and it did a lot of things because, see, it was loose from the wall and it tore up quite a bit of our furniture.

MD: This was after you had moved into Diboll, about 1940 or '41?

EJ: It was '41.

MD: Okay – '41 – and how did that accident happen?

EJ: They let cars get away from the shop. The funniest thing that has always worried me, I dream things a lot of times, and it happens. I dreamed that they let flat cars get away and run into our house, but of course I didn't dream anything happened. I went to three different people to try and get a house and they said I could have one of those red town houses but I didn't want that. I thought my children were kind of special, and I've always lived in a comfortable home and I just felt like I'd rather live in a car on the railroad tracks. They were much nicer than living in them – more comfortable, I thought. So I guess you would say it's my fault, in a way, but Willis wanted it that way, too, because they put it up there in Copestown and, okay, a Mrs. Ballenger lived right behind me.

MD: Mrs. Mae Ballenger?

EJ: Yes, and Claude Welch and Mrs. Standley lived in a house on one side, I had real good neighbors there. So if I couldn't have a house, I liked it real well up there.

MD: Was this kind of at the end of the track?

EJ: Yes, right up there in – the tree is still standing that was in the front yard there. My baby – while I – I had to get the baby to sleep, see there's just 21 months difference in their age and Pat was two years and nine months old. She had gone in the refrigerator and the shop was right behind the cars, and she got a piece of cheese and a cracker and carried it to her daddy because she was the biggest daddy girl in the world.

MD: He was at the shop?

EJ: He was at the shop and I had put the baby to bed, she was about eleven months old then and I had to get her to bed, I bathed her and put her to bed and then I'd always bath Pat and put her to bed. It was about ten o'clock, and I had baked somebody, Mrs. Burchfield had died and I had baked something for them to take down there and then there was another lady that came in and visited that morning. I called Pat and she wasn't in the house and I looked and I saw her coming. When I carried the baby across the hall, the porch, to put her to bed, I saw her coming towards the house and I heard this rumbling noise. I thought "Ooooh – I just screamed and put Judy on the bed and I ran back to get her and it hit. I hung on to a screen door, that was all, and the porch went just straight up and down, stood on end, and all I had to hang on was my left hand. I grabbed – I opened the door with my left hand and I was hanging there and when I looked out, there was fire, this light wire, it broke the light wires. It didn't hit once, it hit two or three different times, just kept jumping, you see. I don't know whose fault it was, I do know they told me that whoever was on that train, I never did try to find out, but they had been drinking all day Sunday, that was on Monday. But anyhow, it happened and I go crazy when I think about it. Anyhow in the meantime, Willis had to go to the shop to start a truck or something, and he had sent her to the house and she had started up the steps when the train hit. It threw her off and it hit her up beside the head and cut her arm off at the elbow, there was nothing holding. I ran to the back to get the baby, she was in the room where it hit but she was all right. The bed had innerspring mattresses and the baby was all right. I heard her, Pat say "Momma, momma, the train's cut my arm off." And I couldn't get to her. MacHenry Kimmey and there was a Mr. Ford that was selling parts, they bought the parts from in Lufkin, was there. He grabbed her up and I got in the – I don't remember who I gave my baby to. I think I gave it to MacHenry and I got in the car with him and went to the doctor's office and he gave me a shot and knocked me out, just about it. By that time Willis had got – when we got back to the house. I don't know who took her, I guess the doctor, no, Mr. Ford carried her on, Mr. Ford carried her on to the hospital and I had to go home and put on some more clothes, my dress, somehow I had torn it. The whole arm out of it down the side, I remember doing that. I got to the hospital, I heard somebody – when I was going up the steps, I heard somebody say "Well, where was the mother when this happened?" I completely passed out. They wouldn't let me go see my baby, they put me on a bed across the hall with no sheets on it or anything and I guess every time I would come to they'd give me another shot. I don't

know. Ruth Currie was always my best friend in Fastrill and Ruth, when I finally got to where I could go in there – I don't know how long she'd been there, but it must have been at least a couple of days because we had called a nurse from Jacksonville because we knew her real well, we liked her, Mrs. O'Brian, and they had – Ora had – I went in there and Ruth was there and I thought "Why doesn't Ruth give me this chair?" But I know by she didn't then because I didn't know what I was doing – I didn't know what I was doing at all. She stayed in the hospital fifty-six days and the doctor thought she would cry for me and they thought it was better for us not to go in there and they had nurses around the clock, Mrs. O'Brian, Mrs. Holland stayed with her. We could go and look in. Mr. Kenley, Dave Kenley, said he had an apartment we could stay in because we didn't have any place to live. We stayed over there two or three days and Vinnie called me and told me to come home and stay with them. But when I got there my baby was at Mrs. Jordan's house so we stayed there and I had to have surgery before Pat came home. I was hurt, had pulled my back in two and had to have some more surgery, female. My uterus dropped, they tied it up, I don't know why they didn't take it out but they didn't back then, that has been a long time ago and – forty-four years – forty-three years – and so finally they got us a house, I don't think I want to tell what we went through.

MD: No, not if you don't want to.

EJ: I'd rather not, honey, it was the awfulest thing anybody had ever been in.

MD: Since Pat was so young when this happened, has she had to have a lot of surgery and therapy since then?

EJ: While she was growing she had to have six amputations to her arm – the bone would grow out and we'd have to put her in the hospital and they would have to take part of that bone off and when she was about fifteen years old, I guess she had her growth, and that's the last time we had it done. At that time we put her in therapy in Methodist Hospital in Houston – in Herrmann Hospital – for several weeks and they fitted her with an artificial arm, she has a glove – she enjoys working with the people.

MD: And what is Pat doing today?

EJ: She works there at the treatment center.

MD: At the McKewen Center?

EJ: Yes.

MD: And what does she – is she helping people?

EJ: Yes, she is helping people that have had strokes and children that –

MD: And I imagine she can identify with them, looks like she'd be a great help.

EJ: Yes, she said this lady had had this stroke and liked to cook and because this arm was paralyzed she couldn't cook.

MD: Mrs. Jordan, when you moved into Diboll, did you think the people were friendly and did they accept the people from Fastrill?

EJ: They were friendly, they were nice, we went to the Methodist Church. The Fullers lived here, the Estes's and Pickle's and they were all very nice to us, real nice. And although we eventually went to the Church of Christ in Lufkin, because that was the church Willis belonged to and the Methodist preacher came down and talked to me and I said I heard my children talking – I hear Beth ask Bill which church he was going to – wanted to join because mother and daddy went to both churches and they didn't know what to do about it. He said "I'll tell you what do, you go to church with your husband, take your children and let them decide for themselves." I told him that my grandfather was Methodist, I'd always – I was baptized into the Methodist Church when I was a baby, that was all I knew, I didn't know anything about other churches until I married, that I was happy with it. He said "But when you marry someone – a man and he will go to church with you, you get up and go because my wife and me didn't belong to the same church when we married" said "If you got a husband that likes to go to church, the best thing to do is go on to church and it worked out just fine for us." Of course, now the children are grown and they can make their own choice, but they were all baptized into the Church of Christ. Willis' grandfather was a Church of Christ preacher. But it hasn't made any difference. I like the Church of Christ, I'm satisfied, I'm happy with it myself.

MD: Tell me more about the boxcar house.

EJ: It was just real warm, they had it sealed real good, you know, with thick lumber and outside was reinforced and I had a long cabinet, much longer than this one down one side and it was just, they were just real comfortable. Now I don't know how comfortable those houses on stilts were though, that's what worries me. If I could just think about that and I can't think of anybody that lived in them. Now Corrie Minton might have lived in some with her first husband, I don't know. You know Minton died a week or two ago. She lives right down here – and I don't know.

MD: They just made those little cars to fit on the trucks?

EJ: They made them fit, a truck would run under them and they'd let the cars down on them and then when – wherever they set them up, well, they'd set two up and make a little porch in between them, a little walk. One side was the kitchen and the other side were bedrooms. There was a lot – I think there were about 25 families out there on 94. It was the other side of the Neches River because we picked up our mail, we had a mail box down there at the Neches River from the beer joint, I remember that, that's where I lived when Pat was born.

MD: Did that have a name, or did they just say "94"?

EJ: I think they said “Red Town” – no – “94,” I believe. Over there at Rayville, that was the ranch, and the deer, the railroad – well, we were on the railroad track and there was a corn field behind it and we’d get up and that field would be just full of deer. I’ve never seen that many deer in my life. Of course, where I grew up we didn’t have deer then although they do now.

MD: When you were out on this logging camp, did you have electricity?

EJ: Oh no, we had – I had an oil stove, we had a wood heater, had lamps and burned coal oil.

MD: And they’d just bring your water in?

EJ: It was in a big tank like they haul oil now on the railroad track. It was full of water and when it would run out of water, they’d go up the river and refill it, they’d go up the river and pump it full of water. And on the end of that they’d have a big feed car with feed in it, hay, and I guess, corn and oats, any way something in sacks, I kind of think it was oats, for the horses and mules.

MD: Mrs. Jordan, when the – you were out in the woods, what did they use the horses and mules for and where did they keep them?

EJ: They had a corral out from where we lived. They had horses for the foremen to ride and mules to pull the wagons that would haul the trees that were cut. They always kept horses in the corral with the mules because the mules would break out once in a while. When the men would come out to work, they’d get on a horse and go after the mules and catch the horse that they were following and bring them back to the corral and that’s the way they handled the mules, to bring them back to the corral. They wouldn’t follow one another, they followed the horse.

MD: Did they leave the mules out in the woods by themselves?

EJ: No, the corral would have someone living out there, a man and his wife and family and, sometimes they would have a corral and they would live in a rent house near by. I’ve known families that lived in a tent when it was summer time to watch after them but that was by choice, I guess, I don’t know that much about it. But I do know that they always put out so much feed every night, there had to be a man there to put out the feed all day so when the work day was over they’d bring in the mules, they’d have something to eat on all night. But once in a while, when it was bad weather they’d break out, they’d have to go after them. But all they had to do was catch the horse that they were following and carry them back to the corral.

MD: The mules were really the workhorse? They did all the work?

EJ: Oh, yes, they did the work. The horses were used for the foremen to ride, the scaler and the – well, I guess every department had a foreman over it because there were

several. I know Hugh Tims was over one thing, Albert J. Wells would be over something else and somebody over the section crew and – but everybody left Fastrill on a work train wherever they went to. They had a lot of heavy machinery then, see, they had skidders and loaders, the loader was on the railroad track. They had graders and tractors and these big wagons. I guess they would have four or six mules to a wagon sometimes, the logs would be so large.

MD: Can you remember – did the logs seem a lot larger than they do now?

EJ: Oh yes, they did – I know the logs they cut from our land, I saw more of them than I did anything else, and they were huge logs. But the funny thing, we didn't have insurance, you know, Nobody had insurance and they let us all ride the train, you know, people would come to Diboll and Diboll people would come out there on the train, work train.

MD: They wouldn't dare do that now, would they?

EJ: No, I think the last thing happened and that was Margaret Farrel Moore, Tommy Moore's wife, they – her daddy and Willis, one of them was an engineer and the other was a fireman and they carried us to the woods one afternoon to pick up the woodcrew, the men, and there was a log train with logs backing in from the other direction and ran four or five flat cars of logs over this train and it liked to have scared everybody to death, including me. That was the last time I ever heard of women riding the train. So I guess we weren't supposed to be doing that but everybody did.

MD: Yes, I've heard a lot of people talk about it.

EJ: You never thought anything about it, it was just something – well, we didn't have insurance but didn't know any better.

MD: Well, describe one of these logging camps that you lived in when you lived in your boxcar house. What was the biggest one you lived in?

EJ: Now when we moved in – one time out on "94", had the most people living there and that was when they were moving Fastrill to Diboll and after that, there wouldn't be more than three or four families. It'd be the mechanics that worked in the shop and the diesel mechanic and that just about does it, it couldn't be very many there, just whoever Willis had to have in the shop. The work went on there seven days a week.

MD: This area where you lived was mostly the people who worked for Mr. Jordan. A lot of them were?

EJ: Not all of them, there were several that did other things but I don't remember just what it was. Come to think of it I can't think of anybody that wasn't a mechanic that lived there.

MD: And every time –

EJ: Everybody would move.

MD: The timber gave out they would just move to another?

EJ: Yes, or it would start raining and they couldn't work there, they would move to another place, there wasn't anything to do, they would find another place to move to.

MD: Tell me about the shop.

EJ: Well, it was a portable affair, it had siding that they could load on to a flatbed truck, take it all down, take the roof off and they would have carpenters who would come in and put it back up when we moved to another camp. But they had to have a place to work.

MD: That is unusual that they could just tear it down and move it whenever they needed to.

EJ: And it was more complete there, they called it Red Gate, I believe, between – I don't know, about five miles from Apple Springs, I guess.

MD: And that was on "94"?

EJ: Yes, and the most that lived out like that, when we moved, must have been at least twenty-five families, black and white, - that drove trucks and things.

MD: When you were living in your boxcar house did you have to pay any rent?

EJ: Oh, no, no, you didn't pay any rent. That's the reason we were living there, we were saving up money, we had built a house on my land in Houston County and we bought land at Glover next to – I think we bought ten acres next to the Glover School over there and had planned to build a house there and rent it out. The school was a consolidated school and it didn't last very long. So eventually, we sold the land and timber which I'm real sorry about now because once in a while I go back by there and see all the pretty timber and the people I know.

END OF INTERVIEW