

ROSIE LILLY

Interview 242a

September 26, 1988, at 803 James Street, Lufkin, Texas

Valencia Kuykendall, Interviewer

Patsy Colbert, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Valencia Kuykendall for the East Texas in the 1940's By Word of Mouth publication, Rosie Lilly recalls life in the 1940's. She talks about World War II and its impact on her family, her many years spent singing in churches and traveling to revivals, and the positive influence of her family.

Valencia Kuykendall (hereafter VK): This is Valencia Kuykendall interviewing Rosie Lilly for *East Texas in the 1940's By Word of Mouth*. The interview is taking place September 26, 1988 at 803 James Street, Lufkin, Texas. Mrs. Lilly what were times like in the 1940's?

Rosie Lilly (hereafter RL): Times were good in the 1940's. We were working. I was singing, traveling and singing with my brother in the religious field and he was a minister and we went far and near trying to save souls.

VK: How did you and your family live?

RL: My father worked at the foundry and my brother worked at the foundry and they made the way for us to have a living.

VK: What is your most outstanding memory of the 1940's?

RL: My outstanding memory was my brother was called to the army and he went to the army and was on the front line and he served in the service for a long...for 3 years. Of course we were concerned about him being there but, he made it back safe.

VK: What types of things did you do during that time?

RL: During that time I was traveling and singing with my brother, in revival, in the forties.

VK: What did you like to do most and why?

RL: I liked to sing because I enjoyed it.

VK: How did your relatives treat you?

RL: My relatives were very, very kind to me. They sent me to school and they did all they could for me back there and they were very, very good.

VK: What did they do with you that you remember best?

RL: Sending me to school, carrying me to church and feeding me.

VK: What times with your family were most enjoyable to you and why?

RL: At the family reunion when we would all come together and we could see one another and we had a mighty good time mixing and eating and not drinking.

VK: What was the funniest experience you had in the 1940's?

RL: The funniest experience I ever had in the 1940's is one day when my mother was making tea cakes and my brother was trying to get him some out of the pan and he picked the whole pan up and dropped them on his head and burned himself. That was the funniest experience I had along with them.

VK: Can you remember something funny that happened to someone in your family besides the teacakes?

RL: Let's see, one time my brother, we were all sitting out in the yard and we were playing a game 'sit down and jump up' and somebody grabbed the chair out from under my brother and he hit the ground.

VK: What was the saddest thing you remember from the 1940's?

RL: From the 1940's I remember my father passed away on January 3, 1959 and that was the saddest moment for us in our lives. His name was Moses Tims.

VK: What kind of work did you or your family do in the 1940's?

RL: My father worked at the foundry and I was traveling and singing as I said.

VK: What did it mean to you?

RL: It meant a lot to me. You meet people. It was an experience to get to see the world, people of the world and see the big cities, singing in the big cities, singing in the big churches and bringing souls to Christ.

VK: How did you feel about living in the country?

RL: I felt good about living in the country, the fresh air. We raised all our food and all and it was nice. It was good out there.

VK: How about the city?

RL: The city has been fine. You get to see so much more than you do in the country and there are more things to do in the city than it is in the country so I liked it fine.

VK: Which do you like best, the country or the city and why?

RL: I like the city the best because you can get around better in the city. We have the street cars, the shuttles and all and you have somewhere to ride and its better. It's more convenient for you. It's more things to see and more to learn.

VK: What cities did you travel while singing?

RL: Kansas City, Missouri, California, Arizona, New York City, Michigan, and quite a few more that right now is not coming to my mind.

VK: How big a part did religion play in your life?

RL: I directed the choir for years. I was lead soloist for a quartet and that kept me busy, kept me doing things. I directed the choir at the New Zion Baptist Church.

VK: About how many churches do you recall singing at?

RL: I should say somewhere around about seventy and in Kansas City, Missouri at this revival we were in, we had 101 persons to come to Christ.

VK: Recount your memories of the home front during World War II.

RL: My brother was in service in World War II and he told us a many a thing that I think about lots and lots of times that happened to him when he was there in World War II. He was on the front line and he told us about a many a thing that happened.

VK: How was your family affected by World War II?

RL: We were all worried. We were upset. We didn't know what would happen to him before he got back. He was there for 3 years and we just worried quite a bit about him, my mother and father and all of us.

VK: How did your family life change after the war?

RL: We all settled down because everybody was home and we didn't have that to worry about that he might get killed and we never see him again.

VK: What do you consider to be the most valuable possession from the 1940's?

RL: From the 1940's I feel good that I have a home to live in and I have a husband and he used to work at the Lufkin High School. He is here with me and I feel like we have really profited from the 1940's.

VK: If you could go back and live in the 1940's over again what would you change?

RL: First I would change the low cost of paying for jobs. Jobs wasn't paying very much then and you wasn't getting much money to live on. I would try work to the extent to help raise the salaries back there so people could live better and lead better lives.

VK: What advice could you give young people which would help them lead better lives?

RL: I would tell the young people to be sure to get their education. I would tell them to stay with the church. I would tell them to take care of their health. I would tell them to respect their mother and father. I would tell them to be sure to stay away from drugs so they would have good health in the future.

VK: What experiences did you have in the 1940's that they could benefit from?

RL: Out there we had to go to school and we didn't have a whole lot of things to do, but I could tell them it would be best to try to not stay out so late at night and to come home early and study their lessons and stay with the Lord like we did back there in the forties.

VK: How many people were in your family and what number were you?

RL: There were thirteen brothers and sisters in our family and I was the ninth one.

VK: Did you enjoy being the ninth child?

RL: Yes, I thought it was good when I come along and I enjoyed it. The others that were older than me took up so much time with me playing with me and all and I was just real happy coming along about that time.

VK: Were they ever jealous of you?

RL: They didn't seem to be jealous of me. They seemed to be proud of me. I loved all of them. I had a favorite though; my oldest sister Teresa was my favorite. She would just comb my hair and just bathe me and took care of me so good and make me...she was so nice to me. She made my clothes and I just had so many pretty little dresses that she would sit down and make for me and I enjoyed it real, real well.

VK: Was your family very religious?

RL: My family was very religious. My father was a deacon in the church and my mother sang in the choir. My mother could give out hymns in the church and I had two brothers ministers, Reverend Moses Tims and the other one was Reverend Eugene Tims.

VK: Did you sing a lot in the church?

RL: I sang a lot in the church. I sang from a child in the children's choir and then on up in the senior choir and then I directed the choir of course at the New Zion Baptist Church.

VK: What got you interested in singing and did you ever take lessons?

RL: One thing got me interested in singing was my mother was a songster and I always listened to her and I enjoyed her singing and then I started out trying to sing and then I took lessons from Mrs. Eunice Victory in singing.

VK: Did that improve your singing a lot taking lessons from Mrs. Victory?

RL: Oh yes it did. Mrs. Eunice Victory is a genius and she helped me so very, very much in my singing. I really did benefit from taking from her.

VK: What are you doing now?

RL: As of now I'm just at home, a senior citizen, a housewife going to church. I'm not singing in the choir anymore, but I am a deacon's wife. My husband is a deacon in the church, Elmer Lilly, at the New Zion Baptist Church and I'm now serving on the deacon's wife staff.

VK: Do you miss singing in the church?

RL: Oh I miss singing in the church so very, very, much. I sing with the congregation when the congregation is singing. I sing in the congregation and enjoy it so much.

VK: Did you receive a lot of awards while you were singing?

RL: I received a lot of awards. I got quite a few plaques while I was singing; at the end of the revivals that I was in they would always present me with a plaque for service at that church while I was there. I have them now and I certainly do appreciate it. I go around looking at them and thinking of the work that I have done in the past and seeing what the people had done for me in the way of appreciation.

VK: What other things did you do in the church beside singing?

RL: As of now I'm a Sunday school teacher at the New Zion Baptist Church. I'm a teacher in the Ruth Class, the name of my class, and I'm also with the Missionary Society. I am in a circle and our circle is also named Ruth and I'm enjoying the mission very, very, much.

VK: Have you always lived in Lufkin?

RL: No, I haven't always lived in Lufkin. I was born in Nacogdoches, Texas and we lived there until a long, long, time. When my father and mother moved to Lufkin I must have been somewhere around about ten or eleven years of age and that is when I joined up with the New Zion Baptist Church. I don't recall the year that we moved to Lufkin.

VK: Have you lived anywhere else besides Nacogdoches and Lufkin?

RL: I lived in Kansas City, Missouri for twenty years. I taught school in Kansas City, Missouri at the Woodland Heights Elementary School. I taught school there for ten years.

VK: What subjects did you teach?

RL: I taught the second grade level. I was on second grade level and I enjoyed those kids so very, very, much. School teaching is a great experience for you and I'm proud to say that I gave my all to the children to try to give them what they needed. I also attended college in Kansas City, Missouri. I first went to college in Tyler, Texas at Butler College.

VK: Is there anything else you would like to add to our "By Word of Mouth" book?

RL: What is your question?

VK: Is there anything else that you would like to add to our book?

RL: I surely would. I would like to say I sure wish you well and I just hope for a good year for you. I hope that your students will do well and I know you are good teacher because they love you so well. I also have one for the Governor of the State of Texas in our church and at that particular time Governor Smith was the governor and I went out and I have two plaques for that. In this drive that we had under my leadership I raised \$1300 and I won the prize.

VK: Thank you very much for letting me interview you for our *East Texas: The 1940's By Word Of Mouth*.

END OF INTERVIEW