

Mrs. A. B. Glass
Interview 012a
October 21, 1982
Becky Bailey, Interviewer
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Abstract: In an interview with Becky Bailey, Mrs. A.B. Glass recalls growing up as the daughter of a team foreman for Southern Pine Lumber Company in lumber camps (Camp #1 and Berring) and in Diboll. She also recalls how she and her husband survived the Depression by working their land and farming.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): I am interviewing Mrs. A. B. Glass and she lives at Route 1, Box 602, Diboll, Texas. My name is Becky Bailey and today's date is October 21, 1982.

Mrs. Glass, where were you born?

Mrs. A. B. Glass (hereafter ABG): In Diboll...a mile and a half east of Diboll.

BB: A little bit further up the road.

ABG: Right up here in this old house. Right here next door to me.

BB: What was the name of the place?

ABG: Massingill.

BB: Massingill? That is what I thought.

ABG: John Massingill.

BB: When were you born?

ABG: September 23, 1901.

BB: That is a long time ago. What were your parents' names?

ABG: Laura and Marvin Warner.

BB: What was your mother's maiden name?

ABG: Massingill.

BB: This place where you were staying when you were born...

ABG: That was my grandfather's.

BB: Do you know...where did they come from originally? What state? Do you know?

ABG: Mississippi.

BB: They came from Mississippi?

ABG: Yes.

BB: Do you know about when?

ABG: No – a long, long time ago. My grandmother was twelve years old when they came to Texas from Mississippi.

BB: That was a long time ago. Has Marie been doing all that research and she knows all that?

ABG: Yes, she knows all that. Yes, she does.

BB: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

ABG: Yes, I had five brothers and five sisters.

BB: And you made the eleventh child. Oh, my word. What a big family. What kind of work did your father do?

ABG: He was team foreman for Southern Pine Lumber Company.

BB: What exactly does that mean...team foreman?

ABG: Well, he looked after their teams that hauled their logs. They hauled them on wagons and he looked after the mules and oxen. They hauled the logs out of the woods.

BB: He would haul them out to a spur line...is that the way it worked? And so he was in charge of all that?

ABG: Yes.

BB: So you must have lived in some lumber camps.

ABG: Yes, we lived out at Camp No. 1 and at Berring... old Berring. That is down in Polk County.

BB: I didn't know they had a camp in Polk County.

ABG: Well, we lived there.

BB: And your mother, was she just a housewife? She stayed home with the children?

ABG: Yes.

BB: What kind of education did you have growing up?

ABG: I went up to the eighth grade. I finished the eighth grade.

BB: Did they have schools at these lumber camps?

ABG: Yes, when I was twelve...thirteen, we moved to Diboll and I went to school in Diboll.

BB: From then on through the eighth grade. You told me a story about the school...was it Hoshall...Was that where you said? Whereabouts is Hoshall? Or used to be?

ABG: Yes...there is nothing there now but a little graveyard. It's between Burke and Lufkin, not very far from Burke. We were sitting there and we heard a racket and it was a car coming. We all jumped up and started to the door. The teacher said, "You all sit down, sit down!" But we didn't sit down. We went on out. That was the first car I ever saw.

BB: Did it make a lot of noise?

ABG: Well, it was a Ford. It made a pretty good noise. But I imagine we made more noise than the car did.

BB: Was this a one-room school there? And did you all have desks and things?

ABG: No, we had sawed blocks of wood and they put 2 x 12's on them and we were just marked off a certain space for us to sit and our books. We had to hold our writing in our laps.

BB: Well, whenever you quit school in the eighth grade, what did you do then? Did you stay at home?

ABG: I stayed at home and then I got married. I was just eighteen.

BB: Where did you and your husband set up housekeeping?

ABG: In Diboll, in Copestown. We had an apartment at the Baptist Parsonage. We had a little apartment there.

BB: Where in Copestown?

ABG: It just joined Diboll. It is altogether now.

BB: I mean is it over there around where the city hall is now?

ABG: No, it is on up north past Stovall's old Grocery Store.

BB: Oh, in that part of town.

ABG: Yes.

BB: What kind of work did your husband do when you first married?

ABG: He was a painter.

BB: And he worked for...

ABG: Southern Pine Lumber Company.

BB: So he took care of the Company houses...was that it?

ABG: Yes.

BB: Why didn't you have a company house?

ABG: Well, I really don't know...we just didn't have one. We never did live in a Company house but about two years for all our married life.

BB: Even though he took care of them, and did all the painting? When did he go to work for the Company? Was he already working for them when you got married?

ABG: He went to work for the Company when he was seventeen years old. He trucked lumber out on the "dolly run". They would load the lumber on the carts and he would push them into the planer. He did that for several years. And he started painting.

BB: Painting sounds like easier work...than pushing the carts.

ABG: I imagine it was. I didn't know him then.

BB: He was older?

ABG: He was five years older.

BB: Mrs. Glass, do you remember how much your husband got paid when you were married?

ABG: Four dollars and forty cents.

BB: How many hours did he work?

ABG: Ten.

BB: A ten- hour day. Was there any time off or that sort of thing?

ABG: No.

BB: Was it six days a week?

ABG: Six days a week.

BB: How many houses was he in charge of? Do you know how many?

ABG: No, I don't. It was quite a few.

BB: At this time you were a homemaker...right?

ABG: Yes.

BB: Tell me what it was like being a homemaker when you first got married.

ABG: Well, being the oldest of that many children, when I was home, I got up at four o'clock in the morning and cooked breakfast...me and my oldest sister. I knew what to do. I had been taught.

BB: When did you all move out of town then?

ABG: In 1924. We moved out about a mile from here where we live now and stayed there about two years and then we went back to Diboll and stayed until the spring of '27. And then we built this house.

BB: And he was working for the Company all this time?

ABG: But then he had gone to contracting. He would just say, "I'll do this room for so much." Or they would set the price.

BB: So he was kind of independent person by then.

ABG: Yes.

BB: Did he work the same hours and all that he had done before?

ABG: Yes, just about.

BB: When you moved out here did he farm any, too? On the side?

ABG: Not until the Depression. Oh, we had a garden.

BB: But not anything big.

ABG: No, not anything big.

BB: Once you moved out here, I bet it was a lot harder...housework wise, wasn't it...because you kept a garden?

ABG: Yes, because I had cows and chickens. Of course, I tended to them. I had to draw water out of the well.

BB: Oh, you had a well.

ABG: A cistern.

BB: A cistern, that's what it was.

ABG: A cistern instead of a well. And I had to wash on the rub board.

BB: You said something about having to go to a spring whenever you washed.

ABG: Well, after the Depression and he was home all the time, we had mules and a wagon. We would load up and go about a mile and a half right through the country here to a spring, and we would wash, hang the clothes on the Myrtle bushes to dry them and have a picnic.

BB: Well, that made it kind of a nice outing, anyway. It would take some of the drudgery out of it. When did he stop working for the Company? You said he was home all the time? Okay, in 1929 when the Depression first started, he was still working for them, but he was contracting.

ABG: He quit then...see they didn't do anything for several years.

BB: They didn't repair any of the houses?

ABG: They didn't do anything during the Depression.

BB: Was this like 1930 and 1931?

ABG: I believe he went back in about '34 or '35.

BB: They stopped almost four years before they did any work?

ABG: Yes, and we farmed. We had four mules and cultivators. He didn't have to walk, only when he was breaking his land.

BB: What did he raise? Cotton?

ABG: Cotton, corn, peanuts.

BB: I was reading somewhere that the cotton prices just went to the bottom.

ABG: Oh yes. That first year I think we raised about seven bales of cotton, hauled it to Houston, and took five cents a pound for it.

BB: Five cents a pound after all of that work?

ABG: Yes, after all that work.

BB: How much does a bale of cotton weigh?

ABG: About four hundred pounds.

BB: That was twenty dollars a bale. That was terrible. Did the next year...did he raise cotton after that?

ABG: Yes, we just kept on. Just kept raising because we thought someday it was going to get better. And that twenty dollars then was like about five hundred now.

BB: That's true.

ABG: It went a long ways. We borrowed fifty dollars the second year and we made a crop and fed us other than what we raised. We made a crop and fed four mules.

BB: So that was pretty good.

ABG: Fifty dollars...now think about that.

BB: It would barely buy the feed nowadays, would it?

ABG: It wouldn't buy the feed, no.

BB: How much did he farm? How many acres?

ABG: I will say about fifty-five acres.

BB: Oh, that's a lot. Where did he borrow the money from?

ABG: From Lufkin National.

BB: From Lufkin National...so they were still loaning money during this time?

ABG: Yes.

BB: During this time when he got laid off, do you remember going without food? I mean just without...that you needed.

ABG: No, we really didn't. We had our food. We had plenty of food, plenty of clothes. I would take hand-me-downs, and I would do them over, remodel them. I would sell a few chickens or eggs to people at Diboll. They would come out here and get milk and butter. If you managed, watched what you did, you did all right. We had plenty to eat, plenty to wear and we were happy.

BB: When did Mr. Glass go to work for the WPA?

ABG: During the Depression. I don't remember what year. But he was foreman when they were putting in those pit-type toilets.

BB: Did they do it all over the county, or just in this area?

ABG: He had a section.

BB: Do you remember about how big the crews were?

ABG: I think he had about four men.

BB: Under him?

ABG: Yes.

BB: Where was the headquarters?

ABG: There was a lady at Burke. That is where he would go to the meetings. Miss Nobie Campbell at Burke.

BB: That is where he worked out of...she had an office and that sort of thing?

ABG: Yes.

BB: You were telling me...in the newspaper article that you showed me about the canning. When did you start doing this? Now this was canning for other people, wasn't it?

ABG: Yes, that was during the Depression.

BB: Was this right after he started farming or was this later?

ABG: No, I would say about a year later. We would take our canner and sealer and go in the wagon and maybe can all day long for \$3.00. That was a lot of money.

BB: That was a lot of money, but that was a lot of work. Canning is not easy. And you would use the sealer. Now this wasn't jars.

ABG: No, canners.

BB: Not many people had those, did they?

ABG: No, not too many people.

BB: Is the process the same as when you are putting it in jars? How do you do it?

ABG: I would blanch my food...beans, peas or corn. If it was corn, you would cook it, put it in the cans while it was hot and seal it. I remember corn and peas, you cooked them an hour on ten pounds pressure.

BB: Oh, it was under pressure, after you sealed them?

ABG: Yes, after you sealed them. Then you had to put it in cold water, and cool the can completely before you put them away.

BB: Was it more trouble than jars? I am sure you have done it both ways.

ABG: No!

BB: It wasn't as much?

ABG: No. It was a lot easier than jars, quicker. You could do 150 to 200 cans a day.

BB: You couldn't put that many up into jars.

ABG: No.

BB: Would you buy the cans?

ABG: Yes.

BB: Would you furnish the cans for \$3.00?

ABG: No, they would.

BB: You would just come and put it up.

ABG: They would furnish everything.

BB: That's still a lot...because I have canned in jars.

ABG: That's a job. One Sunday morning we were getting ready to go to church, and we had to walk to Diboll to the Methodist Church. We didn't have a car, so we walked. Somebody knocked on the back door. It was a man that lives back over here. He said that, "I know you go to church, but I am in a tight." He said, "We broke our sealer. Could we get you to bring your sealer and come over and can some beans? We have two no.3 wash tubs full of beans ready to can." I said, "Yes, the ox is in the ditch, and I'll help my neighbor." I went over there and I canned all day long. Late that afternoon when I started home, she gave me twelve sugar sacks. I worked all day for twelve sugar sacks. But you can't imagine what I could make out of those sugar sacks.

BB: Were these like the feed sacks?

ABG: Yes, white...They were washed and pressed. I made sheets, pillow cases, and made the children little panties...put a little lace on them and little blouses. I would just starch them and iron them...and they would look so pretty...just like linen.

BB: Yes. Mrs. Glass, you were talking about going to the Methodist Church, did the church have any I'm not going to say welfare, but if someone was in need in town, did the church help take care of any people during this time?

ABG: Well, really I don't know during that time, right at that time...I just don't remember. But I know years later in the later thirties, we did, if people were sick.

BB: Everybody just chipped in.

ABG: Or we always had a little money in the treasury in the Missionary Society. That is what we called it then.

BB: Right. Not the UMW.

ABG: It always fell my lot to go see about them.

BB: Oh, really, you got to take the food or whatever.

ABG: Well, usually we would have to buy medicine for them.

BB: But the church did do something.

ABG: Oh yes, we helped.

BB: Well, living this far out, did you encounter any hobos?

ABG: No, I don't remember ever having any.

BB: After your husband quit...or didn't quit...just got kinda laid off, you would call it, were you still able to use the commissary? Could anyone in town...?

ABG: Anyone could use. Everyone all over this whole country went to the commissary. Because Burke or Lufkin was the nearest...there wasn't any little grocery stores around. It was just the commissary here and one store at Burke or you went in to Lufkin.

BB: I wasn't sure if it was just for the people who worked there or what?

ABG: Oh, no.

BB: Your husband, being a private contractor in a way, did he get paid in cash from the Company or did they give him scrip or checks?

ABG: No, he got paid in cash.

BB: He got paid in cash because he wasn't...were the prices there about the same if you would go...

ABG: Yes, I couldn't tell any difference.

BB: How long would it take you to go to Lufkin if you decided to go? Would you go on the train?

ABG: Well, I have gone on the train. If I needed to go to the doctor or something, I would go up on the train and come back. We could, the T.S.E. had a passenger coach, and you could go up, I believe it was about 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning when they run, you could go up on that and come back on the passenger train. It came back at 2:30 in the afternoon.

BB: Oh, that made it a nice outing then. Then he started working for the Company again, say about '34 or '35?

ABG: Yes, along there.

BB: Did it seem like things just easier all over, you know around town, about that time?

ABG: Yes, when they went back to work, things picked up.

BB: Did he do anymore farming after this or did he have his fill?

ABG: Well, we put it in pasture, to raise cattle after that. We just made it permanent pasture.

BB: Do you think a Depression such as happened in '29 or '30 could happen again?

ABG: Well, it could, but I don't know what to say about that but I don't think it will ever get that bad again.

BB: Do you think people would be as accepting now as you all were?

ABG: No, not the younger generation. They wouldn't know how to handle it.

BB: Being without?

ABG: Being without.

BB: Why do you think it was different for you?

ABG: Well, now take our family, we didn't have anything and we were used to not having anything. I think that is one reason that it wasn't too hard on us.

BB: And nowadays people have had and it would be hard to go without.

ABG: It would be hard. A child now, by the time they get a driver's license, they have to have a car of their own. Our girls never had a car, but they drove our car.

BB: Things would be a lot different?

ABG: Yes, they surely would.

BB: Mrs. Glass, what did you think of the Presidents during this time?

ABG: Well, you had a different feeling. You felt like when they were going to speak or they would say, "The President", well, it was something. You know, it was just thrilling.

BB: Would you listen to the radio?

ABG: Yes we had a battery radio.

BB: How did people feel about the difference between Hoover and Roosevelt? Were they optimistic when Roosevelt was first elected? Did they think he would do something or did they think, "Well, this is going to be the same old thing."?

ABG: No, I don't think we did. We didn't feel that way about him. There was a difference. It was just something we thought we were going to have better.

BB: Be better?

ABG: Be better.

BB: Did you and Mr. Glass vote for Roosevelt whenever...?

ABG: Oh, yes.

BB: When you had a chance, huh?

ABG: Yes, when we had a chance. That was one thing we never did fail to do was to vote. He voted up until two years before he passed away.

BB: Do you remember who you voted for when Hoover was running the first time?

ABG: No, I can't recall.

BB: That was a long time ago. Well, I was reading some articles in Lufkin that said when Hoover first took office they were saying that everything was looking good and the economy, was you know, coming along and that he should have the greatest presidency. So at that time I guess, they felt the same way about Hoover as they did about Roosevelt. But hindsight is always easy to look back and think about it.

ABG: People ate those old armadillos. That was how bad it got for some people.

BB: Did they do that here?

ABG: Yes, you know, they just didn't have anything and I guess they just didn't know how to manage or what to do.

BB: My grandmother said she ate armadillo.

ABG: Sure enough.

BB: She said she will never do it again, either.

ABG: No, I never did...but some did.

BB: Who didn't have their livestock and that sort of thing?

ABG: Yes.

BB: It would be bad.

(The dialogue stops here)

END OF INTERVIEW