

WILL JACKSON

Interview 103a

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with student Joseph Phipps, Professor Will Jackson recalls life as a musician during the Depression. He hung paper and did odd jobs during the day, and taught music at night to make ends meet. Eventually, Professor Jackson began to work at the Texas Southeastern Railroad, and the regular salary helped get him through those tough years.

This is an interview with Professor Will Jackson, a well-known black citizen of Diboll. J. Phipps is doing the interview. Professor Jackson is 102 years of age.

Joseph Phipps (hereafter JP): Professor Jackson, can you tell us about the Depression and how it affected you.

Will Jackson (hereafter WJ): Well, it made it pretty hard for some of us. A lot of people didn't have jobs, couldn't get jobs. Times were kinda tight. For my part, I kept working day and night. I was teaching music at night, painting and hanging paper in the day. I went from that to the TSE railroad and stayed there until a few months ago—but things were pretty tight.

JP: Professor, how much money did you make a year when you were working for TSE railroad during the Depression?

WJ: During the Depression? Well, I think I started in about \$1.25 a day.

JP: What was your income for the year though?

WJ: I hardly know.

JP: Could you just give us an estimate on how much you made during the year during the Depression working for the TSE railroad?

WJ: Well, we would have to count it. They paid every two weeks at \$1.25 a day and they finally raised me up to \$1.35. Hanging paper and teaching music—I don't know what my income was.

JP: Did you make any money teaching music?

WJ: Yes.

JP: What was your salary teaching music?

WJ: Well, the way it was, I would teach this class. I would leave that class and go to another one and stay there until I finished it. It was according to how many scholars you had. I would have 25 or maybe 30. And a day if you were working, making a \$1.25 an hour. That was about as high as I got—or \$1.35. Kinda like everything else, the more a fellow could do, the more he knew, the more he could make. I happen to have the advantage of some—I could work at night and day, too I would teach music at night. I went to work at the TSE and stayed there until a few months ago. They paid pretty fair.

JP: Professor, working for the TSE in the day and teaching at night, would you say you were a little bit luckier than some that didn't have a job?

WJ: Yes, because some of them couldn't get a job. I had a job and could get more. I will tell you, the more a fellow knows about different things, the better he gets along. If I wasn't teaching music, I wouldn't do nothing but hanging paper in the day—that was all some jobs you would get \$35.00, some jobs \$25.00. Some I was lucky to get \$40.00, but not very many at that. I had some fellows that worked with me. Freeland Goldman, he worked with me some and shine.

JP: Professor, what do you think about President Hoover's policy?

WJ: Well, some of it was pretty good and some of it wasn't so good. Some of them said if he stayed in office a little longer, we wouldn't be bothered with armadillos because they would eat all of them up. They called them Hoover Hogs. I never did eat a piece of armadillo that I know of.

JP: And you are 102 years old. Is that right?

WJ: That's right—102.

JP: In our conclusion, professor, do you think there will ever be another depression?

WJ: Yes, I think we finally have one. Might not be as bad as this one. If we have one, it will be a little light one. People are going to have to be more conservative about saving a little money. Come easy and go easy. That Depression would learn them how to save a little if they got a hold of a little, if they got a dollar, they would take a dime and put it away. Not ever going to get all of them saving anything. So if they don't have nothing, they are not ever going to have nothing and don't want nothing.

JP: And that concludes the talk with Professor Jackson. Thank you, professor.

WJ: You are welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW