

JOE M. MALANDERS
Interview 114a
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ABSTRACT: Joe M. Malanders recalls his memories of childhood and the Great Depression in this interview with Jorge Martinez. Mr. Malanders remembers working hard as a child, with few toys or opportunities for play. During the Depression he worked hard to support himself. Mr. Malanders is not hopeful when looking into the economic future.

Jorge Martinez (hereafter JM): What are your first memories as a child?

Joe M. Malanders (hereafter JMM): My first memory of when I was about four years old and that was when my father was working for the railroad. We used to go from one place to another and that was my first memory. I started remembering things, you know. Just with my daddy from the time I could remember.

JM: Where did your father work at?

JMM: He was a railroad man.

JM: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

JMM: I have four brothers and three sisters.

JM: Did you have any daily chores?

JMM: We all had our chores in the evening because we didn't have the things that children have today. The only thing we knew was coming home and working. We didn't have time to play, we did our chores and then we did our homework. When we started to school we did that at night, all of our chores, feed the hogs, feed the chickens, milk the cows.

JM: Did you have any games of sports in school?

JMM: The only games we had was like baseball and child games, you know, that kids play at school, but otherwise, as far as sports we didn't have anything but baseball at school.

JM: Do you see anything different from school then and now?

JMM: Today they have more activities in school and the rules and regulations are more loose today than when I came up because they were more strict when I came up. The teacher had more authority than they do now and that's one of the things I feel is wrong with the government, I mean the school board, taking the rulership away from the teachers, that doesn't give them no chance to discipline a child like they should be and that's why we have so much child delinquency because they get out of there and they think they can get away from them on out in life, as they go out into life.

JM: What year did you come to Diboll?

JMM: The first time I came was in 1943.

JM: Describe Diboll when you first came.

JMM: Diboll wasn't really anything then, it was small and they enlarged it when the logging camps all moved into Diboll and that's when it started growing because there wasn't anything here then.

JM: Describe a typical day in your life.

JMM: In Diboll? Well outside of working, that was everyday life, I mean here because, like I said, there wasn't anything to do, wasn't no here to go, weren't any restaurants or anything like that. You ate, you worked and that was about it. There weren't any kind of activities, not even for an adult.

JM: What kind of presents did you get for Christmas?

JMM: The only things we got were toys, I mean not toys, I'm sorry, fruit and things like that, we didn't get – there wasn't anything such as toys, we had a few firecrackers and that was about it.

JM: Did you have any dreams for yourself when you were little?

JMM: Dreams, oh well, I always had dreams of growing up, one of my dreams was traveling, which I did later on in years because I traveled all over the country, traveled all over the United States and I was in seventeen countries. I've met all types of people in all walks of life.

JM: Where did you work?

JMM: When I came to Diboll I worked over here at the sawmill. From there I started doing carpenter work, which I did up until later years.

JM: Where did you get married and with whom?

JMM: The first time I married, I married in Newton County at Weirgate and her name was Agnes Dorset and the second time I married in Mexico.

JM: When you were a child and somebody in your family got sick did you have any homemade medicine?

JMM: Mother always made those, we didn't know what a doctor was, she was the doctor herself you might say, so we never had a family doctor, we didn't know what a doctor was, really, because mother did everything for us. If we got sick mother made her homemade remedies. They were bad sometimes but you had to take them because mother said so.

JM: Can you name any type of medicine?

JMM: No, not in those home remedies, I can't. She mixed up so much; I don't know what she had.

JM: Were there any circuses or carnivals that came to town?

JMM: At that time there wasn't no big circus came, they were just little old traveling shows and those side shows, what we called them, medicine men, - they would call themselves selling medicine but it was actually just water, but people fell for it because they didn't know any different because you had never see one of those things, that was unusual that a side show would come through. The first big circus I ever remember going to was in 1927, when Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey came to Houston, the world's greatest circus. That's the first time I remember going to a big circus.

JM: Since your younger years until now do you see any change in transportation?

JMM: Oh, it is a tremendous change now because when I was coming up there were very few cars, when I first started coming out, you might say. What they called the Model T; their top limit was about 35 or 40 miles per hour. Whoever owned a car then, you might say, was a whole lot wealthier than other people because most of the traveling we did by horses, or horse and wagons. Airplanes, that was uncalled for, I mean the only airplanes you saw then was the small planes but very few people owned planes then.

JM: What kind of work were you doing before the Depression?

JMM: I was only fourteen when the Depression started?

JM: Do you think another depression will happen?

JMM: I sure do, I mean, I think I look for it to be within the next ten years that we will have a depression because things are going that way, our government is getting where it doesn't look like – the situation here in this country, they are looking at those foreign countries where they should be looking here. We have people here starving to death – I

remember one time I read in the paper Reagan said the people were starving here because they wanted to starve, but he doesn't even know what is going on out there. He doesn't know what is going on in this outside world, I mean, among the nation. He knows just what is going on up there, what they tell them up there. Most people don't know nothing about us down here, they don't know what starvation is – people starving today just like it is overseas but they don't know it because here in our country people don't have time for you. They trample over one another, I mean, if you've got anything, well, you've got it, you don't have it and that's why we are going to have another depression, but it is going to be worse than the one we had before because – they last depression we had was no work, people had a little money but this time it is going to be a lot of work but there isn't going to be any money in comparison to what the work is going to be because people – they hate to turn their money loose. Well, you can't blame them because it would cause inflation but, nevertheless, I look for a depression before long, it's coming.

END OF INTERVIEW