

**JEWEL STOVALL MATHEWS**

**Interview 141a**

**Oct. 5, 1993**

**Haynes Mathews, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:** Jewel Stovall Mathews remembers life in Alcedo, a Southern Pine Lumber Company lumber camp where she lived in a boxcar house with her family in the early 1920's. Her father ran the camp commissary, and she recalls their living conditions and the other families that lived near them. Mrs. Mathews' family eventually moved to Diboll so that she and her brothers could attend school, since the Alcedo School only had six grades.

This is Haynes Mathews interviewing Jewel Stovall Mathews about her days and recollections of Alcedo [Alceda]: A Southern Pine Lumber Company camp, located west of Lufkin. The date is October 5, 1993.

**HM:** Now tell me about how old you were and all about it.

**JM:** I was about 6 years old when we lived there.

**HM:** What were the circumstances of you going there? Did you all come from Manning?

**JM:** We came from Manning. My daddy worked at the Commissary at Manning. We were moved to Alcedo and he was the Commissary manager there.

**HM:** What did you live in? Let's talk about the living quarters.

**JM:** When we got there, our house was set up. It was on railroad tracks. Two cars—

**HM:** Where did it come from?

**JM:** It came from Manning. They set it up on tracks. The two cars were joined together by a hallway. They had a sleeping porch built on to that. We had a living room built on to that.

**HM:** Was that living room a separate boxcar?

**JM:** No. They just built it on.

**HM:** Oh, I see. What about water and electricity?

**JM:** We had running water.

**HM:** Where did you get it—out of the river?

**JM:** We had a faucet out in the yard and we got our water from that. We had a hydrant out in the yard.

**HM:** Did you have wells?

**JM:** I don't know where it came from.

**HM:** It must have come out of the river.

**JM:** Must have or they dug a well. I don't know which they did.

**HM:** How many people lived down there?

**JM:** I would say maybe 500.

**HM:** 500.

**JM:** The boarding house was the house next to ours. There were some men who did not have families that lived at the boarding house. I would see them go out every morning with their bucket and their dinner in it. They had syrup buckets.

**HM:** Would they ride the train out?

**JM:** Yes. They went on the train. They built railroad tracks out to the woods where they worked.

**HM:** Do you know how far it was from Alcedo?

**JM:** No. It was not too far because they would go out, spend the day and come back. After we moved to Diboll, I rode one of those trains from Diboll to Alcedo. It didn't seem like it was any ways through the woods.

**HM:** Can you name any of the people you remember back there?

**JM:** Dr. Evans was the camp doctor. C.W. Evans was a young man the same age as Preston, my brother (Preston Stovall). C.W. and Preston came to school one semester of summer school in Lufkin. They had a drug store and it was right in front of our house. They didn't seem to have much organization about where they put the houses. There was our house and the boarding house and then there was the doctor's house and the drug store right across a little road between us. And then from the drug store, there was another row of houses. I remember the Sanders lived there.

**HM:** Sanders?

**JM:** Sanders.

**HM:** What about that story you telling about the Sanders?

**JM:** About “Dad” Sanders being killed?

**HM:** Explain who “Dad” Sanders was.

**JM:** “Dad” Sanders was a young man that lived out there and he went to that honkey tonk at Corrigan and he got killed down there. Someone cut his throat. We heard his mother hollering when she got the word that night. Mama got up and said, “I’ve got to go to her.” She went over there and stayed with her awhile. Somebody had cut his throat at that dance hall at Corrigan. That stood out in my mind. We got our first car when we were living there. It was hard to drive it because there were deep ruts in the streets. There were not many cars at all. I don’t know of more than two or three in town.

**HM:** What did your father do down there?

**JM:** Daddy ran the Commissary. It was a big old building they had built there. It looked big to me at the time. It might not have been large. One side of it was groceries and the other side was dry goods where you could buy cloth and even a few ready-made-clothes. Ollie, my aunt lived with us and she worked there in the store for him. I don’t remember who else worked for him.

**HM:** What was the lady’s name that ran the boarding house?

**JM:** Mrs. Bowman. I remember seeing her pack those syrup buckets.

**HM:** What did you all do for entertainment down there?

**JM:** They had dances once in a while. They had a dance at our house one night. Some men would fiddle and play.

**HM:** Did you have electric lights?

**JM:** Yeah, we did.

**HM:** Did they leave them on all the time? Did they furnish you lights 24 hours a day, or do you remember?

**JM:** Let me see, now. I just don’t remember that part.

**HM:** Were there any churches down there?

**JM:** There was one building they used for a church and a schoolhouse, too. But they did not go past the sixth grade.

**HM:** How many teachers did they have?

**JM:** Well, I don't know. I was not old enough to go to school. But Paul did and Preston was too old. He and C.W. Evans came in to Lufkin one semester. That was when daddy bought the house and moved us to Diboll so Preston could go to school. Paul had not reached the age that he could not go there. When we moved to Diboll, I think Paul started in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade when we moved to Diboll.

**HM:** You told me you used to go down to a spring down there and do your laundry.

**JM:** Back of our house—they built us a cow lot before we got there. They knew we had a cow. The cow lot was back of our house and not far, there was a spring down there that mama went to on pretty days and washed. Then there were times when water from the river would come up to our barn.

**HM:** That is when mayhaws would float up there?

**JM:** Yes. We would go down there and pick up the mayhaws. I guess mama canned them. I don't know what she did with them.

**HM:** It was a pretty busy place?

**JM:** Yes, it was a busy place.

**HM:** Well, you didn't get lonesome down there?

**JM:** I was too little to get lonesome. We played.

**HM:** And Dr. Evans was the doctor there?

**JM:** Yes, they had the necessary people there. They had a butcher there in a separate building to daddy's store and they had a meat market. Seems like his name was Chambers.

**HM:** We need to establish what year this was that you all lived down there.

**JM:** I was born in 1917.

**HM:** Okay, in the early twenties – twenty-one or two – somewhere around there. And you all lived down there about two years. Did your family have malaria or anything like that?

**JM:** No. And Ollie came to live with us.

**HM:** Ollie who?

**JM:** Ollie White. She was left with 7 boys. And when we came to Diboll, Nobie came to live with us.

**HM:** You all took in all the kinfolks?

**JM:** Well, there were poor circumstances then.

**HM:** Did you ever come in to Lufkin?

**JM:** Yes, once in a while. Not very often. We had no business in Lufkin. We had everything we needed out there.

**HM:** You were way back in the woods, I will guarantee you.

**JM:** Daddy ordered through a catalog or something. I don't remember how he ordered. But he had a good supply. People didn't complain about it. He had a good supply of groceries and dry goods, too. Ollie worked on the dry goods side.

**HM:** When we were down there, you remember that the pasture rider told us there was a water tank down there for years. Where the water tank was there was a big tower. But of course it has been gone a long time. They must have pumped water into that from the river to give plenty of pressure. You all lived up on a hill. Alcedo, as I recall, was up on a hill. When Alcedo cut out, why didn't you all go to Fastrill?

**JM:** Daddy did not work for the company any more. He had already bought us that house in Diboll.

**HM:** Would you have gone to Fastrill, if he had stayed with the company?

**JM:** Yes.

**HM:** Fastrill is way up in Anderson County.

**JM:** I read about it sometime. There is a woman in Beulah who writes about living at Fastrill. But I haven't seen it in a long time now.

END OF INTERVIEW