

CELIA ANN SIPPPIO BOATWRIGHT

Interview 237A

June 2, 2000, at her home in Lufkin, Texas

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with R.L. Kuykendall and Rev. Bettie Kennedy, Celia Ann Sippio Boatwright reminisces about growing up as an African American girl in segregated Lufkin and Trinity County. She talks about her work in the church and the girls she mentored there. She also discusses the differences in child raising styles in the past and present days and her opinions on the children of the present day and their discipline problems.

R. L. Kuykendall (hereafter RLK): Good evening, afternoon, along with Mrs. Bettie Kennedy my name is R.L. Kuykendall. We are going to be interviewing Mrs. Celia Ann Sippio Boatwright. I am a member of the Ministerial Alliance Black Archives Committee. Reverend Mrs. Kennedy will be part of the interview. You will hear both voices along with Mrs. Boatwright's voice. Mrs. Boatwright has a great deal of knowledge we expect to get from her through many settings. So we will listen to her tell us things. Mrs. Boatwright I would like to say this to you, we need for you to begin to tell us about you, your birth, where you were born, your age and after doing those things your parents and siblings begin to tell us your experience from day one. Just tell us what we need to know. There is a lot of information we do not have, textbooks are not showing us these kinds of things. Too often we read information concerning Lufkin but we do not get the kind of information we would like. If you will do this for us we would surely appreciate it. Mrs. Kennedy please do not fail to interrupt if you feel there is some information you feel like we need. I am the only one that has very little or no knowledge of Lufkin.

Celia Ann Sippio Boatwright (hereafter CB): I was born in Trinity County, May 16, 1903 and we moved from Trinity County. I was born at Nigton, Texas. We moved from Trinity County to Angelina County in 1914, I think. I went to school here and my parents' name was Lafayette Sippio and my mother's name was Maggie Lou Izer Pittman Sippio and they both are deceased. After we moved here then we moved a place out here they called Lufkin Land and they had a sawmill there, Long Bell Lumber Company and the planer went along with the sawmill and my father worked on the drive chain, marking the lumber. Then we had a commissary here and the commissary here and the butcher. I don't know the rest of the names but the butcher was named Martichew. Then we had a company doctor and then the first undertaker here was Mr. Gipson. There was a black man named Bowman that worked for him. Then I went to school at the only black school here at that particular time was Lucky Ward.

RLK: Tell them about Lucky Ward.

CB: No, that is the reason I was trying to get it. I tried to get it before then but...1914. I had to be seven and I had started at Antioch and then when we moved here from Trinity County to Angelina County and Momma started me to school and I was practically seven or eight when we did that but I say seven. And Mrs. Emma Hollings was my first lady teacher. Hollings Street is named for the Hollings family.

Bettie Kennedy (hereafter BK): Show us a picture there.

CB: This is my grandmother; this is my grandmother, my mother's mother. She died at 60 years old and she is buried at Strangers Rest here in Lufkin.

RLK: At Lufkin Land?

CB: Yes, at Lufkin Land.

BK: That brings up another question too.

CB: This one here was the first one they put down.

BK: The first marker?

CB: Yes, the first marker at Strangers Rest.

BK: There are a hundred and something persons buried there.

CB: Yes, a hundred and something persons buried there.

BK: How many of your family members are there?

CB: This is the first or the second monument they put down, the last one. My grandmother is buried there, Maria Pittman. My mother is buried there, Maggie Lou Ives Lacey Sippio at that time. My brother, William Sippio is buried in that cemetery. Why it is called Strangers Rest is because the people that were buried out there were not native of Angelina County and then they named it Strangers Rest.

BK: I thought it was called Strangers Rest because there were some they did not know.

CB: Right, that is the reason, see they were not a native of Lufkin. Now some of these people, the Hollings and the Luce's all of them buried out there they were native but like I said the reason they changed the name is because the people that died here weren't native of Angelina County they named it then Strangers Rest and that is what it is now Strangers Rest.

BK: (unintelligible) It is right under that picture. This is your mother and dad?

CB: This is my mother and daddy. That is the whole Sippio family but about two. They have preceded this picture in death.

BK: Point out you, which one is you?

CB: The little one in the last row down there or the first row that is me and that is my brother that is buried out there.

BK: You can point to it.

CB: This is my oldest sister, this is my mother, my daddy, this is the next oldest sister, this is the next one, this is me and this is William Sippio who is buried out there and this is Homer Sippio's father, James Douglas Sippio, and this is my sister Rosie and this is Ada Mae, the one I'm next to.

BK: Okay. This is the Bible and it shows some historical okay, this is the Bible and in her Bible, her mother started this Bible, and in this Bible are recordings of family members who passed. It has birth dates too and it goes back, some of the dates are 1897, 1824, and some of the dates are way back in early history.

CB: My two oldest sisters were 1800's. That was Lilly and Missouri. Ada was born January 19...

BK: 1901.

CB: 1901, the seventeenth day. William, the one that is buried out at Cedar Grove, was born 1905, July 25th. Rosie was born in 1906, Feb. 16th. Della was born in the year 1910.

BK: That gives me to the time that you came to Lufkin.

CB: Yes, that gives me the time that we came to Lufkin. She died out there at Lufkin Land at 3 years old and so she is buried out there at Cedar Grove. My father and my mother's last child was born in 1919, November the 11th day, Robert Lee, that is the baby brother he was born in 1920.

BK: And they were born in Lufkin?

CB: No.

BK: They were born out at Lacy?

CB: All of them but Elvira were born here in...

BK: In Lacy?

CB: At Antioch...at Pennington.

BK: Oh Pennington okay. I want you to mention the railroad station because that is such a historical event here. This cover on this directory certainly depicts very much of Mrs. Cely's lifestyle and she mentioned how they had to flag the train down. Can you mention that Mrs. Cely?

CB: Yes, it ran from Groveton to Lufkin and Lacy was between Groveton and Lufkin and when they got ready to come to Lufkin they had a little flag station down there, kind of a shed like and you flagged the train and when you flagged the train he blew the whistle and everybody in the community knew somebody was getting on the train or getting off. He would blow when he come in from Lufkin to Lacy going back to Groveton. So, I don't remember how old I was at that time, but anyway that is the way they did it because after my father died my mother married Will Dixon and he moved us down to Lacy and that is why I know so much about Lacy.

RLK: When you would ride the train were there any problems? Did you have a special section you had to sit in?

CB: At that time we did, I'm sure we did at that time.

RLK: Did you have a special section you had to sit?

CB: I'm sure we did at that time.

RLK: Were there any incidents concerning...

CB: Yes, we all had to sit, all the black folks had to sit together and not sit with the white folks and at that particular time that was the first time I rode the train. And the first time I came here my daddy had to pay half fare for my sister Ada Mae and I don't remember when we went back if he had to pay full fare for her then. I don't remember the age that we had to pay the whole fare or half fare. He might have had to pay half fare for me but he didn't pay anything for me and the rest of them down under me.

BK: Mention the share here that is another historical point.

CB: Oh yes, our (unintelligible) at one time was named Dr. Watts. I don't know his first name and he was a good share and went all out for the black people. He cared about them.

RLK: What do you mean when you say went out?

CB: What I mean he was...he respect us and regarded if anything happened he was there to defend us, you know, because he cared about the people and that is what he did.

BK: He was fair in his business.

CB: Yes.

RLK: Can you mention any particular thing that may have happened that period of time or anything prior or anything like that?

BK: I want you to mention his death when he was dying.

CB: Oh yes, when he was sick they blocked off the whole block that he lived on because they didn't want the cars or nothing to disturb him while he was sick. Then to go back to Lufkin Land we didn't have running water. We had a little narrow well that we could draw water from and it was narrow and we had a long deep water bucket. Not a square one a long one and the (unintelligible) was square but we let that down in there and draw our water from there. We had a lamp light and next was the Pace Funeral Home. He was the only black funeral home here for such a long time. I don't know when he started or anything like that but I know when I was here going to school, when I started to school here it wasn't but one undertaker here. Then after Mr. Pace, before Mr. Pace died Mr. I. D. Tim's bought it and since he deceased his son and his helper still has the undertaker. Then later on in years we had another black undertaker here and that was Mrs. Lattie Moore. I don't know how long she stayed but she had my mother's body when she passed. My mother passed here.

BK: Then Mr. Davis came in later years.

CB: Yes, Mr. Davis came in later years. I was back here when Mr. Davis came here to have the funeral home.

BK: I want you to mention the soap, how you made the soap and how you made your own lye.

CB: We didn't buy lye from the store we had a place what we called ash hopper and we would put oak ashes in it and they would have the flat bill or put a barrel on there and then put oak ashes in the barrel and then at certain times they would pour water on there on them ashes and they would drip the lye out of there and then we would take that lye and make soap out of it and then they made lye hominy out of then and then the first soaps that I can remember that were in the grocery stores was this yellow bar of soap, auction soap they called it. Then our, what we call our washing powder like Cheer was the Gold Dust Twins.

BK: They had the PNG soap later.

CB: Yes after then I can remember when the oxen pulled the wagon and pulled the plow for the farmers to plow. I can remember that.

BK: Mention some of the earlier families.

CB: Roxanna Dunlap at the time, she had three children. Mrs. Goins, she married a Williams after then. Then Daniel Hicks and then that is the Lufkin Land families I'm talking about and the others were the Bradford family. I think they have a street named out there for the Bradford's.

BK: Jesse Hackney.

CB: Yes, Jesse Hackney that is James Hackney's father and Mrs. Durden's father was named Rev. Durden and that was Vera, Manga Starch, Ethel Starch, Ruth Starch were their children. Their mother was named Vera.

BK: The Squire Long family.

CB: Yes, the Square Long family.

BK: Squire Long was a slave.

CB: There was Lacy Duke and Bud that was the children.

BK: Georgie Long.

CB: Yes, Georgie Long that was the Vera's children, Garfield...

BK: That was S. T. Lewis's father.

CB: And the Bradford's were...

BK: The Bradford's and the Lewis were two sisters.

CB: Yes, and one of the sons of Mrs. Bradford was a (unintelligible). There was Horace Bradford, Vera Bradford, and Johnny Bradford all of them. I might be leaving out some but that was the Bradford's.

BK: Mention Mother Glover.

CB: Mother Glover was the mother of Goodwill Baptist Church at the time. She has passed but she had...Dede Glover was one of the daughters and she had two more daughters. I can't remember their name.

BK: Robbie was one, Robbie Glover is one.

CB: Yes, she was the baby. I was getting to her. Then she had the boys. One was called Carl Jr. that was the youngest boy and I can't remember Paul, Paul Glover. Those are the children, what I can remember the names.

BK: Was Rob the baby?

CB: Yes, she was the baby.

BK: You mentioned the Williams.

CB: Yes, Leven Williams, his wife was named Ara Williams and they were Effie Hills' father and mother. Then Mrs. Weston, Dave Weston, Sr. and Mrs. Weston I don't remember her name but anyway those was the older folks that were here at that particular time.

BK: You went to Goodwill; let's review some of the preachers. You went way back.

CB: I tried to find that but anyway I can name some of them that I knew about. The first ones I don't know, I can't call their names but there was Reverend Brent, Reverend B. H. Roberts, Reverend Jurden, Reverend Lampley, Reverend Pardon. Now all of those pastors that I called pastored me at different times and then Reverend Thomas, A. B. Thomas.

BK: Wasn't there a Reverend Brooks?

CB: Reverend Brooks, Reverend Thomas was under Rev. Brooks then they got him for a pastor after Reverend Bush left. That was the pastor and in those days well here come Reverend...I'll call it.

BK: After Rev. Thomas?

CB: Yes, after Rev. Thomas. I liked to call his name that time.

BK: Reverend Berry.

CB: Yes, he came after but I'm trying to call the pastors name that followed Reverend Thomas.

BK: Hardin?

CB: Hardin that was the next pastor after Reverend Thomas but he pastored me, Reverend. Berry pastored me. Reverend Jesse pastored me and our present pastor is named Dr. Robert Lee Sessions.

BK: Some of the teenagers are...

RLK: What kind of things went on when you were a teenager? What happened society-wise what happened in Lufkin and how did it affect you?

CB: Well, I will start at the church first. They would have some things that happened at the church when I was a child. But now go back to the activities at the church I don't

remember them having anything except Sunday school and the eleven o'clock service and church at night.

BK: Did they have BGB?

CB: I don't remember. Now the only thing I remember when we were at Trinity County we had BGB but I don't remember them having it here but we had Sunday school and eleven o'clock service. The first picture show I saw was at the church and I came along when they wouldn't let you go to the picture show. The only way I saw this picture was my daddy was the name of the church and he carried us there to see that picture they showed at the church. They didn't allow us to go to play cards, I don't mean cards, marbles and things like that and ring around the rosy what we used to play. They did allow us to play that but now.

BK: Was Mr. Joe's show here then?

CB: Oh no, I was grown when he showed.

BK: He was one of the first shows we had for blacks.

RLK: (unintelligible)

CB: Well I remember when the fire station would blow at nine o'clock and a woman wasn't allowed on the street at that time. If she was on the street she better hunt her a shelter somewhere. She wasn't too safe with a man on the street but she had to be off the street at that time.

RLK: What might have happened?

CB: At that particular time they might have beat them or something like that if they were on the street and didn't obey the law.

BK: The horn blowing. They had to clear the street.

CB: It was pretty rough for the black people when I was coming up.

RLK: Can you tell me what kind of things (unintelligible).

CB: Well I had a cousin, E. D. Hogg. We called him E. D. but his name was Eddie Hogg. He had beautiful hair. Well they cut his hair off then. It wasn't no Negro at the time that had that hair.

BK: Did they shave his head Mrs. Cely?

CB: I don't know how clean they cut it but they cut it, they cut his hair. He is still here. His widow has property over there on North Avenue. He had a house there.

RLK: What was his name?

CB: E. D. Hogg. His widow was named Annie Mae Hogg.

BK: They're both deceased now.

CB: No, she is the only one of the Harris family living, the Harris's from Lacey.

BK: You talking about Dan Harris's family?

RLK: Did they ever say what happened?

CB: They never did say what happened or nothing but I tell you what did happen that was really sad. The Boatwright boy and the pastor's boy they rented a car from the Perry Brothers, I don't know about them at that particular time, but they rented a car from them and they kept it. Well he said they kept it over time and he charged them seventy five cents more and they had a fight. The two black boys killed one of the white boys (unintelligible) and then they killed the Boatwright boy. Then, the Castle boy went to Kelty's and hid himself in the loft at his cousin's house and they told me that she told the laws where he was and they shot six times up in that loft and killed him.

RLK: Do you know what happened after that?

CB: No, no more than they kind of got afraid, they kind of feared us more than they did before.

RLK: Was there a trial?

CB: No.

RLK: The policeman?

CB: No, there wasn't nobody to try because they had killed the two black boys, the Boatwright boys.

RLK: I think what I'm asking is was there an explanation to why they killed them?

CB: I'm sure they didn't. I wasn't here at the time I was living in Lacy and I was so young then I thought they were going to hunt up all the Boatwright's and kill them.

RLK: In growing up, what kind of (unintelligible) that you could do or could not do to have fun or whatever you want to call it.

CB: Well it's like I mentioned about the picture show we were not allowed to go there. I had a cousin out there at the Lufkin Land running a place they called the boarding house and I thought since he was my cousin I could go there but my daddy didn't allow us to go

there. That is where the people went to dance. We stopped there from school like children will do I stopped there on the outside and I loved to see Gertrude and Jesse Hicks at that time, Jesse Bradford, but anyway I can't think of her name but that girl he danced with I loved to see them two-step. That is what they called it. Some of them would work for the white people then some more men worked at the planer or the mill.

BK: Did they work at the hotel?

CB: I imagine they did but I don't remember who all worked there. I know James Hackney had a brother, Johnny Hackney that worked at the Angelina Hotel but that was...

BK: Later years.

CB: ...yes, oh and they had, the black folks up there where the planer was they built a platform and had music up there and they had all kind of drinks, soda waters, you know, for the people to drink while they were there and then they would dance those that danced could dance. We were allowed to go to the 19th of June celebrations. We were allowed to go to that.

RLK: (unintelligible)

CB: I imagined the city or the mills or Long Bell Lumber Company might, I don't remember who did it.

RLK: As you were growing up and getting older and teenage right on through adulthood some things that happened.

CB: Well I don't know. It wasn't nothing but the picture show.

BK: I can only go as far back as Joe's picture show and it was located right here.

CB: The first picture show was in town there. I don't remember the name of it though but the first picture show was right there on Main Street.

BK: There is a Pine's Theater on Main Street and then there was the Texan Theater and Lynn Theater that I remember downtown.

CB: Well I don't know which one, it wasn't but one in my time and I can't remember which one it was whether the Pines or the Texan.

RLK: Concerning (unintelligible).

CB: It was, the only black ones were here. Jessie Hicks and Jessie Bradford all of them were young ladies at the time but I was in school at the time and I went to school with Olivia Hackney's husband. What is his name?

BK: Hugh Hackney.

CB: Hugh Hackney and his brother.

BK: Louis Hackney.

CB: Yes, I used to think as a child they were twins but they weren't. Glen Taylor he belonged to Goodwill and he was what they called at that time a deliverer. He had rent houses. Goodwill at the time some time after they bought this property there by the church those houses they moved or sold those houses and they moved two or three of them on Chestnut and Banister. That is where some of the houses are. I think Mr. Mackenzie moved those houses.

BK: Did Robert Tatum buy those houses?

CB: Yes, in the long run. Robert Tatum bought one and Otis Collins bought one.

BK: Mentioned Mr. Utley's wood yard. He had a big thriving business, T.J. Utley and Mr. Jim Utley and Annie Utley.

CB: Well I don't know too much about his work but I do know, I was so small but, everything I don't remember, but anyway Jim Utley owned all of those houses that the church bought, Jim Utley did. He was black.

BK: He was a good member wasn't he?

CB: Oh yes!

RLK: What kind of work did he do?

BK: Well the wood yard was the only thing I know of.

CB: Yes, that is all.

BK: He hauled wood, most people owned wood heaters or fireplaces.

CB: Oh, yes they had wood heaters because we had heaters.

BK: How much would it cost when you bought a cord of wood?

CB: Oh I wouldn't remember that but my daddy was buying the lumber from the planer. He would buy the planer wood and I don't know how much he paid for it.

RLK: (Unintelligible)

CB: Mr. Collins out here, Chester Collins, he could tell you. He went as far as the grades went here at Lucky Ward and then he went on to Nacogdoches and finished his education.

BK: I don't know if...

CB: No because he was too little. I don't know how far in education the Lambs got. He used to be our Worshipful Master.

BK: Elijah Lamb.

CB: Elijah Lamb, he went to school there too.

BK: What about Monty and James Hackney didn't they go to school there?

CB: I'm sure they did.

RLK: (unintelligible)

BK: At Lucky Ward is what we were talking about.

RLK: You mentioned him going to college in Nacogdoches.

CB: Yes, yes.

BK: What were the grades then?

CB: I don't remember.

RLK: Let me ask you, today the text books come from the state. Did the state furnish the books or not?

CB: I don't know where the state furnished the books or not but somebody furnished the books that we started with and in the long run they passed a law or something that we could get the books from the school, second hand books I call them.

BK: Who was your superintendent then do you remember?

CB: It was...I don't remember. I remember the superintendent that served time but I don't remember the superintendent.

BK: I know I had Coston...

RLK: Can you compare the schools, the black school to the white school at the time? Were you aware of anything that was happening then that wasn't happening now?

CB: I don't remember anything happening like it's happening now. I don't remember that, all I remember is we were treated all right because we had black teachers and Professor...

BK: Fierce?

CB: ...Professor Fierce was the principal at Lucky Ward and Mrs. Hollings was the assistant teacher and all of those... Vivian, Mrs. Annie Simpson.

BK: Bobbie Johnson?

CB: I don't remember her but I remember their daddy and mother. All of his children, all of them went to Lucky Ward and they went on and finished their education, if my memory is serving me right, practically all of them Mrs. Annie Penson was a teacher.

BK: Her sister?

CB: I think so, Vivian and what is the other one that Richard was so crazy about?

RLK: Vivian.

BK: Vivian, one of them was named for their mother but anyway all of those went to school there, most of them went on and not only got their education they were teachers.

RLK: Are they here?

BK: They taught at Lucky Ward and at Brandon.

CB: Yes, Mrs. Annie Simpson she was a teacher when she passed.

BK: She taught at what we call now Garrett School but it was known then as (unintelligible).

RLK: Garrett School?

BK: Yes, Melinda Garrett. Did Mrs. Melinda teach at Lucky Ward?

CB: I was there when she died.

BK: She didn't teach at Lucky Ward?

CB: No, at that time I don't even know if she was here or not. She might have come from up there at...

BK: Alto?

CB: No, no, no. Oh, we got a lot of members belong to Goodwill from the place that I'm trying to recall, anyway they might have been from up there but I don't know about that. Professor Fierce was a principal, that is all I know and Mrs. Emma Hollands was the assistant teacher. There were just two rooms and some of them tell me that is the same house that Vera lives in.

BK: It is...it is the same house, Vera Price.

CB: Vera's place is right there on Chestnut and our little place to eat and the principal's room faced Chestnut.

RLK: And that was at which school?

BK: Lucky Ward later became Dunbar on Leach Street.

RLK: Lucky Ward School was (unintelligible)?

BK: No, that was Carver, G. W. Carver that was in the later years. That was in about '38 or '39.

CB: That was later years because Professor Lacy, Chimney I'm trying to say, taught there.

BK: Then Bertie Harris and then Olivia Hackney was one of the principals in the later years in '30 or '31.

CB: She was principal at Brandon.

BK: Brandon too but she was principal here before she went to Brandon.

CB: Oh she was?

BK: Brandon in later years.

CB: That was later years 'cause at the time I was talking about it wasn't but one black teacher at Lucky Ward and I don't know who was the teacher before or after then but when I went to school down there Professor Fierce was the principal and Mrs. Emma Hollings was the assistant teacher. She was my teacher but now the two older sisters were...

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END OF SIDE ONE

RLK: What kind of things when you were a teenager, you've done something since you were fifteen years old, what kind of things have you done? Do you have children?

CB: No, I don't have any children.

RLK: Let's talk about the kinds of things you've done from that period of time to where you are now.

CB: The only thing I can tell you about myself is I went to Sunday school and church and after I got grown then, well before I got grown I taught primary out at Lacy and then I taught when I moved back here I taught the youth and I taught the young women.

RLK: This is at church?

CB: This is at church. That is all I can tell you about is what I done at the church about what my activities was but since I got grown I went to the show but...

RLK: Well I see that church is generally your life.

BK: When did you marry?

RLK: All of those kinds of things just tell us something about you. We've talked about Lufkin in itself but tell us something about you.

BK: Did your husband live here in Lufkin with you?

CB: No, no, I lived at Lacy and I told you it was named after them but I went to school down there. Professor W. W. Johnson was one of my teachers down there and Mrs...

BK: His wife?

CB: No, later on years one of the principals, two of the principals Professor Hadnot married a woman and she was his assistant teacher and then this man that lives over here on North Avenue married one of the women from Nigton, Jessie, Professor Hadnot married Jessie. Anyway, I married when I was 18 years old and I didn't finish school. I studied the sixth grade books and I married when I was 18 and my first husband was Arthur Johnson and later on I married Douglas Boatwright. So, I just did church work all I know that I've done.

BK: Now your husband Mr. Boatwright was what kin to Aunt Lynn?

CB: They were cousins because Wayne Boatwright's daddy is Ed Boatwright and that was my husband's uncle, Lee Jay Boatwright.

BK: Mrs. Lela was.

CB: Lela was Effie's and Wayne's sister. They were first cousins.

BK: Now had you moved to Lufkin then when Aunt Wayne and Mrs. Lela would come here to visit?

CB: Yes, and then I was out in Trinity County they would come out there and their daddy was named Ed Boatwright and Joe Boatwright was Ed Boatwright's brother.

RLK: What kind of work did your husband do?

CB: My first husband worked on the railroad.

BK: I don't remember him.

CB: He farmed, he farmed.

BK: When you lived down on Van he wasn't here then?

CB: Oh no, no, no.

BK: I don't remember him but I remember.

CB: No, you don't remember either one of them.

BK: I remember when Aunt Wayne would come she would always come and visit you.

CB: Yes and Mrs. Manley

BK: Mrs. Manley.

CB: Mrs. Manley married Ed Boatwright's brother and Wayne and them's uncle.

BK: Oh, she would visit her too.

CB: Yes, she would visit her and she stayed with her more than she did me. So, that is about all there is.

RLK: She said some things that I missed. You want to tell us what age you are now.

CB: 94, yes.

RLK: (unintelligible)

CB: The Lord has blessed me and the 23rd I'll be 95.

BK: Isn't that wonderful.

RLK: It is wonderful; but I keep trying... but I can't get her to say, but 94 years she has done something...

BK: Usually when the families would come in you laugh and talk and eat and dance and sing.

CB: Oh, I've done so much. I don't know of anybody that has done more than what she is now.

BK: That is a beautiful story.

CB: She asked me to be her second mother because her mother passed. Her daddy was named Gus Stephens and her mother was Faye Stephens and she asked me before her mother passed and she asked me to be her second mother. She knew she meant so much to me and I meant so much to her but I tell her when she is talking and telling me what she meant to me she had confidence in me and I didn't want her to be confident in me.

RLK: What did you do?

CB: Huh?

RLK: What kind of things did you do for her to have confidence in you?

CB: I teach her right and wrong and I tried to live right before her and in her absence because she had confidence in me and I didn't want her to have too much confidence in me. I had a cousin that told me that I had Vera Pitman at that time, she went to school here at Dunbar, she went to school here, she stayed with my sister Rosie and Charlie and it was so far from the school I done forgot who she stayed with after that well, I had helped her. I had so many other children that I taught through the Sunday School come to me and tell me what they meant to me and that is all; I tried to help somebody, especially the young folks. Now I didn't tell them I lived in a band bar you know, but I tell them now I have experience in this and there is nothing to this and don't do that. I tell them. Now there is my record right there.

BK: Mention that she wouldn't go to sleep after her mother passed until you laid down.

CB: Oh yes, she wouldn't. I asked her to go to sleep and rest because she really waited on her mother and she said I won't lay down unless you lay down with me and I laid down with her and she told me she said, "I am so glad that I got you for my second mother."

RLK: How old was she at that time?

BK: Had she finished high school?

CB: Oh no, she hadn't finished high school.

BK: She is the baby girl isn't she?

CB: Yes.

BK: There is a boy that is the youngest child. She works at the Lufkin State School.

RLK: What is her name?

BK: Lilley Bailey now.

CB: There is so many of them that I could name.

BK: Well your name rang a bell with Barbara Tatum and Elaine and Melba. I was talking about you and how we had talked and they mentioned what a wonderful job you did with them. They had BTU then.

CB: Oh yes at Goodwill. That was at Goodwill. They know what to do. These young ones now expect...so any way that is my life.

RLK: What do you think made a difference? What kinds of things did you pass on and what kind of things did you say to young people?

CB: There was a little girl, they were training her to be Sunday school secretary and she called the Psalm a chapter and I didn't tell nobody but her. "I said it is not a chapter, it is a Psalm." Well the next Sunday she said Psalm but she had called it a chapter again and she fell out with me. And then another little girl they were training her to be the secretary and I told her to hold her book up when she talks because she had her head down and I told her to hold her book up, the next time she had her book up and the next time she had it down. Well I told her again about it and I told her real nice and said "you didn't keep it up" and she kind of fell out with me. That is the reason I say now, Minnie Bell, Jolina rose to the top. All of them came along but Joe taught them but I taught my junior class and Lois was in my class. Barbara Ann, I didn't teach them but they will tell you what I meant to them. I tried to live so that I could help somebody. Our lesson was yesterday, our Sunday school lesson was about bearing fruit, about being barren. I try to help somebody.

BK: They mentioned that yesterday and your name came up.

RLK: Are you saying then that today it's pretty much the same thing?

CB: The same thing but they don't take it and accept it like Lilley and the girls and all of them, Barbara and all of them they will ask me right now about so and so well I tell them wrong, I mean I tell them right. I told Lilley, I said if you do the wrong thing don't think Mrs. Cely is satisfied with it but I know I have told you about those things. Now when she got grown up I told her that. I know you are grown and you do what you want to do and you do wrong Mrs. Cely is not satisfied.

BK: A lot of those that you mention have gone on to achieve. Dean is a pharmacist and Minnie is working as a secretary out at the State School. Barbara is a teacher and Elaine is a teacher and you mentioned another one. But all of those at that time who listened and obeyed the rules have done very well with their jobs and are very strong.

CB: Oh yes.

BK: A lot of training with the Bible.

CB: Yes, when they came along, the children we are talking about, when they came along Reverend Thomas would tell them, "I'm gonna get my stick to you" and they would accept it. I've seen him whack some of the children and they weren't his. But one child, I can't remember who it was, mentioned what he was going to do to him and this other one said, "he going to do that to me" and they said, "yes" and he said, "he wasn't going to do it to me." It's the difference in the generation and it's a difference in the parents because I came along where I taught Minnie Bell one thing of all the things I taught her and it was a woman came along and tell her to do what she wanted to. That was the time we were living in Lufkin.

RLK: You said a difference in the parents; what is your opinion about that?

CB: Well if your child was doing wrong and I tell your child he was wrong and then I tell you what the child done you would chastise that child or whoop that child, whatever you wanted to do. Well I go to parents now and tell her what her child was doing she will come to me and if it's bad enough or she thinks it's bad enough, the laws come to me. That is what I mean it's different, that is the difference, it is different. Now there's a mighty few people at Goodwill that will tell you if you see my child doing wrong tell them they are doing wrong and then tell me. But you put it this a way, you got to live what you telling the child. You got to be qualified telling the child but now...

RLK: Do you think that is one of the many problems that parents are not getting the role they are trying to do if they (unintelligible)?

CB: Do I what?

RLK: Do you feel that this is what is taking place, that parents are not walking the same line in many cases that they would want the child or that the parent is not trying to do anything with them?

CB: That is right. That is what they doing. Nowadays, now when Momma and them just like we are talking, if I was a child I would stand there and say well so and so is here now you go out and play. You don't say that and right now children will take the conversation with their parents and I'm not used to that. I asked the Lord to make me strong with what is going on now because I have got to live with the people.

BK: Did you teach the Mills children?

CB: Yes, I taught the two little boys.

BK: They have all achieved very well and their children are doing extremely well.

CB: Very well, very well.

BK: Mrs. Curtis Mills and Mr. Mills picks up Mrs. Cely every Sunday morning.

CB: Every Sunday and you know, it makes me feel good. It don't make me feel no larger, you know, stick my chest out or nothing like that, but when children come to me because I'm getting to the age now that I forget who they are but anyway when they come to me I appreciate that because all of them know they come to me and speak to me. Now, the Mills boy, one of them I taught, I forgot how he looked, I didn't know who he was and Mrs. Mill told me, say that is so and so and he said, "that is Mrs. Cely" or Mrs. Boatwright or whatever he called me and she said, "yes" and he said, "I was your student." That is what he said.

BK: Curtis, Marvin, Lester and Esther are the children.

CB: Yes, I didn't teach Esther, but I taught two of the boys.

BK: They have all finished from A&M and doing extremely well and their children are going to A&M and finishing with honors.

CB: Those children coming home back then they all try their level best to make something out of their selves.

RLK: That would be a recommendation on your part to parents today to try to live the kind of life you've lived.

CB: Now when I gave the children the history and I told them before I left I said please parents teach your children. You will be surprised that most of the children don't care nothing about history now but I said teach your children and when I got through with the children I told them now, I said now be sure and teach the children. They need to know. My hands going to be cold directly and somebody ought to know.

RLK: That is what this is all about so you are doing it right now hoping we will have these kinds of things for them to refer to.

CB: The parents need to be making the child doing these things. And too, back now about what we did as a child at home we didn't have brooms like we have them today. We went to the field and got this sage grass. I saw it on television the other day and it brought my mind back. That is what we swept the floor with it and we kept the walls clean. We didn't have them like we do today. So we didn't have brooms and we didn't

have a wet mop like you buy in the store. We took corn shucks and had a board about this wide and about this long and they had holes in it and we would twist those shucks and push them in there and that made our mop. Then when we got through mopping we put sand on the floor to keep the floor clean. We didn't know what carpet was and when we were living on the farm my daddy would go to the store, town we would called it then, and momma would cook, cook all the meals she had while he was gone to the store the grocery store, and cook all the fresh things like that and she would go to the fields and whenever the corn wasn't mature for you to carry to the grist mill well she would go and get it and we had what we called a potato gritter and it was on a board and she would rip that corn and cook that bread. And, that bread was good it was cornbread and it was good.

Then we had a wash pot to wash our clothes and then we had a block that they said to keep the dirt out of the cloths, branding block. That is what they called it. They would wet those clothes and then they would take a pad just about wide as my hand and that long and they would beat the clothes and then they drug them and put them in a pot and boiled them. They would boil the clothes and then they take them out and rinse and they used to just rinse in two waters and now they rinse in two waters or whatever.

BK: They would blue them too, put some bluing in the water.

CB: Oh yes, bluing.

BK: You can't find it now.

CB: I imagine you can't because people don't use it. There used to be a man in the community that was Sam Madden's daddy. Minnie Wheeler do you remember her?

BK: Yes ma'am.

CB: Her father's daddy...brother would make rub boards and he would make the rub board out of something kind of like the clothesline but it would be heavier. He would make the rub board out of that. I've got the rub board but Lilley Bailey has got it.

BK: Isn't that wonderful.

CB: I have it and I have my mother's washing pot and everything out there.

BK: I want to look at it.

CB: She has got it. She has got it hanging up way up there. They had sticks and Brother Odis King, he used to be one of the artisans at Memorial Hospital, he straightened it up for me and made it where you put the soap up there, he made that. It's just like it was at first it's just fixed over. She has got it. I told her to keep it but out of all my family it's ten of us and nine of us got grown. No one of the ten but me want to keep things like that. That rub board, my sister had it in Houston in her garage and I asked her for it.

BK: Only two of the family members are living now.

CB: Yes, out of the ten there are two sisters living and that is Ada Mae and me. Ada Mae is in a rest home.

BK: She is younger than you are.

CB: No, she is older.

BK: Oh, she is older than you?

CB: Yes, two years from February to May older than me. Then my brother that is buried out there at Cedar Grove, he wanted to go, he was following a woman out there, he wanted to go to Houston and stay with one of my sisters I think and Ada Mae was the only one staying there then and he wanted to go there with her instead of the boarding house. And that boarding house when I was a child it was a man and woman running it but they called her Babe Coleman and she had a son and he had a wife and Mrs. Lilley that raised Jeremy, you know who I'm talking about? You know Jeremy?

BK: Yes ma'am, Jeremy King?

CB: Yes, Mrs. Lilley.

BK: I know her.

CB: She and Coleman and the son and his wife and her and her husband were good friends. I don't know at that time my first instinct was that Ada Mae up there and Mrs. Betty Coleman was my first teacher's sister. That is the way things came out right there. George Jumper was running the boarding house at one time. He used to live over on Leach Street. And, then I don't know who was running it at that time but the Boatwright's, Willie that was Wayne's brother, bought it from Lawrence Boatwright. That was his brother.

BK: Where was the boarding house? Where was it located? Was it near where y'all lived?

CB: Oh no. I tell you what, I can't hardly tell you now because they have changed up so but when we come here to school we would pass the boarding house and we would walk across a plank or a ditch with a plank and it run from the sawmill pond and we would go and I can't hardly tell you now because they done changed it up so much. Let me see, you wouldn't hardly know.

BK: I don't remember the boarding house. It was on the end?

CB: Yes, well I'm trying to locate it. Paul was over here and way back here was the boarding house. I am trying to think about who I could call that lived close to the boarding house.

BK: Was Mr. Webster here then?

CB: Close to it kind of but the Websters lived here and the boarding house was up here.

BK: The Starks?

CB: The Starks, no that is too far down.

RLK: (unintelligible)

BK: I don't know if those streets were named then because see those were the quarters.

CB: Yes, we had the black quarters, we had the Negro quarters and the Mexican quarters at Lufkin Land.

BK: That was the Mexican quarters. I think there are three or four houses still standing.

CB: I know Glen Carter's house is still there and the one that I know. I can't get it in my mind about the others. I was trying to tell you...

BK: Mr. Charlie's house is still standing and that was part of the settlement.

RLK: Would that be (unintelligible).

BK: No, no, we are Lufkin Land now. It was called Lufkin Land and that was where the old mill was she is talking about and this boarding house is in there somewhere.

CB: Can you remember the Gilberts, Jennie Mae?

BK: I remember Jennie Mae.

CB: Lenora, no Roberta.

BK: I remember Mrs. Jennie Mae.

CB: You don't remember Roberta. She was younger and Lenora was younger than Jennie Mae. Well anyway I'm trying to locate where they lived. She lived kind of close. The boarding house was here and this row of houses that I'm talking about run this a way and that was the first, well the second row of houses from the boarding house. So that is as far as I can tell you about it because the people I know you don't know. But anyway we would pass the boarding house coming to school here and we would pass the homes

coming through here. And back when I was a child Lining Street, I'm backing up now, Lining Street was Shack Town. That is what they called Lining Street.

BK: We are on Lining Street now.

RLK: What is that?

BK: Shack Town.

CB: Shack Town that is what they called it.

RLK: Is there a reason?

CB: I don't know all I know is they named it Shack Town. The only thing I can think of in my mind at that time they had some shotgun houses there but that was after this Street was in Shack Town.

RLK: Let me back up a minute. The name of the school Lucky Ward do you know how that came about that particular name?

CB: No.

RLK: You talked about it and I've heard other people mention Lucky Ward and I couldn't get any information about it.

BK: My father moved here in about 1836 I think and he married in 1916 and brought his bride from Crockett here and they lived on Chestnut Street which is a block over and a lot of the things that we are communicating on is what I've heard mother mention, and mother was a very dear friend of Mrs. Cely. I remember Mrs. McGoughey, she was very fair and your other sister Mrs. Rosie, they would visit with mother. And a lot of time like Mrs. Cely is saying when they would start talking, you know, then mother would say it's time for you to go outside. And, you knew that you went out to play, you didn't stay inside but, I can remember it. Mrs. Cely's sister she would come to visit with mother and a lot of things she is saying I remember it because mother and daddy talked about it and about her calling so, that is why we can communicate an awful lot about it.

RLK: We have been doing this for an hour and a half and I think this is a lot of talking. I surely would like to have another opportune time when Rev. Kennedy and I may return.

CB: Yes anytime, just tell me. Now I tell you what, I don't be away from home unless I have to go to the grocery store or like that. The next thing I'll be away from home is like when brother is going to be here.

RLK: Yes, maybe we can come back and set up a time with you. We want to do this at your convenience.

END OF TAPE
END OF INTERVIEW