

Ozell Lawrence

This recording is of the interview conducted by Alvin Jackson of Ozell Lawrence. The interview takes place via phone call on April 2, 2013. Jackson is calling from Cincinnati, OH, to Lawrence's residence in Bulloch County, GA. Topics discussed include Lawrence's wife and children, his attendance at the Bennett Grove School, and Willow Hill School, the school buildings and average school day, as well as Lawrence's teachers while at each school.

ALVIN JACKSON: Today is April 2nd, 2013. I'm in Cincinnati, Ohio, getting ready to call Mr. Ozell Lawrence, who was a student at the Bennett Grove School. Calling Cousin Ozell Lawrence.

F: Hello.

AJ: Yes. How are you doing? Alvin Jackson again.

F: OK, hold on. He's here.

AJ: All righty.

F: (inaudible) (pause)

OZELL LAWRENCE: Hello.

AJ: Hey, cuz, how you doing?

OL: I'm doing fine. How you doing?

AJ: Good, good. Thank you for taking my call.

OL: All right.

AJ: You know we always got these projects we working on.

OL: Right, right.

AJ: Well, our new project is the Bennett Grove School.

OL: The Bennett Grove School, all right.

AJ: Yes. And --

OL: I'll try to do my very best to answer you, to give you information what you want to know.

AJ: All right, and so what we -- I've heard your name several times when I've been interviewing students. And so I want to do -- I have several questions I want to ask you on your memories of Bennett Grove School. OK? So I'm asking everybody the same questions. I have a list. And we start off the questions with what is your full name?

OL: What is my full name?

AJ: Yes, sir.

OL: Ozell Lawrence.

AJ: OK, no middle name?

OL: No middle name.

AJ: OK. What is your spouse's name?

OL: Lily Wheat Holloway.

AJ: OK. And how many children do you have?

OL: We have five living.

AJ: OK, how many total children did you have?

OL: Seven.

AJ: OK, starting from the oldest one, give me their names, including the ones who are dead.

OL: All right. The oldest one is George Merrill Lawrence.

AJ: OK.

OL: Rosell Lawrence.

AJ: OK.

OL: Jesse Lawrence.
 AJ: OK.
 OL: Jerry O'Neal Lawrence.
 AJ: OK.
 OL: Connie Chelline Lawrence.
 AJ: OK.
 OL: Deceased one is Homer Lurie Lawrence.
 AJ: OK.
 OL: And Ozell Lawrence, Junior.
 AJ: OK. Now, how old was Homer when he died?
 OL: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. I got to bring Ozell Lawrence, Junior back up. Now, there's a (inaudible) Rosell was a twin, but him and Rosell were born together, but he died. He died six days after he was born. (inaudible)
 AJ: So Rosell and Homer were twins?
 OL: No. Rosell and Ozell were twins.
 AJ: I see. And he died --
 OL: And Ozell lived six days.
 AJ: I see. And where is Ozell buried at?
 OL: At Johnson Grove.
 AJ: At Johnson.
 OL: At the church.
 AJ: OK. And then when did Homer die?
 OL: Well, Homer was the sixth -- was the sixth child. The seventh child. So he was a baby.
 AJ: He was a baby.
 OL: Right.
 AJ: And where's -- how old did he live to be?
 OL: Well, he was born dead.
 AJ: OK. And is he buried at Johnson Grove, too?
 OL: Right.
 AJ: OK. Is he buried with Ozell?
 OL: He's -- he's buried right there with Ozell.
 AJ: OK. Do they have markers at their graves?
 OL: Right.
 AJ: OK. Now, what is your mother's name?
 OL: My mother was named Louise Harden.
 AJ: Louise Harden. And what's her mother's name?
 OL: Her mother's name was named Susie. Susie Sherrard.
 AJ: OK. All righty. And then what's her father's name?
 OL: Oh. That's out of my (inaudible).
 AJ: OK, so your mother's name was Louise. Her mother's name was Susie. What was her father's name?
 OL: My grandmother's father?
 AJ: No, I guess Miss Susie's husband would have been Homer --
 OL: My -- my -- my grandmother's husband was named Homer.
 AJ: Homer Harden.
 OL: Homer Harden.

AJ: And you don't know who Mr. Homer Harden's mother and daddy and was, do you?

OL: No, I don't.

AJ: And you don't know who Miss Susie's mother and daddy were?

OL: No, I don't.

AJ: And so, what was your father's name?

OL: My father was named Roscoe Lawrence.

AJ: OK, now who was Roscoe Lawrence's mother?

OL: [05:00] My dad always talked about her, (inaudible) name. (inaudible) to tell you the truth, it's so far back. I don't remember.

AJ: OK --

OL: So, my dad was raised up by his stepmother. His mother died, I think, early. And it was more like a Rosie round -- Rosie Miller was raised my daddy.

AJ: OK. And what was your daddy's father's name?

OL: His name was Elijah Lawrence.

AJ: Elijah Lawrence.

OL: Right.

AJ: Now, where are they from? Elijah Lawrence?

OL: Elijah Lawrence was -- he was up (inaudible) raised up in Burke County, and him and my grandmother were (inaudible) when she died, he left me (inaudible) in California.

AJ: I see. All right. Good, so when is your birthday?

OL: My birthday's September the 4th, 1937.

AJ: Nineteen thirty-seven. And what's your current address?

OL: Thirty-seven-oh-six Banks Creek Church Road, Portal, Georgia, 30450.

AJ: OK. All right. And so, now, what was your very first school that you ever went to?

OL: My very first school was Bennett Grove School.

AJ: And what was your second school?

OL: Willow Hill.

AJ: And what was your third school?

OL: William James.

AJ: And that was the last school you went to?

OL: That was the last school I went to.

AJ: OK. Now, when you went to Bennett Grove, how far did you go at Bennett Grove?

OL: I went at Bennett Grove, well, to fifth grade. That's when the buses stopped running. We'd catch the school bus, pay on a weekly -- pay a fee. A weekly fare. And I went to Willow Hill.

AJ: Who were you paying the fare to, and whose bus you were riding?

OL: I was riding Mr. Garfield Hall, school bus that I was paying forty cent a week.

AJ: Forty cents a week.

OL: Forty cents a week.

AJ: OK. And so, you went to Willow Hill from the fifth to what grade?

OL: Till -- I went there till the tenth.

AJ: So you went -- so you did the fifth grade at Bennett Grove, and you did the sixth grade at Willow Hill?

OL: Right -- no. I did -- see, what happened, I did, actually, my last year at Bennett Grove was the fourth grade, I went to Willow Hill -- see, my uncle died. We moved to (inaudible) and we moved in with my aunt. And we stayed down there a year. All right.

I went to school -- (inaudible) Willow. Willow Hill. And I was in the fifth grade. Miss Ruth Hall was my teacher, fifth grade teacher.

AJ: OK.

OL: All right? And so, and when I went back into the sixth grade, they rebuilt -- Bennett Grove wasn't till (inaudible) going to Bennett Grove, but I would ride the bus. So I just continued on riding. I didn't never go back to Bennett Grove.

AJ: OK. Now, what aunt were you living with?

OL: Aunt Lula Mae.

AJ: Lu--

OL: (inaudible) name. Jerry Lawrence, that's my daddy's brother.

AJ: OK.

OL: He died at 48. I mean 47.

AJ: OK. All righty. That's good. Then, so, who were your teachers when you were at Bennett Grove?

OL: Oh, Miss -- oh. I know one was Miss Leela Scarborough. That's one. One of my teachers was Miss -- Miss -- what, what, what in the -- I'm not (inaudible) name?

F: (inaudible)

OL: Miss --

AJ: Veronica Young.

OL: Veronica -- well, her name was Veronica?

F: (inaudible)

OL: I believe it was, Veronica Young. That's what one of my teachers at Bennett Grove. I had another one named Miss Michaela. Now, they came from -- they got -- she died of (inaudible) there was a first name or last name, I don't know. But I know it was Miss Michaela. I really (inaudible) was their -- her last name.

AJ: OK. Now, so your first teacher was Miss Leela Scarborough? Or was --

OL: Miss Leela Scarborough.

AJ: She was your very first teacher.

OL: That was my very first teacher that I can remember. That's Barbara Scarborough's mother.

AJ: And then your second teacher was who?

OL: Ms. Veronica Young.

AJ: And then your third teach--

OL: And Miss Michaela.

AJ: So, she was your teacher when you went to Willow Hill?

OL: When I left.

AJ: Miss Michaela.

OL: When I left Willow Hill.

AJ: OK. And you don't know what part of Carolina she was from?

OL: No, I don't.

AJ: OK. What subjects do you remember taking at Bennett Grove?

OL: (laughing) That was so (inaudible) [10:00] I can't remember (inaudible)

COMPUTERIZED FEMALE VOICE: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) needs your attention (inaudible)

OL: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

AJ: Yeah.

OL: It was too (inaudible). I know I went (inaudible) Willow Hill in the fifth grade.

AJ: OK. Now, can you describe what Bennett Grove looked like when you were going there?
What did it look like inside?

OL: A barn.

AJ: (laughter)

OL: It looked like a barn. They told -- I tell you, the grades went all over, piled in one. So I was on one side, (inaudible) class was in the back. So (inaudible) was all over. We were almost like what you said, like a little salmon can, we was packed in there. One teacher, one room.

AJ: Did you have --

OL: And I know I went to the fourth grade there, and it was (inaudible) was left there until they got rid of all these (inaudible) schools, and brought them all to Willow Hill.

AJ: Now, did y'all have desks, or benches, or tables -- what did you sit at?

OL: I sat a -- we had benches. He had whatever we could sit on. And there were long tables.

AJ: Now, what is a -- was the benches attached to the table?

OL: No, they weren't. Some of them might have been attached, somebody might have been at little, like the little old desks that what you do -- set into the desk and put your books on it. But we had a mighty few.

AJ: You had a few of those.

OL: Had a few of them.

AJ: Now --

OL: A mighty few.

AJ: OK. So, where did the teacher sit?

OL: They had a chair, at a little old bitty table, they sets mostly there in a little corner.

AJ: OK.

OL: And I thought, well, they choose they want to make they little -- their space there, that's where they sit.

AJ: Where did the big kids sit? The big kids?

OL: The big kids? Well, the big kids had a little section. They sat -- they might have sat up in the front, in a corner. Might have sat in the middle of the school, wherever. But they mostly set -- they didn't set with the big children -- I mean they, little children.

AJ: So the little children were more in the back of the school?

OL: Right.

AJ: And they were mostly at tables and benches?

OL: Right.

AJ: And the bigger kids had desks, and --

OL: They had little desks, and now, whatever they -- put their notebooks or whatever. They had whatever we had to write on.

AJ: Did y'all have a blackboard in the building?

OL: Yes, we did.

AJ: How many was in there?

OL: Probably one.

AJ: OK, which side of the building was it on when you came in the front door?

OL: What side of the building we -- do what now?

AJ: What side of the building was the blackboard on, when you walk in the front door?

OL: Oh. It most always (inaudible).

AJ: On the left.

OL: Mm-hmm.

AJ: OK, how many doors was in the building?

OL: Two. One on the front, and one on the side.

AJ: OK. And on the side door, is that near where the small kids sat?

OL: Well, mostly not, cause, don't run outside, don't everybody, the teacher most wherever that -- wherever the side door was, that way, she always cut that corner. For her, you know, for her (inaudible) place where she sit at.

AJ: OK. Did --

OL: But the -- the side door was on the side where the well was. So -- but, you had, you know, whoever had to go out and get the water, brought the water, because we only had to go out the side door.

AJ: OK. So, where was the heater?

OL: Heater sat right in the middle of the building.

AJ: OK. What type of -- describe what the heater looked like.

OL: Well, we had a -- what you call it? Do you remember that little old potbelly heater?

AJ: Yes.

OL: A little round heater with a one chimney up in the top.

AJ: OK. And the chimney went up through the -- through the top of the building?

OL: Right up through the top of the building. And it was a -- you used it, the stove pipe from the heater up. But it had a little flue (inaudible) up on the top of the building.

AJ: OK. And did they cook on top of that stove?

OL: Did they cook?

AJ: Did y'all --

OL: (inaudible) cook. We didn't do no cooking.

AJ: OK. And so, it was like a potbelly stove?

OL: Right. A little round potbelly stove.

AJ: It was kind of a tall -- more tall than long?

OL: Right, right.

AJ: OK. And you opened the front door and throw the woods in it?

OL: (inaudible). You throw in the wood.

AJ: OK. So, who would put wood into the heater? Was it the teacher or the students?

OL: It was -- the big boys. In the school. They didn't want them putting the wood in the -- in the heater.

AJ: OK. Did you -- did you have a wood windows or glass windows?

OL: [15:00] We had wooden windows.

AJ: So no glass windows?

OL: No glass windows.

AJ: OK, so how did you see how to read in the winter time?

OL: (inaudible) like I said, the best we could see. We saw -- we saw with lamplights. And we got (inaudible) used for lamplights.

AJ: Oh, so --

OL: Wait.

AJ: So they had (inaudible) --

OL: We had a stack on a lantern.

AJ: You had a lantern.

OL: Right.

AJ: And what did the lantern use? Did it use oil, or kerosene?

OL: Kerosene.

AJ: OK. Is that like them old lamps that had the shades on them?

OL: Well, our lantern, it more like a -- oh. I would say, it was shaped that you was think it might be something like a -- some kind of like a little -- a bucket. But it had a -- it was shaped -- but it had a little shade. Then I kind of remember, I would got then (inaudible) shade (inaudible) become much (inaudible) screw the top of it off. But it was like a lantern, was like a lamp.

AJ: OK. And how many of those lanterns did y'all have?

OL: Well, I can remember two. They always -- (inaudible) we all, we had a little (inaudible) who (inaudible) lantern -- I mean, a lantern to the front, and a lantern to the back. And sometimes when they have (inaudible) like that, some of the -- the -- I mean, the --

AJ: The --

OL: The...

AJ: The patrons?

OL: The patients. Were -- do you know granny (inaudible). You know when they have something the teacher tell them bring something?

AJ: Yes.

OL: They were -- they would donate that. But that would be (inaudible) and they get (inaudible) all over, they'd take it back.

AJ: OK. Now --

OL: (inaudible) -- and really, then you were talking about where they (inaudible) (inaudible) the weather, that's about the only time they get real dark in that building, cause you didn't have nothing (inaudible) in the cracks.

AJ: I see.

OL: So they would be -- they'd play the lights, and he gets better and then we won't -- we had to get out of school early.

AJ: I see. Now, did y'all -- you walked to school?

OL: Yes, we did.

AJ: How far did you walk to get to school?

OL: Oh, I walked just -- just cross the bridge. I didn't walk -- I probably didn't walk -- I didn't walk a mile to the schoolhouse. So the school, (inaudible) school where I lived then, so I didn't have to (inaudible).

AJ: OK, so who would walk to school with you?

OL: Oh, it's seldom not sure what (inaudible) and other places that I had some cousins. First cousins walked with me. And we had people that lived -- my neighbor lived across the branch, across the (inaudible). We got like a little (inaudible), we didn't have to -- we didn't walk around the road. We made shortcuts, and went through fields, branches. The (inaudible) we could get there.

AJ: OK, now, so you went to -- when you mean your cousin, you're talking about the Hardens?

OL: Right, right.

AJ: OK, so you walked with the Hardens.

OL: Right. Now, that's the (inaudible) with a little old ravine, where, you know, the younger brother, I think (inaudible) to death.

AJ: Yeah.

OL: (inaudible).

AJ: OK. All right, so did y'all have devotion before school started?

OL: Yes, we did.

AJ: How did that -- who led devotion?

OL: The teacher always led devotion. You know, she'd start out -- it was a song (inaudible) she led a song, and she'd always do the prayer.

AJ: OK. Then --

OL: We had that every morning. Five days a week.

AJ: Did y'all have Pledge Allegiance to the Flag?

OL: Yes, we did.

AJ: OK. Did you have a bell at the school?

OL: Yes, we did.

AJ: Well, who would ring the bell?

OL: Well, the big boys would go out there, where, you know, they wouldn't have no long rope all the way down. The ones you have to reach the rope to ring.

AJ: OK. How many times a day did y'all ring the bell?

OL: Ring it -- we rang it I think twice a day. We rang it for the morning, let them know that their school is taken in, and at lunch time when lunch is over.

AJ: OK. So what kind of -- did y'all have paper and pencil, or did y'all write on little slate boards?

OL: No, we had -- we had little tablets and pencils.

AJ: OK. And who furnished that? Did your parents have to buy it, or did the school give it to you?

OL: Right.

AJ: Your parents bought it?

OL: Right.

AJ: OK, well what kind of textbooks did y'all have?

OL: Well, we had some textbooks that partly the lesson was there, and partly (inaudible) we had little -- had the dime books.

AJ: Where did the books come from?

OL: [20:00] I guess I think they come from the -- I don't know back then whether the Board of the Education (inaudible) where they come from, what the white school, what they had, I used.

AJ: OK, so y'all had hand-me-down books?

OL: We had hand-me-down books.

AJ: OK. You don't remember the name of any of your books, do you?

OL: I (inaudible) I had a book. (inaudible) remember that Jack and Jill.

AJ: Jack and Jill book?

OL: I had a little Jack and Jill book.

AJ: OK. Now, did you have report cards when you was at Bennett Grove?

OL: Yes, I did. Yes, I had a report card at -- when I was at Bennett Grove.

AJ: Do you know where your report card is?

OL: No, I don't.

AJ: OK. Now, when you got promoted, did you sit in a different place in the school?

OL: Yes, we had to set over where they had the higher grade at. When you make a grade, you had to move over. You all set with the same (inaudible) you used to sit with.

AJ: OK.

OL: You had a little (inaudible) -- the children, we didn't have no -- the school did, but the children had to be one to -- you know, do the dividing in the school.

AJ: OK.

OL: A little A's group, I will call it. Little A's group.

AJ: OK. All right. And so, what did y'all do for lunch? Did y'all bring your lunch?

OL: We'd bring our lunch.

AJ: What would be some of the things you'd bring in a lunch?

OL: Oh, I had a -- have biscuit and ham meats, and sausages. (inaudible). We had, back then, we had a good lunch.

AJ: OK. Did you eat in --

OL: I had them -- Mama made it at home. The home-made preserves. We'd have -- even have biscuits and put it in -- bake them and put it in my bucket.

AJ: Yeah.

OL: Put the preserves between the biscuits and (inaudible).

AJ: Yes.

OL: And you'd take a little ham, a little ham meat, and put a piece of that ham in another biscuit.

AJ: Mm.

OL: You were good to go.

AJ: Ready to go. So what did you --

OL: That's right.

AJ: You'd put your lunch in a bucket, a bag, or newspaper?

OL: Now, where we put it in wherever we could find. We most put it in a little brown bag, and put that next to your food and wrap it up in newspaper.

AJ: OK. Now, did -- how many recesses did y'all have during the day?

OL: I really don't -- let me see. At 12:00, I don't think we had but one.

AJ: OK.

OL: One recess. We had lunch with the -- they had the big children -- they had the biggest children, they had to go -- they had to (inaudible) they didn't -- they didn't -- they didn't mix with the little children.

AJ: Mm-hmm. So, where did y'all eat? In the building, or outside?

OL: Well, sometimes when it be -- well, if it was warm weather, we eat outside.

AJ: Well, where would you set? Where would you set?

OL: Anywhere you can.

AJ: Oh, a log --

OL: (inaudible) whatever you can find to set on, a log, or anything. A stalk. Anything you can find (inaudible) around the school as you want to set on.

AJ: OK. And did the children share lunches with each other?

OL: Yes, they did.

AJ: OK. And give me a piece of that -- give me a piece of that, huh?

OL: Right, right. (laughter)

AJ: OK. Did y'all have -- after lunch, y'all had a time that y'all would have recess and y'all would play games?

OL: Yes, we did.

AJ: What kind of games did y'all play?

OL: Well, we had a -- a -- some had a little old baseball, and -- but you don't know (inaudible) we had a -- we played ball with a half a ball. Rags -- a rag-ball, for sure. They made you take your -- made you (inaudible) ball with a board bat.

AJ: OK. Did the boys and girls play together with ball?

OL: No, they didn't. The girls -- the girls mostly went off somewhere, you know, (inaudible) white grass. White grass were, back then, they'd get out and find a little -- a lot of little white grass, and girls got in they little dollhouse and played -- plaited grass.

AJ: Oh, they plaited grass for braiding hair-like?

OL: (inaudible). They plaited -- you know, like the girls plait the hair?

AJ: Yes.

OL: They'd plait the grass.

AJ: Oh.

OL: Yeah, they'd plait grass. That's what they -- back then, they'd play house.

AJ: I see.

OL: Plait the grass and find anything -- plait anything they can find to bring and put in the playhouse. I mean, they'd plait that grass. That was they children. That was, they had -- that was they little girls.

AJ: I see. Now, did y'all ever play tug-of-war, where you'd draw a line, and one group tried to pull the other one across the line?

OL: I don't -- I don't remember that. But I know one thing, the boys got together, and they'd (inaudible) playing marbles.

AJ: Oh, y'all had [25:00] marbles?

OL: Yeah. We played -- we played marbles.

AJ: Mm-hmm.

OL: We'd jump rope. We -- well that's -- huh?

AJ: Did y'all have board-jump, where you'd get on a board, put a stump in the --

OL: Oh, yeah, we had jump-boards.

AJ: Jump-boards.

OL: We'd take a board -- they'd get a board from out (inaudible). They'd bring us a log, and put the log on the ground, and let that board go across. And one get on one end of it, and one get on the other end, you know. One jumping was too high, because you got -- you have to (inaudible) good way of getting hurt.

AJ: OK.

OL: We had to take that board, what would cross that log, and put a piece there to keep that board from flipping. Once they got there, it was stationary.

AJ: OK. Now, did y'all have a see-saw, anything, a sliding-board, anything like that?

OL: Yeah, I'm trying to -- we had a see-saw. (inaudible) see-saw here.

AJ: At Bennett Grove?

OL: We -- yeah, we had a see-saw. We had a -- that's the board across -- that's the board across wasn't it? We had a see-saw, jump-board. Yeah, and I think that's all we had.

AJ: OK, you didn't have any slides, anything like that?

OL: No, we didn't have that.

AJ: So you had a see-saw, and a jump-board.

OL: And a jump-board.

AJ: Did y'all ever plait the Maypole at Bennett Grove?

OL: No, we didn't (inaudible) -- no. We didn't plait the Maypole until I got there to Willow Hill.

AJ: OK. Now, did y'all -- at Bennett Grove, did they have like the end of year of school closing event?

OL: Right, right.

AJ: What was that like?

OL: Well, (inaudible) they had something, something on the end of the year, some kind of activity. But I can't remember what it was. But I know that the Maypole plaiting was out at Willow Hill.

AJ: OK. Now, at Bennett Grove, at the end of the year, did the parents come out and see the kids perform?

OL: Yes, they did.

AJ: What kind of performance did the kids do?

OL: Some of them did the -- they just (inaudible) they little speeches and something, and a song. And doing a some kind of little dance, I don't know what it -- back then. And they'd dance a little -- they'd been so long ago until -- all I remember, they did something. There was some kind of performance, where the parents would come out and be (inaudible) -- they'd come out the school, right out the front door and stand on the little porch. And when they finished, they'd go back into the school-house, and the parents be -- you know, as the audience, they'd be standing -- they'd be standing right there in the front. (inaudible) you had a (inaudible) you had nothing to sit on.

AJ: OK, so the porch was the stage.

OL: Right.

AJ: So the parents would be around the porch.

OL: Right.

AJ: OK --

OL: And then out in the yard.

AJ: So, was there a yard between the porch and the road?

OL: Yes, it was -- yeah, it was -- yeah, it was a porch. The porch and the yard were between - the yard was between the road and the schoolhouse.

AJ: So they must have made the road wider recently.

OL: No, the road was wider. Back then, in that day, you'd stand what you could stand in the road.

AJ: Oh, so some of the parents would be standing in the road?

OL: right. So they had no, like, public roads. They had nothing traveling on the road but a vehicle every once in a while. And mostly it was wagons.

AJ: Oh, so they weren't many cars coming down the road back then.

OL: No, no. They had to get out the road.

AJ: So the road didn't look like it look now, then.

OL: Oh, no. Nuh-uh.

AJ: So it was like just a two-lane road?

OL: It was a two-lane, dirt road. Just, I mean, a car coming down that road, you had to get in there (inaudible) place (inaudible) way to get past each other.

AJ: Oh, so they couldn't even pass at the same time?

OL: No, they couldn't.

AJ: So --

OL: In the night-time, if there was a car, like, that was a road, but they can't see. They had to be in the rut.

AJ: Oh, they couldn't see.

OL: They couldn't see.

AJ: Now, they didn't have any -- any, like, ditches, where the -- those scrapers --

OL: Of course, they had the ditches, in places, but back then, they didn't have no -- there's no rose paper to pull an old roll up. So it had just like a little pass-like. In other words, it was a wagon-pass. Wagon-trail.

AJ: Oh, it was more like a wagon-trail, back then?

OL: Right.

AJ: I see. And so, when you came down with a car, that was only one car coming at a time?

OL: That's right.

AJ: And if another one come, one had to pull to the --

OL: He had to wait till he find a space, where you can go by.

AJ: I see. And so, horse and buggies, and mules and wagons used those roads the most?

OL: Right.

AJ: And so, that would have been space between the porch --

OL: Yes, see -- one wagon -- the wagon could [30:00] pass by that way, because they would be as close to wherever -- whatever (inaudible) they can get out the road, or whatever, and pass. But a car had a little rut. He had to stay there.

AJ: OK. So when the parents came to the school closing, did they come in wagons or cars, or walk, or how did --

OL: They had a -- they had no car. They'd come in a wagon, and a walk.

AJ: Most of them came in wagons, and they walked.

OL: Right.

AJ: Did they bring food for the closing event?

OL: No. (inaudible) they had little, like a little -- like a little picnic.

AJ: OK.

OL: I can remember my parents bringing like, you know -- yeah. Like food, or a little cooked stuff, and they had a little lemonade, all that kind of stuff.

AJ: Did they have a table that they built for the end of the year to put the food on?

OL: Right. They had a little table to the school -- (inaudible) they had a table, you don't be moving (inaudible).

AJ: Was that over by the well?

OL: Very close to the well.

AJ: OK. And so, the kids would be -- after they finished the events for the performance and all, then they would eat and have a little get-together?

OL: Yeah, a little get-together, and we'd all dismiss then all of them get to go home.

AJ: OK. Do you ever remember Miss Julia Pearl Bryant coming out to Bennett Grove, while you were there?

OL: No.

AJ: Do --

OL: I remember Miss Julia Pearl.

AJ: Do you ever --

OL: (inaudible) --

AJ: You don't remember her coming to Bennett Grove?

OL: I remember Miss Julia Pearl Bryant. Miss Julia Pearl Bryant. That's a -- feel like I remember her.

AJ: Did she come to Bennett Grove?

OL: (inaudible) you know how the teachers come around? Yeah, she was a supervisor.

AJ: Yeah.

OL: I remember Miss Julia Pearl Bryant.

AJ: Yeah. And she came out to Bennett Grove and visit?

OL: Yeah, I don't know how else I know her, but I remember her coming out there.

AJ: Well, how did she get out there? Did she have a car, or a mule and wagon, or --

OL: Now, they would probably be most them -- if they had a -- they would have a car.

AJ: OK.

OL: Or they would have a car, or either somebody would bring them.

AJ: OK. Now, you said that Miss Leela Scarborough was your teacher. Did she have a car?

OL: Yes, she did.

AJ: Do you know what kind of car Miss Leela Scarborough had?

OL: No, but it was way back in there. Probably back in the early '40s.

AJ: And where did Miss Leela Scarborough live while she was teaching at Bennett Grove?

OL: She lived down below Statesboro, back out towards Magnolia Church, somewhere back out that-a-way.

AJ: Now, are you talking about Ms. Eva Moore, or are you talking about Ms. Leela?

OL: I'm sorry, that's who I'm talking about. I'm talking about Miss Eva. So that's (inaudible) Barbara's mother, right?

AJ: Yes.

OL: That's Barbara's (inaudible). I'm talking about Ms. Eva.

AJ: OK.

OL: Ms. Eva Moore. Not Ms. Leela.

AJ: Now, Ms. Eva Moore didn't teach at Bennett Grove.

OL: Ah?

AJ: She taught at Willow -- she didn't teach at Bennett Grove.

OL: Who?

AJ: Ms. Eva Moore. She taught at Willow Hill. Now, Ms. Leela Scarborough did teach at Bennett Grove, that's why I was asking.

OL: Now, that -- that -- wait a minute. Let me get it straight, now. Ms. Leela -- Ms. Leela didn't have no children. Ms. Leela -- Ms. Leela's the one taught at Bennett Grove.

AJ: She taught at Bennett Grove.

OL: She taught at Bennett Grove.

AJ: So, where did she live when she was teaching at Bennett Grove?

OL: So, now, where did she live then? I don't know. She might have stayed -- I mean, a lot of the teachers stayed with the parents.

AJ: OK. Now, Ms. Leela Scarborough, that's Barbara Scarborough's mama. She didn't have a car, did she?

OL: She didn't have a car.

AJ: OK. All right. And so, then the next teacher you said you had was Ms. Veronica Young.

OL: Ms. Veronica Young was one that I can -- (inaudible) was a teacher I can remember then. I had a Miss Michaela. I don't know if she come after Ms. Leela, or come before.

AJ: Where did Ms. Michaela live?

OL: She came from parts of Carolina.

AJ: Who did she board with?

OL: I can't remember. I don't know whether she boarded with the Lesters or some in the Bennetts. But she boarded with whoever was living close around the schoolhouse.

AJ: OK. Did she walk to school?

OL: Yes, she did, because that's why she had to live with somebody that lives close around the school.

AJ: Now, describe what looking -- what did she look like? Describe her.

OL: Ms. Michaela?

AJ: Yes.

OL: As I can remember back, she was a brown-skin, little, small lady; brown-skin lady.

AJ: OK. And she was small?

OL: Yes. What I can remember, that thinking that maybe she was a small lady.

AJ: You don't remember her having long or short hair? Which was it?

OL: That I don't know.

AJ: You don't know that. OK. Now, just a few more questions. Did y'all ever play any sports against Johnson Grove while you was at Bennett Grove?

OL: Yes, we did.

AJ: What did y'all play?

OL: [35:00] Base -- baseball.

AJ: How did y'all get over there?

OL: Walked.

AJ: You walked all the way from Bennett Grove to Johnson Grove?

OL: To Johnson Grove.

AJ: Well, what time would y'all leave the school to get over there?

OL: Well, we'd leave the school, by the time we'd get to -- time we get to the schoolhouse.

AJ: OK.

OL: So as we had to walk -- walk over there, play, and then walk back.

AJ: And so, how -- about how far is Bennett Grove from Johnson Grove? That's about how many miles?

OL: Mm. About four, five. Not over five.

AJ: OK, so which way would y'all walk? Down the dirt road?

OL: Down the dirt road. Through the woods.

AJ: Would you cross over -- you'd cross over Rocky Ford Road?

OL: No. We wouldn't cross over Rocky Ford Road. We would cross Black River. We would come back to the store, a little package store?

AJ: Yes.

OL: And go up the highway apiece to either a dirt road. And go down the dirt road. And go around and hit another dirt road, that's the road going into Johnson Grove.

AJ: OK. And so, then y'all would -- y'all would take your lunches with you?

OL: Now, I don't know. Now, I suspect they were -- I don't know. I think they might feed us when we get there, you know?

AJ: OK.

OL: Some of the (inaudible) there, what you call them? Trustees?

AJ: Yes.

OL: Brought us the little -- brought us one little repast for after they get to playing ball.

AJ: OK. Now, who won most of the games, Bennett Grove or Johnson Grove?

OL: That I don't know. That I don't know. Because Johnson Grove -- Johnson Grove had some good-sized boys, and Bennett Grove had some good-sized boys.

AJ: OK. And then Bennett Grove came to visit Johnson Grove some time, too?

OL: Right, right. If you come to play me, I got to come back to play you.

AJ: OK. And the teacher would walk with the students to the school?

OL: Right.

AJ: Well, that was a nice event y'all had. Did you all ever go to Scarborough Grove?

OL: No, I can't remember going to Scarborough Grove, that was sort of too (inaudible).

AJ: OK. And --

OL: I suppose it was Bennett -- it was Bennett Grove, and Johnson Grove.

AJ: OK. Who was the Trustees at Bennett Grove when you were there?

OL: Fred Lester, Callie Bennett, Brooke Bill, and I want to say my daddy. I think that's about all of them.

AJ: OK, now were they the trustees until the school closed?

OL: Right.

AJ: OK. Do you know any other trustees that were trustees before they were trustees?

OL: No, I don't.

AJ: Do you know about what year Bennett Grove was organized or built?

OL: Like I said, I (inaudible) I thought that was the first school that I went to in the grade (inaudible) it was called a primer. You had a little old book about six of the -- it was a thin little book. So I -- I would have to say I was -- I was 10 in '37. Now, I don't know how old I was when I started the school, but I don't know who the trustee was then. I can't remember that (inaudible) I got -- you know, up in there.

AJ: Yeah. Do you know who actually built the school?

OL: Who actually that was?

AJ: Who built the school? Who constructed the school?

OL: I think some of -- some of the Bennetts. Scarlett Bennett, and I don't know whether it was his daddy or some of them. So that why he got that -- I think got that name. Cause it was on the Bennett's place. And that's why it got that name. Bennett Grove.

AJ: But did your -- did your dad go to Bennett Grove?

OL: The school?

AJ: Yes.

OL: I don't know. I want to say I think like I heard him say he got to Bennett Grove. But I don't know.

AJ: OK. You don't know who your dad's teacher was?

OL: You know, a Miss deBloise? Lois? Ms. Lilly May Barber?

AJ: Yes.

OL: That was my daddy's teacher.

AJ: Ms. Lilly May Barber?

OL: Right. That was why I know he was one of them, because he'd always tell me Lilly May Barber was his teacher.

AJ: OK.

OL: Now, where they was teaching at, I don't know.

AJ: Yeah, but Ms. Lilly -- where was your daddy living at when [40:00] he was a little boy?

OL: Oh, about two and half hours from where -- back -- back about two and a half miles from where I'm living at now.

AJ: So the closest schools around there would have been Scarborough Grove, Johnson Grove, or Bennett Grove?

OL: No, the closest school would probably have been a good school that they called Thankful.

AJ: OK. Is that school still there?

OL: No, it's not.

AJ: It's torn down?

OL: It's torn down.

AJ: OK. So Ms. Barber might have taught at Thankful school, and your daddy might have gone there?

OL: Right. He might have.

AJ: OK. Because Bennett Grove was a little far, at that time?

OL: It was.

AJ: I see. Did you know anything about the turpentine quarters?

OL: Yes, a little bit.

AJ: Well, who --

OL: So that would be something that the children went to -- what lived in the turpentine quarters, they went to school to Bennett Grove.

AJ: Did you remember any of the children in the -- living in the turpentine quarters?

OL: Yes, I do.

AJ: Who are they?

OL: There was the one named George -- George Ellis Lee, Moss Fell, Barmas Fell, Daniel Lewis, Irene Bennett -- no, they didn't live in no quarters -- turpentine quarters. But boy, now, just (inaudible), his name is -- oh. His name, you know, you'll have to give me time to think of them names. His name not hopping to mind.

AJ: Mm-hmm.

OL: Barmas Fell, Moss -- Moss Lee. Arlene Lee. Who was that other one? I don't know. Them all I can remember right now.

AJ: OK. All right, then. So -- and so, I can't find anybody who can tell me exactly when Bennett Grove was built. And I don't know anybody who would know that now.

OL: You'd like to know when Bennett Grove was built?

AJ: Yeah, I'm trying to figure out what --

OL: I -- I'll tell you what. If we be living by the weekend, if he can think of it, he can come closer to it than anybody, that's my uncle Tommy.

AJ: Uncle Tommy (inaudible)?

OL: Right.

AJ: Will you see him this weekend?

OL: Yes, I will.

AJ: Ask him what Bennett Grove -- when was it built, and ask him does he know any of the teachers over at Bennett Grove, the first teachers? Because I'm trying to figure out who them early teachers was, and when the school was started.

OL: OK.

AJ: And --

OL: I'll do that.

AJ: Is his mind good?

OL: Yeah, (inaudible) his mind good. You know, he just will get sometimes where, he'll set there and think a minute, and he -- his mind just as strong as a dollar.

AJ: How old is he now?

OL: He's going on 101, if he lives to see October.

AJ: He's a 100 years old?

OL: He was 100 years old this past October.

AJ: My Lord. Well, he's certainly -- and tell me, how is he your uncle? How is he related?

OL: See, when -- I told you about my -- we moved, and went down and my uncle had died, my daddy's brother?

AJ: Uh-huh.

OL: And he moved, and he met my aunt in '48.

AJ: OK. And what was your aunt's name?

OL: Lula Mae.

AJ: OK. Now, who was those children that Ms. Lara Burroughs raised that went to Bennett Grove?

OL: That was Uncle Tommy's children.

AJ: OK, what --

OL: They mainly (inaudible) Bennett Grove was close to them.

AJ: Now, what was the name of the children?

OL: The boy was named Devon T., and the girl -- the oldest girl was named Burlene, and the baby girl was named Chubby.

AJ: Are they --

OL: (inaudible).

AJ: Are they living?

OL: Yes, dear.

AJ: All of them living?

OL: (inaudible) Now, the oldest girl is in a -- back in some parts of Ohio. And the boy -- the boy is in Indiana. South Bend, Indiana. And (inaudible) in South Bend, Indiana.

AJ: So, about how old are they?

OL: All right. Devon T., he might be about three years, or two years older than I am.

AJ: OK.

OL: And (inaudible) is all them living all together.

AJ: OK.

OL: And the oldest girl, me and her is together. I'm September older than she is. My birthday's September, her birthday in October.

AJ: OK. All righty. Now, OK, so you've got some good memory. Now, is -- I'm trying to -- so, where were the toilets at Bennett Grove?

OL: The boys' toilet was on one side, down next to the branch, and the girls' [45:00] toilet was on the left.

AJ: So was any of them across the road?

OL: The best -- the toilet?

AJ: Yes.

OL: Yes, the girls' toilet was across the road.

AJ: OK.

OL: And the boys' toilet wasn't.

AJ: OK, so the boys' toilet was behind the building?

OL: It was behind the building.

AJ: OK. Who was the closest people that lived at Bennett Grove when you was -- who was the closest house?

OL: The Lesters.

AJ: The Lesters?

OL: Right.

AJ: Now, did Miss Levana Lester ever teach or substitute while you were there?

OL: Mm. That I don't know. That I don't know. I don't remember never seeing her substituting at the school.

AJ: Did Miss Lois Bennett ever substitute while you were there?

OL: Lois Bennett?

AJ: Yes.

OL: No.

AJ: OK. Did you know Ms. Darlene Halsey or Hulsey?

OL: Mm-mmm.

AJ: Did you know Ms. Eva Wigs?

OL: No.

AJ: OK, did you know Ms. Lula Spearman?

OL: Spearman. No, I think they were some people living -- that must have lived right around Willow Hill.

AJ: What about Ms. Naomi White?

OL: No.

AJ: Now, Ms. --

OL: You said Naomi White?

AJ: Naomi Pearl White.

OL: No. I didn't know none of them.

AJ: Now, Ms. Evelyn Green taught at Bennett Grove, did you know that she taught there?

OL: No, I didn't.

AJ: Ms. Evelyn Green, and Mrs. --

OL: Is Evelyn Green Mr. Johnny Green's daughter?

AJ: Yes, she taught there from 1940 to 1941.

OL: Oh, see, I wasn't even going to school. (inaudible) 1940 -- I wasn't but three, three or four years old.

AJ: Now, did you know Ms. Fairbanks Love?

OL: Uh-huh.

AJ: OK. Now, Ms. Beatrice Jones, she taught there also. That's Cousin Thelma's sister. So --

OL: Oh, I didn't know that.

AJ: They had three of Cousin George Jones's children taught there, and I was just, have been digging this up. So Cousin Thelma had taught there, Ms. Beatrice Jones taught there, and Ms. Leela Jones Scarborough taught there, all three of them. And it was at different times.

OL: Aha.

AJ: Now, did you ever hear of a person named Ms. Lara Kent, or a Professor Kent that taught there?

OL: No, but I heard that name. But I didn't know that they taught there. I have heard that name, Professor Kent. Now, (inaudible) Professor Kent, back then, I don't know.

AJ: But you've heard the name Lara Kent?

OL: But I've heard the name -- Professor Kent.

AJ: OK. All righty. Now, did you ever hear a name of Ms. Hall -- Miss Sally Hall, or anybody like that, that taught anywhere around Bulloch County?

OL: Sally Hall.

AJ: You ever heard that name? It must be one of the old --

OL: (inaudible). No, I ain't heard that name before.

AJ: OK, did you go to school with Mr. James Bennett and Ms. Laura Bell?

OL: Yeah, I went to school with -- (inaudible) James Lewis?

AJ: James Lewis.

OL: James Bennett?

AJ: Yes.

OL: Yeah, I went to school with James Lewis. But I was -- you know, that -- that was a big children come in at.

AJ: Yes.

OL: And I went to school with John Lester.

AJ: OK.

OL: And I went to school with Laura -- Laura Bell. And Mildred Bell.

AJ: Now, did you know cousin Dolly Bennett and Annie Bennett; did you know them well?

OL: Yes, I did.

AJ: What do you remember -- what kind of people were they?

OL: Dolls Bennett and Anne Bennett was -- I know they was (inaudible) -- was a lady, they had never been married. And they lived together.

AJ: Mm-hmm.

OL: So that's why I was there, and somebody, they -- her daddy -- (inaudible) her daddy must be the one donated the lamp by the Bennetts in the schoolhouse.

AJ: You didn't know their -- did you know their daddy?

OL: I think they daddy was Ben Bennett.

AJ: Did you -- had you ever seen him?

OL: No, I hadn't.

AJ: OK. Ben Bennett. OK, good. And you don't have any pictures from Bennett Grove School?

OL: Pictures?

AJ: Yes.

OL: No, I don't.

AJ: OK, now I'm going to get you going in a minute. So, you said now, when the fifth grade, you went to Willow Hill, and that was that old Rosenwald building that you went to?

OL: Yep. I reckon that, cause that's part of the building, over there where the (inaudible).

AJ: Yes.

OL: That's the old -- because we have the [50:00] old Willow Hill what was across the road, all of it was, you know, they was all over there together.

AJ: OK. Well, I know I've -- I don't want to wear my welcome out. So the next time we talk, I'll take it from there, but I'm writing this history of the Bennett Grove School, and I'm using everybody's memories and recollections, because we going to be putting on a little -- a presentation. We wrote a grant to the Georgia Humanities Council, and we've been working with Georgia Southern. So our goal is to restore the Bennett Grove School,

make recordings of as many students, to keep the memory of this, so that it doesn't get lost.

OL: Uh-huh.

AJ: And so, I appreciate your help on it. And I'm -- at some point, I do have some additional questions I want to ask you about Willow Hill, but as I said, I know you go to bed early, so I don't want to wear my welcome out tonight, but I'll call you another time, and finish that.

OL: All right. And I will give that (inaudible) by the weekend. I will get that information that what (inaudible) if he can remember it. (inaudible) to that --

AJ: Yes.

OL: -- (inaudible) the time about when that school was built.

AJ: All righty. Thank you so much. He's about the only one who can tell us that.

OL: All right then. He about the onliest one, because he's the onliest one old up in that area who is living.

AJ: And ask him did he ever go to Bennett Grove himself.

OL: And I want to think he did. Because I think -- we, and my daddy went there, (inaudible) you know. (inaudible) hear him talk about it, he had went to Bennett Grove School. Him and a couple of more (inaudible), but they done passed and gone on. So -- but I will get that information for you about that school. (inaudible)

AJ: OK. Thank you so much, cuz. I appreciate it very much, now.

OL: Oh, OK.

AJ: You have a good night, now.

OL: Bye. All right, you do, too.

AJ: Bye-bye.

END OF AUDIO FILE