

## Rosebud McCullough

This is an interview conducted by Dr. Alvin Jackson of Mrs. Rosebud McCullough. The date and location of this interview is unknown. Topics covered include family genealogy, and McCullough's years at Willow Hill. These years included activities such as school plays, field days, and Easter egg hunts, which are describe within.

ALVIN JACKSON: [00:00] First question is, what are your recollections about Willow Hill? In other words, I'd like to know what you remember of who the teachers were, the principals, something about the students, what did the buildings look like, anything like that.

ROSEBUD MCCULLOUGH: Well, the first Willow Hill I remember was an old, wooden building. A matter of fact, it was so old, till the wood on it looked dark. And Cousin Ruth Hall was the principal. And her step-daughter, [Annie Mae?] Hall had the senior class. Beatrice Jones was the fifth and sixth grade teacher, and [Trudy Cohens?] was my teacher, first, second, and third grade teacher. And [Caroline Green?], what did she have? I think she had the seventh grade, the hardest grade of all. But Caroline Green was Ms. Stewart Green's daughter.

JACKSON: How far did (inaudible) at times?

MCCULLOUGH: Now, these was the original teachers. And that school was sitting just above Cousin Douglass's house, where his house is sitting now, because the next Willow Hill was sitting where his house is now.

JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

MCCULLOUGH: And later on, this school went on until we got the new building, which I think was in the '40s.

JACKSON: You mean the one they have now?

MCCULLOUGH: No, the one that --

JACKSON: Oh.

MCCULLOUGH: It's my mother's house now. That was the home economics building then, the agriculture teacher was Mr. Lawton. And home economics teacher was Miss Rambeau. That went on until they got the new building. They had two new buildings. Then, they put Annie Mae Hall, Caroline Green, Beatrice Jones, and Cousin Ruth, and all those old teachers out. Because none of them had a college degree. And they said they wanted all college-degree teachers. So, Cousin Ruth went back to college and got her degree, Annie Mae quit. Beatrice Jones got married. Miss Trudy got married, and she went up north, to Jersey. Then, we had, for our teachers, Miss Rambeau --

JACKSON: Do you remember the years these were, now?

MCCULLOUGH: I can't remember the exact year.

JACKSON: When did you first start, do you remember?

MCCULLOUGH: Well, when I went to school, I was five years old.

JACKSON: OK.

MCCULLOUGH: Five years old, we had primer. Primer's a Latin word meaning "beginning." So, the same as the kids up here had kindergarten, we had primer. So I was five when I got in primer. And Cousin Ruth Hall was my first teacher in primer, and then Miss Trudy Cohens was my second teacher in first grade. Now, if I was five years old when I went to primer --

JACKSON: So about '33.

MCCULLOUGH: About, that must have been '33.

JACKSON: Around the Depression.

MCCULLOUGH: And that was the first old, old building. Then, when they turned it into a bigger school, and made it a junior high school, the first agriculture teacher was Mr. Martin, home economics, Miss Rambeau, the principal, Miss Dominics.

JACKSON: The principal was Miss Dominics?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, Miss Dominics. Old, old lady.

JACKSON: Yeah, where's she from?

MCCULLOUGH: Boston.

JACKSON: She was from Boston, Massachusetts?

MCCULLOUGH: Mm-hmm.

JACKSON: She was -- all of these were blacks, though?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, all of them was black. Now, let me see who was with Miss Dominics. Miss Dominics, Mr. Martin, Miss Rambeau.

JACKSON: Now, this is Mr. Martin, from Statesboro M.M. Martin?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah. He was the agriculture teacher.

JACKSON: Now, what --

MCCULLOUGH: I'm trying to think who else was with Miss Dominics, I can't remember.

JACKSON: So Cousin Ruth --

MCCULLOUGH: Oh, yeah, Mr. Cooper. And I'm trying to think of the one had the first grade - Miss Scurret. She had the first grade, and she was a gym teacher.

JACKSON: Now, you're saying that before they asked all of the people to leave without degrees, this -- the people you're talking about now is a new crowd that came that had them?

MCCULLOUGH: With the degrees. Miss Dominics was the first principal and these was the first set of teachers that had college degrees.

JACKSON: OK, now --

MCCULLOUGH: And Miss Dominics was the first principal.

JACKSON: OK, now, what year did you leave Willow Hill? Do you remember that? Did you graduate from Willow Hill?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, I graduated from Willow Hill.

JACKSON: Do you remember the year?

MCCULLOUGH: It was '42.

JACKSON: You graduated in forty--

MCCULLOUGH: I think. And I went to Statesboro one year, and then I went to Jacksonville, Florida the remainder of the years.

JACKSON: OK. Now, when you graduated from Willow Hill, did they have a graduation exercise with caps and gowns?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, they had caps and gowns, and the music and everything.

JACKSON: Oh, OK.

MCCULLOUGH: It was beautiful, but the class before me that graduated, they had white dresses.

JACKSON: OK.

MCCULLOUGH: All white. My class was the first class with caps and gowns.

JACKSON: OK, and that was in 1942?

MCCULLOUGH: Mm-hmm, I think it was '42.

JACKSON: OK, now what were some of the kinds of things that you did at Willow Hill when you were there, what were some of the activities, plays?

MCCULLOUGH: Well, we always had school plays, but I was always the leading star. And I was the valedictorian of the class. Well, we had school plays, and what I like about the school plays, the teachers were the producers, and we were the actors. And it was just like real Hollywood. Because we could act just like real movie stars, and I always had a leading role, though.

JACKSON: Do you remember any of the names of the plays, or anything?

MCCULLOUGH: No, [05:00] it's so far back, I wracked my mind and tried to remember all of it, I can't.

JACKSON: OK. And --

MCCULLOUGH: I remember when E.R. made the little wooden boy, in the play, because he wanted the little boy to be one of the boys so bad, and they named the little boy Pluto. E.R. Holmes, Mr. Joe Reed's nephew made the little wooden boy in the play. And then I was the madam of the house. I played the part of the white lady, and then I was calling, "Kate -- Kate? Where are you, Kate?" And my sister coming in, and say, "Yes, Miss Margie? I ain't so late, be I?" "I ain't so late, be I?" Yeah, but I can't remember the play, it's been so long ago.

JACKSON: Now, which one of your sisters was that?

MCCULLOUGH: Oh, the other one's in Detroit.

JACKSON: OK.

MCCULLOUGH: See, she -- I was like the white lady, and she was like my maid. And I was always be screaming and hollering, if I seen a piece of dust, or something out of the place, and then I would holler, and she'd say, "Yes, Miss Margie. I ain't so late, be I?" I never will forget that. But I can't remember too much of what year it was, or anything. They might know what years it was -- Roxy went to the old school, the first school I was telling you about, before the new school. See, the third new school, I wasn't there. I was there on the second new school.

JACKSON: So, there were --

MCCULLOUGH: Willow Hill now is the third new school.

JACKSON: OK, OK, the third school.

MCCULLOUGH: Roxy went to that original school.

JACKSON: And you went to the first two?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, I went to the first two. Same one as Roxy went to.

JACKSON: OK, now, how many buildings were on the ground when you were there?

MCCULLOUGH: One.

JACKSON: Just one building?

MCCULLOUGH: But one big building.

JACKSON: One big building. OK.

MCCULLOUGH: Then, when the new school came, there was two buildings.

JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

MCCULLOUGH: One large building, and the home economics building, which is my mother's house now. That was the home economics building.

JACKSON: Mm-hmm. OK. Is there any -- who was --

MCCULLOUGH: Home economics and agriculture shop. Mr. Lawton became the second Ag teacher. Which, later on, he became about the fifth principal of Willow Hill.

JACKSON: That was at -- he was not at the old school, though, was he? Was he principal at the old school?

MCCULLOUGH: No, Professor Martin was at the old school. He became the -- no, he was not at the old school, he was at the new school. He never was at the old school.

JACKSON: Who, Lawton?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah. And when I went home, about 20 years later, Lawton was the principal.

JACKSON: Yeah. I remember him, he was principal when I went there. I guess, other than Willow Hill, some of the questions I wanted to ask you, what were your recollections about Aunt Carrie, Aunt Cora, Aunt Essa and Alex Hodge, Uncle Bud, Uncle Benny?

MCCULLOUGH: Well, I think among the uncles on my mother's side, I loved Uncle Benny best. And among the aunts, of course you know I loved Aunt Carrie and Aunt Essie the best. I guess I liked all of them, I had nothing against none of them.

JACKSON: OK. Did they -- let's see now. Do you remember your great-grandfather, Benjamin Donaldson?

MCCULLOUGH: He was my grandfather.

JACKSON: Right.

MCCULLOUGH: He taught me how to tell the time on the clock, and he would run. I used to feed him every day. He's the one that told me he was six years old when they freed the slaves. And he told me, he stayed in the master's house, because he was related to the master.

JACKSON: Now, you don't remember...

MCCULLOUGH: I'm not sure whether the master was his father or what way he was related, but, you know, grown people don't discuss sex with people in those days. But all he told me, he was six years old when the slaves was freed. He'd lived in the master's house; he was treated very well. And --

JACKSON: You never heard who the master was, did you?

MCCULLOUGH: He told me that the slaves took the last name of their masters. He told me as much as he could tell me, without hurting anybody, and see, he was blind, and it was my duty to feed him. And I --

JACKSON: What did he look like? What do you remember he looked like?

MCCULLOUGH: He looked just like a white man. He was big.

JACKSON: He was a big guy?

MCCULLOUGH: He was a great, big man, and he had a great, big nose, like a Jew. And he was bald-headed, and you couldn't tell him from any white man, that was my mother's father. And I said to my mother one day, I say, "Grandpa looks more like a white man than Mr. Johnny Green." And I say, "Yet, all of Miss Dora Green's children are light and all of you are brown-skinned." I mad that remark to her one day, because Grandpa looked more like a white man than Mr. Johnny Green did. Well, in other words, he lookeded like a white man.

JACKSON: Do you remember you grandmother, Roseanne?

MCCULLOUGH: I remember her on two occasions. I just remember looking at her, but I can't remember anything she ever said to me but one word. Me and her went out to get up the eggs one day -- remember, I was only two and a half when she died. And we came back in, and I had my hands on my head like this, coming through the house, and she said,

“Don’t do that. That’s ugly.” That’s all I remember about her, nothing else. I don’t remember when she died. I don’t remember going to her funeral or anything.

JACKSON: You don’t remember what she looked like?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, I remember what she looked like. She was very dark, and she looked -- had a face like mine. But she’s very dark, and she had hair that long, like an Indian. She used to wrap it in a great, big ball, back here.

JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

MCCULLOUGH: But she was more like those black Indians, you know. Hair was that long. And she wrapped a big ball back here. And then her face looked very much like mine, but now, she had high cheek-bones, but she was just black.

JACKSON: [10:00] You don’t know what she walked like?

MCCULLOUGH: And she wore long dresses.

JACKSON: She wore long --

MCCULLOUGH: And she wore those high-top shoes. The shoes had a heel on them that high, and then string all the way up, about half-way your leg. That’s the kind of shoes she wore.

JACKSON: Do you remember the way she walked? Did she walk straight or wobbling (inaudible)?

MCCULLOUGH: She didn’t wobble. She walked something like the way I walk. A lot of people say that I remind them of her.

JACKSON: OK, do you remember any of your grandfather, Ben’s sister, like Aunt Mariah, or --

MCCULLOUGH: I remember Aunt Mariah, that was Cousin Dan’s mother.

JACKSON: Do you remember her -- now, what do you remember about her? What did she look like?

MCCULLOUGH: Aunt Mariah wore long dresses, and she was slightly light-skinned. And that’s about all I remember about her. That was Cousin Dan’s mother, but I know her good, because she used to stay with grandpa, and she used to cook for him.

JACKSON: Do you remember any of the other sisters and brothers, other than Aunt Mariah, (inaudible)?

MCCULLOUGH: Mm-mm. I don’t --

JACKSON: Aunt Mary, or uncle -- you wouldn’t remember that, would you?

MCCULLOUGH: No, I don’t know those.

JACKSON: OK, did you remember any of my grandma Roseanne’s brothers and sisters, Uncle Nelson?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, I know Uncle Littles.

JACKSON: Gill? OK. Nelson? OK.

MCCULLOUGH: I know the best one and the baby brother. I’m trying to remember his name -- the one my mother loved the best of all. I can’t remember his -- I’m sorry.

JACKSON: It wasn’t Nelson, was it?

MCCULLOUGH: No. Uncle Ben Littles was my mother’s -- my grandmother’s baby brother.

JACKSON: Benny (inaudible)?

MCCULLOUGH: I remember him and his wife. But I’m trying to remember the one my mother loved the best of all. Because he was there when grandpa died, and Aunt Essie and Aunt Carrie, and all of them was mad at my mother for getting the whole plantation. And he came around, and he told my mother, he said, “I’ll take them out, and I’ll talk to them,

one by one, that you had nothing to do with this, and you didn't in no way undermine your father, to will only to you."

JACKSON: Now, he willed everything to her?

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, well, see, my grandfather had eight children. But they all had left him but my mother. And we had another house, where my grandfather had another farm. And he let my father have the farm for free, not paying any rent or anything, and everything he make, well, he could have it. That's why we always lived good. Then, Uncle Benny married, and he went to Florida, and he took his wife with him, and this left Grandpa in the house by hisself, so my mother said to my father, "We going to have to move in the house with Pa, and see after him." Then we moved in the big house. And my mother, and my father, and me took care of my grandfather till the day he died. I always fed him and led him around, till he had the stroke. Me and my brother Bobby would lead him where he want to go. And then, when he had the stroke, and began to mess the bed every day, my father would get up every morning and shave him, and bathe him and clean him, and clean the bed, and people -- when he had the stroke, he told my mother to send for his lawyers. And the lawyers were three white men came to the house. And in that day and age, children weren't allowed to be in the room when grown people was talking. So I set in the corner where they couldn't see me. And the lawyer said to my grandfather, "Who do you want to leave the plantation to?" And he said, "Bonnie." He said, "OK, now, if it's Bonnie, or if it's all the children, raise your hand, however you want us to do it." He could talk very little. Whatever they called that he liked, he raised his hand. Then the lawyers wrote down all of this on the paper, and used the other lawyer for a witness, and told him to touch the pencil. And that made it legal. So he left the whole plantation to my mother. When they come home to his funeral, and find out my mother was left everything, then they said that she had gotten behind their back and undermined them, and persuaded him, and took advantage of him, and made him leave everything to her. And this one Little, their Uncle Little -- I don't know whether it was Uncle Nelson -- but anyway, my mother was --

JACKSON: There's a William Little. There's a Herman...

MCCULLOUGH: It must have been Uncle Nelson, because he was the tall one. Uncle Ben was the short one. But he took it Aunt Essie out, and he came back and told my mother, he said, "I talked to all of them, and I got them all to understand, but Aunt Essie," he said, "Essie is fighting mad, and she still wants to fight you in the courts. She still think you undermined them, and took advantage of them, and got the whole plantation."

JACKSON: OK, now, do you think Aunt Essie carried that feeling for a long time?

MCCULLOUGH: I don't know. I think when Aunt Essie got like all the rest of us got when she got saved, her only concern then was going back with him when he come.

JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

MCCULLOUGH: Because that's mine, and, Lord, I've truly wanted to go back when he come. I don't have no malice in my heart. I've nothing against nobody. I just want to be ready when he come for me. And I'm thinking Aunt Essie, like all of the rest of us, when we're young, and before we get saved, we do have a grudge some time, against certain ones. But when the Lord save us, he cleanse us of all of that.

JACKSON: OK. Now, do you remember grandmother Sarah Ann and your grandpa Jonas.

MCCULLOUGH: I called her Aunt Sarah Ann, [15:00] and Grandpa Jonas. I only remember that we went into the house on Sundays for dinner. And Grandpa Jonas used to come in a

horse and buggy with a bag of pecans, give the pecans to my sister, because she was the lightest, and didn't like the rest of us, because we were black.

JACKSON: Which one would he give it to?

MCCULLOUGH: Grandpa Jonas, and he was black as coal himself.

JACKSON: Who would he give it to?

MCCULLOUGH: Wadell. She was a light-skinned little girl, and she was pretty. And Grandpa Jonas would get out the buggy and pick her up and hug her, and kiss her and then handed her back, and say, "You give the others some; you divide it up."

JACKSON: You don't think he gave it to her because she was the oldest?

MCCULLOUGH: Ask her, she'll tell you, he gave it to her because she was light. She told it to me.

JACKSON: OK. Now, you don't -- what about Grandma Sarah Ann?

MCCULLOUGH: I don't remember her too much, except she cooked and wore a long dress. But I never called her Grandma Sarah Ann, I called her Aunt Sarah Ann.

JACKSON: Do you -- let's see, now, you wouldn't remember -- you should remember some of her sisters, like Aunt Mary Ann, Aunt Maisanne.

MCCULLOUGH: I remember Aunt Maisanne, because Aunt Maisanne, she came in for nothing. And I know Aunt Mary, because Aunt Mary Ann used to live in Statesboro, next door to Uncle Wash and Aunt Rose. And they were right next door. But I didn't know her before she moved from the country. Her name was Mary Ann. And Aunt Mary Ann was one of the youngest and one of longest-living. So I only remember Aunt Mais, Aunt Mary Ann, and my grandmother, which was named Sarah Ann -- they all had a "Ann" on the name.

JACKSON: OK.

MCCULLOUGH: You know, I tell you, Aunt Mais used to come to Philadelphia to visit me.

JACKSON: Do you --

MCCULLOUGH: But her husband was Lord McCullough. She had a son named Lord McCullough, too.

JACKSON: You remember Uncle Bubba Hodge? And he's still living.

MCCULLOUGH: Well, I went to Uncle Bubba's house, in Brunswick, Georgia. He remembered me, but I didn't remember him. He said he knowed me when I was a little girl, before he moved to Brunswick, Georgia. And Uncle Dougie carried me there. We was on our way to the family reunion in Fort Pierce, Florida, and Uncle Dougie said, "I got to stop in Brunswick, Georgia, to pick up Uncle Bubba." And that's when I seen Uncle Bubba. But I couldn't remember that I had seen him before, so I must have been a little girl.

JACKSON: Yeah, he's up in his -- he's (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

MCCULLOUGH: Yeah, but I've been to his house. He lives in Brunswick, Georgia. He got a nice little house there, and he got a front porch and swings on the front porch.

JACKSON: When did you first come to Philadelphia?

MCCULLOUGH: March, 1947. I think it was March the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

JACKSON: Now, that was after living in Jacksonville?

MCCULLOUGH: Mm-hmm.

JACKSON: Now, you went to school in Jacksonville. What kind of school did you go to?

MCCULLOUGH: Standard High School. It was a large school, but it's not --

JACKSON: OK, so you graduated from high school in Jacksonville?

MCCULLOUGH: Standard High -- well, when I went there, I was in eleventh grade. I didn't have to go but one year.

JACKSON: OK. And then you went to -- what kind of school did you go to after high school?

MCCULLOUGH: I went to Ed Roader's College, only during the summer, but it wasn't no college course, it was preparatory courses, to prepare you for college. And that was when I had made up my mind, I wasn't going home anymore. And I wrote my mother a letter and told her I wasn't coming home. But there's something else behind it that I said in the letter, I prefer not to tell.

JACKSON: Mm-hmm. And --

MCCULLOUGH: But then, how she got me to come home, she told me that -- see, I was promised -- you know, southern people have -- still stick to their customs and tradition. And in the olden days, they could promise a man a child, and then no other man could marry that child. And see, when my husband went in the army, he was 18. And I was 12 and a half. And he had seen me, and he said I was a pretty little girl, "and some day, when you grow up, I'm going to marry you." So when I finished Willow Hill, which was the ninth grade, I went to Statesboro. And I made my own evening gown for my junior-senior prom, and I sent him a picture in the Army. Then he wrote a letter, and asked my mother and father that when he got out of the Army that he would marry me. And I showed the letter to my mother, and she said, "Promise him. We don't want to hurt nobody in the Army. He might not live to come home anyway." So we promised him. And then he came home. He came from Philadelphia, and they wrote me a letter in Jacksonville and said he was coming home to marry me. Let me see your album.

JACKSON: OK.

MCCULLOUGH: Turn off this. (break in audio) Baptist Southern United Church.

JACKSON: But what I want to know is, what do you remember about where did you go to church at the time?

MCCULLOUGH: Bank's Creek.

JACKSON: Was that the only place you went? Did you go to any other churches?

MCCULLOUGH: Well, I went to a revival once, at Cousin Everill's church in Portal, Georgia. (inaudible)

JACKSON: Mm-hmm. But most of the time, you went to Bank's Creek?

MCCULLOUGH: That's all.

JACKSON: Who was the minister when you was there, Aaron Mullen?

MCCULLOUGH: The first minister was Smith. Elder Smith. And the second minister was Elder Munman. But the third one was Thomas, but I wasn't home when he become a minister. But Doc Parrish told me he heard his last sermon. He said, "I'm going to be briefed today, because I got to go home." And he left there and got killed.

JACKSON: Hm. OK. So, was church life a great social life, at that point? Is that one of the --

MCCULLOUGH: Well, in the olden days, church and school was our only activities. It all originated from church and school. And in school, [20:00] that's where we had all our dances, in the big school auditorium. And see, every Friday evening, you could see the truck when it come from Statesboro with the piccolo in the back, the pick-up truck. And that meant Friday night was a dance at the school-house. And at that time, when I was growing up, everybody -- all the girls went to the dance, but their fathers had to take them. And George asked me one time, didn't I feel embarrassed with a father taking us to all events? I said, "Your father didn't take you, you didn't go," because all the fathers



took their daughters. But, see, the fathers sit way back in the back, on a bench. And the piccolo played the music and the girls danced and then --

JACKSON: This was up at Willow Hill School?

MCCULLOUGH: Willow Hill School, in the big auditorium. And if my father didn't take us, we couldn't go.

JACKSON: OK, now did --

MCCULLOUGH: That was the customs.

JACKSON: Did you walk to --

MCCULLOUGH: We walked to the dances. We didn't live far from Willow Hill School.

JACKSON: OK, now, let's see.

MCCULLOUGH: Well, school and church was our only activities at those times. But our greatest -- we had a social life in school, too, because once a year, we would have the field's day. And that's when the mothers brought in their needlework and their quilts. And the boys belonged to the 4-H club, and that's when the boys brought in their prize bull and their prize pigs, and see who would with the first prize on the bull, and the first prize on the pig. And then the girls would have their needlework, and the mothers would have their quilts, and they'd hang the quilts all along one wall, and then the judges would come around and look at the quilts. And name the first prize on the quilts, you know, and that was called field's day. Now, they call it "the relays," but it was called field's day, in my time.

JACKSON: OK.

MCCULLOUGH: And that's about all I remember about it.

JACKSON: OK, speaking of --

MCCULLOUGH: The Easter hunt -- you know, every Easter, the mother would -- every mothers would bring their eggs to the schoolhouse, and then lock the children up in the school room, and then they'd go hide the eggs, and then we would go find them. They'd call it Easter egg hunt.

JACKSON: In the back.

MCCULLOUGH: And the one that found the most eggs always win the prize.

JACKSON: OK. Speaking of quilt, do you still have your grandmother's quilt?

MCCULLOUGH: Now, the quilt that she gave me has been washed so many times, the washing machines has tore it up. The quilt --

JACKSON: Do you still have any parts of --

MCCULLOUGH: The only quilt I have now is the one I bought the last I was in Georgia. I bought that quilt from somebody.

JACKSON: OK, so do you have any parts of the quilt, even just a fragment, because --

MCCULLOUGH: Mm. I saved it until all the fragments -- I saved -- one time, I saved just a little piece of cotton. And I don't have it.

JACKSON: Hm. Because I was going, I remember that quilt, and last -- when I came to your uncle George's -- Uncle Edward's funeral, I remember that quilt being -- I was going to ask to try to res--

MCCULLOUGH: It was raggedy then.

JACKSON: I know. But I was going to -- I was going to get it restored. I wanted that.

MCCULLOUGH: I don't have it.

JACKSON: OK.

MCCULLOUGH: That's the last thing she ever given me.

UNKNOWN WOMAN: What was this affair here?

JACKSON: That's -- OK, now, this is a Kwanzaa in here.

END OF AUDIO FILE