

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: C. J. Scarlett

Interviewer: Peggy S. Lloyd

Location: C. J. Scarlett's residence, Pine Bluff, Arkansas

Date: June 10, 2000

Situation: As a boy and young man, C. J. Scarlett lived in the McFadden Road area, just a short distance outside Pine Bluff. The Pine Bluff Arsenal took much of the land to the west of this road in the early 1940s. Dr. John House of UAPB is investigating this area for sites of historical significance. Mr. Scarlett and his family were long-time residents of the vicinity just outside what is now the Arsenal. His father R. L. Scarlett provided the government title attorneys with numerous affidavits of heirship and adverse possession as they cleared troubled chains of title in the neighborhood.

Mr. C. J. Scarlett can add to our knowledge of the African-Americans and Euro-Americans who inhabited this rural community in the period from 1920 through the Great Depression to the outbreak of World War II. I drove to Pine Bluff and interviewed him alone in the kitchen of his home while Mrs. Scarlett watched television in a nearby room.

Focus of the Interview: The inhabitants of the McFadden Road community and their lives from the 1920s through the Great Depression to the coming of the Pine Bluff Arsenal.

Lloyd: All right, Mr. Scarlett, as I told you, we'll be taping this to give to the Arkansas Center of Oral History and Visual History. And we will transcribe it. In other words, we'll put it in written form, and I'll send a copy of it to you

for your approval and to make any corrections that you deem necessary. This will be used by students of Arkansas history in the future. So what I need for you to do right now is to just say your name and that you give your permission for us to allow students of Arkansas history to review this tape in the future.

Scarlett:           Okay. You want my name?

Lloyd:             Please, sir.

Scarlett:           C. J. Scarlett.

Lloyd:             All right, sir.

Scarlett:           And you want my address and all?

Lloyd:             That would be fine.

Scarlett:           3203 Linden, South Linden, Pine Bluff.

Lloyd:             And do you give us permission to use this information?

Scarlett:           Oh, yes, ma'am. Anything y'all want to do with it.

Lloyd:             All right. Well, thank you very much. Let's start out by—let me ask you a little bit about your family. Who were your parents?

Scarlett:           My parents was R. L. Scarlett and Maude Scarlett. M-a-u-d-e. And we had, let's see, was seven kids besides the...there was two dead. The oldest boy was Willie and there was a girl about five years old, Frances. She died across the river. There was a big snow on the ground at the time. Dr. John is the one that he rode a horse out there whenever she passed away.

Lloyd:             Do you remember about what year that was?

Scarlett:           No, ma'am, I don't. I was about six or seven years old probably. She was older than I was about a year or so.

Lloyd: When were you born?

Scarlett: 1918.

Lloyd: 1918.

Scarlett: Yes'm.

Lloyd: Okay. And where did your family live in the county at that time?

Scarlett: Well, we first—what I was telling you—when I was born it was over there at the old John Shelby Place. He was a big...a pretty good citizen of Pine Bluff at that time, and he might have been a county judge too. But his name was John Shelby, and I was born just outside the Plainview Gate out there. Do you know where the Plainview Gate is?

Lloyd: Yes, yes, I do.

Scarlett: Well, it was just outside there. And when I was one year old, we moved across the river to the Danaher Place. Did you ever hear of the Danaher?

Lloyd: I have heard that name. Yes.

Scarlett: At that time, it was the old bridge. They've rebuilt the bridge now and built a new bridge, but at that time...it was...the river and the people...Ikey Fitzpatrick...a guy...he carried food and stuff over there...the river got up and flooded and they was up on the bridge. People on the bridge and he, Ikey Fitzpatrick, take clothes and stuff over there for 'em.

Lloyd: When would this have been? in the 20s?

Scarlett: Oh, I have an idea, yeah, it was in the 20s probably. Yeah, it was in the 20s. I'm pretty sure.

Lloyd: And when did your family move over into...?

Scarlett: ...the Danaher Place?

Lloyd: Yeah, into the Danaher Place.

Scarlett: Well, I was about one year old. I was born in 1918, and that was about 1919. We moved over there. And then when we left there, we moved back across the old McFadden Road. And we had three houses along the river bank, the old bank of the river. It used to be the river, but we called it “the bottoms.” You were out on the bluff or the bottoms.

Lloyd: Is that what they call the Tucker Lake area?

Scarlett: Well, no. Tucker Lake is... Let’s see Tucker Lake, I think, is in the bottoms. Yeah, Tucker Lake was in the bottoms, I believe. Yeah, down in the bottoms.

Lloyd: Yes, right, right. And was your father a farmer or...?

Scarlett: Yes, yes, ma’am. Yes.

Lloyd: Was he renting land from people or..?

Scarlett: Yes. Well, we rented land from Judge Jones, the old Judge Jones Place, out there in the hills right close to McFadden Road.

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: And then we farmed in the bottoms.

Lloyd: Okay. Let me ask you some of the people in that area that you probably knew. I know that you knew the McFa...the Warbrittons.

Scarlett: Oh, yeah.

Lloyd: And..

Scarlett: The Dalbys.

Lloyd: The Dalbys. They...I don’t know them.

Scarlett: They, they, they lived up there at the old McFadden Place.

Lloyd: Okay. All right. And...

Scarlett: And farmed.

Lloyd: Did you know a man by the name of Gamble? This would have been in the thirties.

Scarlett: Oh, yes, ma'am. Sam Gamble.

Lloyd: Yes. Could you tell me a little about him?

Scarlett: Well, when I went to Dollarway, when I went to the old White Hall, White School, Joe White School at...close to the college out here. We consolidated with Dollarway finally, but I used to go to school at the old Joe White School. And Miss Ruby Parker...

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: ...married Sam Gamble after Mr. Parker died.

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: ...and we used to see him when I was at school. He lived right there right at the school, him and Miz Parker.

Lloyd: Well, I...she owned some of the land out there.

Scarlett: Yes, she did. She owned a lot of the land.

Lloyd: And...

Scarlett: The old Parker place.

Lloyd: ...sometimes they said her name was Parker and sometimes they said it was Partridge and I was confused by that.

Scarlett: Well, it might have been her daddy, might have been named Partridge.

Lloyd: Okay. All right. That's possible, and maybe Parker was her married name.

Scarlett: Yes, Parker was her married name. She might have been a Partridge.

Lloyd: And the Partridges owned quite a bit of land in that vicinity.

Scarlett: Oh, yes. They sure did. Yes.

Lloyd: Okay. She was quite a bit older than Mr. Gamble, wasn't she?

Scarlett: Yeah, she was.

Lloyd: Did they...the land that they owned out there, did they have tenants on their land?

Scarlett: I'm...I really don't know. They might have. I knew the old colored people that used to own land there too.

Lloyd: Who were they?

Scarlett: They...oh, Lord...I'd have to think about that one.

Lloyd: Let me mention some names and see if they ring any bells for you. A woman named Rosa Stewart?

Scarlett: Oh, yeah. We knowed Rosa Stewart. Her...all her kids. They used to live right up there close to where Daddy built the new house. That was the old McFadden Road then.

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: Rosa Stewart. She's the one that her house got blowed away during a tornado and it didn't kill'em or nothing, but it was tore up.

Lloyd: I think so. Laura was her daughter. Yeah. I wanted to get a little more information about Rosa. I think her house was on that road that went down toward the river. Is that correct?

Scarlett: Well, she was out there on the main road, the old, the old...See when we was kids that school bus couldn't even get up and down there a lot of times for the school 'cause it was so bad and ruts and all.

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: And, and they...I could tell you a lot of things about that school days. Time we used to, we used to...when we lived across the river, there used to be water get up on, under the house...

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: ...Flood...and we'd have to go to school by boat and go over there and get in the car and cross the levee.

Lloyd: Did you come back to school at Dollarway from across the river?

Scarlett: No, it wasn't Dollarway. It was Sherril school.

Lloyd: Okay.

Scarlett: We went to Sherril school ...and Daddy would take the car and park it over there across the road and we'd ride the boat up to the levee and then he'd get in the car and go to the school, take us to school.

Lloyd: And that was probably in the twenties, right?

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am.

Lloyd: Did you know the Ollie family?

Scarlett: Oh, yeah. Fletcher Ollie?

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: Yeah. I knew all of 'em. Knew him well. Of course, he passed away several years ago and I think his wife did.

Lloyd: Yes. He had an older brother named Will Ollie.

Scarlett: Yeah, I knew Will.

Lloyd: He got killed in a freak automobile accident.

Scarlett: Yeah. Will Ollie.

Lloyd: Could you tell me a little bit about the Ollies? I've not been able to get too much information on them.

Scarlett: Well, I don't know how he got hooked up with that wife he got, but I think he was a lot older than her. She was kinda... Jamie was I believe her name, Jamie Ollie...

Lloyd: This Mrs. Fletcher?

Scarlett: Yes, Jamie Ollie.

Lloyd: Yes, I think that's right.

Scarlett: And they had a bunch of kids. Well, they had a lil ol' store long time. And... called the Ollie's grocery.

Lloyd: Was it out there on their place along McFadden Road?

Scarlett: Yeah, right there. You know the Bushes? You ever hear of the Bushes?

Lloyd: I've heard that name. Yes.

Scarlett: Well, I went to school with the Bush boys. They're all gone now, but... yeah... the oldest one, Harvey, he passed away not too long ago.

Lloyd: They told me that Fletcher had a dance hall?

Scarlett: Yeah, he did. And we, we had, we rented it one time and my Daddy got his ear chewed off and a bunch of... it was a... my brother he went way back in the woods and got a gun and he was gonna shoot'em.

Lloyd: Who chewed his ear off?

Scarlett: One of them boys, one of them guys that he had a fight with.

Lloyd: Oh, okay. What? Did they rent it for a party?

Scarlett: Yes. Rented it. Yes'm. Dance hall. Back in the good ol' days they call'em. Liquor days.

Lloyd: Okay. Was that during Prohibition?

Scarlett: Aw, yeah.

Lloyd: I don't think that Prohibition was very popular in Pine Bluff.

Scarlett: Naw, but there was plenty of liquor around. Homemade.

Lloyd: Yeah. What kind of music did Fletcher play? Did he play himself?

Scarlett: No, he just had a nickelodeon or something. Well, it was some of 'em, I think, they was a country band. And the girl that I used to...was my first girlfriend--she married Joe Pierce and he died—and Notie is dead too--Notie Haynes—there was a Haynes out there close to the river too. They had some land in there. Haynes.

Lloyd: Okay. I haven't run across them, but I'll keep that name.

Scarlett: There was a Haynes. Old man Jeff Haynes is the one that he played a fiddle, and they had music in a way.

Lloyd: You mentioned that you worked for the WPA during the Depression.

Scarlett: Yes'm, yes'm, I did.

Lloyd: Could you tell me a little bit about that experience?

Scarlett: Well, I tell ya, I was working on the WPA when they—Miz Nell Hern—she was the head of that then—and she decided I was too young to be working on the WPA, so they sent me to the CCC camps.

Lloyd: Where did you work in a CCC camp?

Scarlett: Up at—first, it was out at Fair Park. The street car used to go right out to Fair Park and go back and then we went from there up to Lake Catherine. They built lakes up there and that park, Boyle Park. We hauled big ol' rocks, they did, I mean, we would work, work in that park.

Lloyd: Now, let's see. Boyle Park is in Little Rock.

Scarlett: Yes, that's right.

Lloyd: But you also worked in Hot Springs, I would say, if you were near Lake Catherine.

Scarlett: Well, it was, it might not have been Lake Catherine. It was out from a lil ol' town...I can't remember like I ought to since I had my stroke about twelve years ago. I had a little stroke. I couldn't say, tell nothing. I couldn't even drive. My wife had to think of what I was trying to say.

Lloyd: Well, maybe it will come to you late. But you did work for the WPA for a little while here in this area.

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am. Well, yeah. I used to, I used to drive a team when they was building up the levee, down there from the bridge and I'd walk through the bottoms for over a mile. I didn't have winter clothes or nothing, but I'd walk through them frozen banks, the canals, back over there to catch a team of mules out at the big ol' nigger that had the, that took care of the mules, fed 'em and all. I had a hard time when I was a boy. I mean that was cold in the wintertime.

Lloyd: Well, did the Depression hit your family pretty hard?

Scarlett: Oh, yeah. It sure did.

Lloyd: What were some of the effects of it?

Scarlett: Well, there wasn't too much to eat. When I worked on the WPA, I took my check every time I got it, a lil ol' check, and I'd go to town with Daddy and buy a barrel of flour and all that kind of stuff. I had three sisters going to school at that time, and I went to public works when I was seventeen.

Lloyd: You were seventeen when you worked for them?

Scarlett: Yes'm.

Lloyd: Okay. And you gave part of your money for the family to buy...

Scarlett: I gave 'em all just about all of it all up til I got grown, til I got married just about.

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: He'd go to town with a wagon and get the groceries, and then I want to tell you about that free bridge over there.

Lloyd: Okay. Fine. Tell us.

Scarlett: The old free bridge. There was a—did you ever know the Cooks? Ever know the Cooks over there? Cook's Fish Market across the river?

Lloyd: No, I haven't heard of them.

Scarlett: Well, Junior Cook used to be—his daddy was a fisherman, a commercial fisherman. He was born in a tent under the free bridge, Junior Cook was. 'Course, he finally got his own fish market and all. But he was, he was born—and like I said—we used to go to school in a boat when the river would got up, it was an ol' river they call it. And it got up.

Lloyd: You said the free bridge, that anybody could drive across the bridge.

Scarlett: Well, it was built—they left it open—like here and on the side, they had—oh--you could hear a wagon and horses trotting down the old bridge.

The old bridge. Then they finally opened it up and blacktopped it and widened it about two feet each way and they'd have a stop sign for coming traffic. One red and one green. Whenever it was green, you could come this a way. Cass Ussery was the bartender. I mean, not bartender, caretaker of the bridge.

Lloyd: And so he regulated the signs?

Scarlett: Naw, he raised the bridge up. Back there then they had to raise the bridge by hand, I guess, for the boats to go through.

Lloyd: Oh, I see. Okay. So it was low over the water

Scarlett: Yeah, he was caretaker of the boats, the levee, the...

Lloyd: Cass Ussery?

Scarlett: Cass Ussery.

Lloyd: Okay. All right.

Scarlett: And he had a daughter by the name of Spevin, and she used to work for J. C. Penney's, I think. Nice, pretty girl. And the boy's name was...I forgot that.

Lloyd: Did you know, did you know a lady by the name of Pinky Johnson?

Scarlett: Oh, sure did. I sure did.

Lloyd: Oh, well, I don't know very much about her, and I'm interested in learning about her.

Scarlett: Well, I'll tell you about Pinky Johnson. She used to, they used to farm down there in the bottoms. Pinky Johnson used to farm down there in the bottoms too. And they used to have a line and grill machine, just sorghum. She used to make molasses. She had a machine, but Daddy would take our

cane over there and she would make so much, so much molasses on it. They had a mule and go round and round and grind that machine.

Lloyd: Now she bought some acreage there on the west side of McFadden Road. Did she build a house there?

Scarlett: I thought she did.

Lloyd: I thought she ...

Scarlett: .....I don't know exactly where the Pinky Johnson house was now, but I'm sure she bought some land. Yeah.

Lloyd: I think she had lived in the north at one time.

Scarlett: She probably did. I didn't know when she lived in the north.

Lloyd: I got that impression from looking at her papers.

Scarlett: Well, she could have.

Lloyd: What about a woman named Virginia Ollie? Did you know her?

Scarlett: Yeah. Ollie?

Lloyd: She was Will Ollie's wife, but they divorced.

Scarlett: Will Ollie, yeah.

Lloyd: They divorced in 1929, and then he got killed in 1931.

Scarlett: That was Fletcher's brother?

Lloyd: Yeah. Older brother.

Scarlett: Will Ollie. I can't remember Will Ollie.

Lloyd: You probably would have been a young boy.

Scarlett: Yeah, I was. I am sure I was. I'm sure I know Will Ollie. I remember the name.

Lloyd: But Virginia bought some land there next to Pinky Johnson on the west side of McFadden Road. This would have been in the thirties.

Scarlett: Yeah.

Lloyd: And I don't know—maybe she built a house out there too.

Scarlett: I'm trying to think of some guy that got that—the ol' boy that I used to, that I was raised with. His daddy went down there and the man was out in the outhouse and passed away and died.

Lloyd: Oh, really.

Scarlett: And I can't think of his name right now. Floyd? Can't think of it.

Lloyd: Now the Terrys lived out there too.

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am. I knew all them Terrys, old man Terry. I tell you the truth—one time there was a fellow—Maxwell—you ever hear of the Maxwells?

Lloyd: No, I haven't heard of them.

Scarlett: Well, the Maxwells lived out there by the Terrys. And old man Terry—I don't know whether it was him or the Maxwell guy—they dehorned a cow and put stuff on it and he sold the cow.

Lloyd: Mr. Terry sold the cow?

Scarlett: I think it was Terry.

Lloyd: Did he live on Mr. Gamble's place?

Scarlett: Let's see. Ruby Parker. Let me think of what Mr.... Ruby Parker and them built a house out there in the country, I think, a brick home. I thought they did. But...where's I at? Talking about the Terrys. A lot of water run under the bridge since then.

Lloyd:                    Maybe it will come to you. Did you ever hear of a lady named  
Lummie Coleman?

Scarlett:                No'm, I didn't.

Lloyd:                    She lived a little further away. Or a man named Dock Black?

Scarlett:                Dock Black? Seemed to me like I remember Dock Black.

Lloyd:                    He lived out there just south of where the Ollies lived. In fact, I think  
he married Alice Ollie, but they divorced. Or a man named Lee Kimbrough?

Scarlett:                Oh, Lee Kimbrough, yeah! Ol' Lee Kimbrough is the one that used to  
keep the hosses, the mules for the WPA. You know, kept 'em in a lot. Back  
there across the river.

Lloyd:                    He took care of their stock for them. Now what were they doing back  
in there?

Scarlett:                You mean the stock?

Lloyd:                    Or the WPA? What all were they doing?

Scarlett:                They were building that levee, higher always. See the levee runs out  
at the old McFadden Place. And then it runs all way around. And they was  
building up that levee. That's what I was doing, slipping, doing dirt. They  
had a slip, they called it. And you dig that dirt and haul it and dump it over  
there where the levee was building up.

Lloyd:                    Do they have trouble every year with flooding?

Scarlett:                Well, they did have. Now that floodgate—they have floodgates down  
in the bottoms and there'd be a woodchuck or something in there and hang  
and then they'd flood it, flood the whole bottoms.

Lloyd:                    But they were farming those bottoms?

Scarlett: Oh, yes'm, yes'm. Did you ever hear of Sophia McEachern?

Lloyd: Yes, I have.

Scarlett: She was a nurse during World War I, and she was my black mama.

Lloyd: Oh, really.

Scarlett: She was—you know—helped mama when she was pregnant with the baby.

Lloyd: Tell me a little about her. Was she a midwife?

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am. That's what she was.

Lloyd: I saw her name when the government wanted to take her land. She fought it.

Lloyd: Was she a farmer and a midwife?

Scarlett: I don't know, I don't think she...I don't know whether she farmed or not. Daddy sold her a mule one time. I think it was named Tony. And she'd come by buggy to get in Pine Bluff and get groceries and go back with that old mule.

Lloyd: Could you tell me a little bit more about Rosa Stewart? Did you know her?

Scarlett: Yeah, I knew her real well, but I didn't know too much about her.

Lloyd: I think she was a sharecropper, wasn't she?

Scarlett: Well, yeah. Sharecropper and her kids picked cotton and all for the daddy and them.

Lloyd: She was married to a man named Fate Stewart that I've never been able to find out much about.

Scarlett: I don't know her husband. I just, I don't whether he died or what, but she had a bunch of kids.

Lloyd: She sharecropped, but she also owned some land.

Scarlett: Yes, she did. The old Rosa Stewart place was right out there close to where Daddy and them built the house, the new house on the McFadden Road. Like I said, that school bus used to be rough coming, getting us.

Lloyd: Yeah. I'll bet...

Scarlett: Sometimes they couldn't even get over it when they built that Arsenal. They used to have a washout bridge, and they never did rebuild it. They called it the washout bridge at the Arsenal.

Lloyd: Why did they give it that name?

Scarlett: It washed out.

Lloyd: Just washed out. Okay. What were the roads like then?

Scarlett: Oh, back there then. Well, after the Arsenal came in, they blacktopped it all. Up til then, there used to be—you know—did you ever hear of Dexter? Dexter Gate and all that?

Lloyd: Yeah, yeah.

Scarlett: Well, when I was a boy, my brother forgot me one time and folks went and got me. He had a girlfriend, and I spent the night with Henry Walters. Did you ever hear of the Walters?

Lloyd: No, I haven't heard of them.

Scarlett: Well, anyhow, he didn't come back and get me and I had to walk all the way from way up above Dexter, all the way down that country road down to McFadden Road and get home. Walked all the way.

Lloyd: Now there was a church out there on McFadden Road called Barnett Chapel Church. Black church.

Scarlett: Yes, yes.

Lloyd: And I think they moved it. I think it used to be a little further south of there. Did you know anything about that church?

Scarlett: No. I knew Barnett Chapel. Used to be the Cox and Alexander place. Did you ever hear of that?

Lloyd: No, I haven't.

Scarlett: That's a big farm right out there at that time. Cox and Alexander's.

Lloyd: The Barnett Chapel Church was a black church, wasn't it?

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am, and it was set back off the road 'bout half a mile or so, down that road.

Lloyd: And was there a school there too?

Scarlett: Yeah, the school. Barnett's Chapel school, I guess... because the lady that—she used to ride the bus, the school bus and taught school out there. That's before the whites and blacks mixed. And she was a nigger teacher out there, Barnett's Chapel. She was old when she passed away.

Lloyd: Do you remember her name?

Scarlett: Oh. Geraldine might know. (Rises to go and ask his wife and then tries to call his sister for the information. She is not at home and he returns to his seat.)

Lloyd: You mentioned that when you worked for the WPA, Mrs. Nell Hern was your boss or manager?

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am. Well, she was over the WPA. I mean—it wasn't WPA—whatever she called it—welfare or somethin'. I think she was the head of the welfare.

Lloyd: So...

Scarlett: Nell Hern. H-E-R-N. Hern.

Lloyd: H-E-R-N? Okay. All right.

Scarlett: Nell Hern. I'm pretty sure she was over the...Geraldine! (Calling to his wife in the next room.) Nell Hern used to be over the welfare, wasn't she?

Mrs. Scarlett: What?

Scarlett: Nell Hern. Mrs. Nell Hern.

Mrs. Scarlett: Oh. I think it's H-E-A-R-N.

Lloyd: Yeah. Okay. That's good.

Scarlett: Well, I said was she over the welfare. Was she over the welfare at that time? She didn't hear.

Lloyd: Oh, it's okay.

Mrs. Scarlett: I didn't hear you.

Scarlett: I said, "Was she over the welfare at that time?" But I know she was out where she could get...

Mrs. Scarlett: She was at Jenkins. I think there was one at Jenkins.

Scarlett: But she used to give out flour and stuff. Distribute it or give permission to do it or other.

Mrs. Scarlett: (Speaking in the background, she urges her husband to call his sister to confirm this information.)

Scarlett: (To his wife.) Well, she's not there.

Lloyd: So she distributed things to people.

Scarlett: Yes'm. Well, she'd—they had commodities—what they called commodities. She was over part of that.

Lloyd: When your father was farming, what did he raise?

Scarlett: Mostly cotton. Yeah.

Lloyd: And was there a market for his cotton?

Scarlett: Oh, yes, ma'am. Well, one year it was a bad crop, and Daddy—he had the onliest turnip patch there was in the town, county—and he we sold we we go by and pull up the turnips and tie 'em up in bunches and then we'd go in there and pump water in the Pine in the city—not in Pine Bluff—where we lived, I mean—and then we'd wash'em and then put 'em out and spread 'em out on the ground for the dew and then he'd get up about four o'clock and deliver 'em. Seventy-five cents a dozen bunches.

Lloyd: Took into town to sell 'em?

Scarlett: Yeah. Yeah.

Lloyd: So he was mainly...

Scarlett: That was just a one-time crop he made.

Lloyd: But he grew cotton most of the time.

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am.

Lloyd: So what about corn?

Scarlett: Well, some corn. Mostly cotton. But he did raise some corn too.

Lloyd: Did he work for any of the Depression-era agencies?

Scarlett: No'm, I don't think so.

Lloyd: He continued working on the farm.

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am.

Lloyd: When did you first hear that the Arsenal was coming to Pine Bluff?

Scarlett: Whew! Well, back in the early forties, maybe late thirties or forties. I went in the army and stayed forty-seven, twenty-seven months.

Lloyd: When did you go in?

Scarlett: Went in in '42.

Lloyd: After Pearl Harbor?

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am.

Lloyd: Were you overseas?

Scarlett: Oh, yes. I was over there twenty-seven months.

Lloyd: In Europe or the Pacific?

Scarlett: Italy...Africa, Sicily, and Italy. 'Course, Sicily is part of Italy. I've seen the leaning Tower of Pisa, the Coliseum, and all that stuff.

Lloyd: Which outfit were you in?

Scarlett: The Thirty-fourth Section Hospital.

Lloyd: Oh, you were a medic? Or you worked in a hospital?

Scarlett: Well, I was a cook.

Lloyd: You were a cook!

Scarlett: It's come in handy since I've been here. Yeah. I wound up with Twelfth Air Force Headquarters and I was Villa...Siena, Siena to Villafranco and the day we went up there all the Germans surrendered. The old general surrendered all the Germans. They were the Twelfth Air Force. They was through with that bombing and all.

Lloyd: That was in northern Italy?

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am. Villafranco was in northern Italy.

Lloyd: When the Arsenal came into Pine Bluff, how did--your area was near where some people had to give up their land. How did people feel about that?

Scarlett: Well, I really don't know 'cause, like I say, after I went--they built the Arsenal while I was in the service. I don't 'pect they really liked it too well, but there wasn't nothing they could do about it.

Lloyd: Did you know the Jennings family out there? A woman named Lulabelle Jennings?

Scarlett: I knew some Jennings.

Lloyd: They bought some land out there in the thirties.

Scarlett: Jennings?

Lloyd: Her husband's name was Holbert Jennings.

Scarlett: Oh, yeah! I knew Holbert. Knew his wife. Yeah, he used to be a mechanic on a lil ol' porch down here close to the college. He did mechanic work on a lil ol' porch out there.

Lloyd: Yeah. Yeah. They lived out there for a while, but the Arsenal took their place.

Scarlett: Well, James Bush I'm talking about married, married, married Holbert's wife's sister. James Bush. The Bushes used to raise...they used to farm out there. The old McFadden place.

Lloyd: Right. I've heard their name, but the land they owned, I guess, was not on the Arsenal. So...

Scarlett: No, it wasn't. It was just outside.

Lloyd: Right. Just outside. The Bushes and the Kealeys, I think, were some of their names.

Scarlett: Now, Kealey...my wife was a Kealey. Walter Kealey was her daddy.

Lloyd: I heard their names, but the land records I looked at were just, you know, on the tracts that were in the Arsenal.

Scarlett: Well, they was just outside the Arsenal. The Kealey part was.

Lloyd: So they just missed losing their place.

Scarlett: Yes, that's right.

Lloyd: They were lucky.

Scarlett: Yeah.

Lloyd: Let's see. Let me ask you about some politics since you were growing up in that era. How did you and your family feel about President Roosevelt and his programs?

Scarlett: Well, I guess it was real good. He was WPA.

Lloyd: Right.

Scarlett: Yeah. We poke around. That's what we used to say. We people, we poke around.

Lloyd: Oh, really.

Scarlett: That's one thing told about the guy on the WPA. He was holding a shovel and the shovel and said the shovel broke off and injured him and said by the time the ambulance got out there there was two or three of 'em.

Lloyd: Well, did you feel that you just sort of poked around or did you really work?

Scarlett: Naw, we worked. I worked, really. I didn't poke around.

Lloyd: What did you do when you were in the CCC?

Scarlett: We built that Boyle Park. I helped build it.

Lloyd: Boyle Park? Where did you live when you were in the CCC? Did they move you around?

Scarlett: Yes'm. We moved, I moved one time after I—I was up there at Fair Park.

Like I said, the old streetcar came round, round—and I told some of 'em I was halfway between the crazy house and the zoo and they didn't know which way to send me.

Lloyd: That was in Little Rock. You were in Little Rock.

Scarlett: Yeah. Little Rock. That was Boyle Park. Fair Park. It was a big ol' army barracks like. It was just regular army is what it was. Had army officers and all.

Lloyd: Now did you all work on the Fair Park there in Little Rock?

Scarlett: Boyle Park.

Lloyd: Boyle Park.

Scarlett: Fair Park was just where we was stationed.

Lloyd: Okay.

Scarlett: ... and then we'd drive out to Boyle Park.

Lloyd: And what did you do out in Boyle Park?

Scarlett: Well, it was common labor, I guess. We had to shovel, landscape and all. That's about all I can say. Like I said, they had them great big ol' rock by the tons. They'd unload 'em and build part of that park out there.

Lloyd: Building walls—that kind of thing?

Scarlett: Yes, that's right.

Lloyd: How long were you in the CCC?

Scarlett: Little less than a year—just a little over—just a little under a year.

Lloyd: Did you enjoy that time?

Scarlett: Naw, not really. I was sending twenty-one dollars out of thirty to my Daddy and them. That was the main purpose of me going in there.

Lloyd: And you were about seventeen or eighteen at that time?

Scarlett: I was seventeen 'cause I was too young to work on the WPA, they said. So they sent me to the CCC camp.

Lloyd: What about the other young people that you mixed around with? Was it just a hard time or ...?

Scarlett: Well, it was more or less a hard time because, like I say, I guess other kids sent money to home too. But I sent twenty-one dollars out of thirty home to my folks. I guess it partly took care of the kids—the girls—that was in school. Of course, my sister got all the education. She's a schoolteacher—Janie Winkelman.

Lloyd: Where did she go to school? Where did she study?

Scarlett: Dollarway. And she went to college several places.

Lloyd: Did any other children in your family work for any of the Depression-era agencies?

Scarlett: No, ma'am. I don't think so. Them three girls went to school.

Lloyd: They were still in school.

Scarlett: Yes'm.

Lloyd: Was it four of you at home, four of you in the family at the time?

Scarlett: Well, Willie was my older brother. Sid and Pat—'course he run off from home and was gone about a year.

Lloyd: Where'd he go?

Scarlett: Hobbs, New Mexico. Then we heard from him—finally heard from him.

Lloyd: What was he doing out there?

Scarlett: I don't know. Working or doing somethin'. He liked to smoke and Daddy was strictly against smoking. 'Course, I finally—after I come back from the CC and helped farm and all, them do the farming. Well, I finally got to where I could smoke.

Lloyd: Your Dad would accept it then?

Scarlett: Yeah, but after fifty years, I quit. The last twelve years I've been off cigarettes. Daddy knew what was good for me when I started.

Lloyd: How did your father get involved with the Arsenal Project out there?

Scarlett: I really don't know. I knew he knew a lot of folks up there and all the land out there. He knew just about everybody out there, so he might have got in that way. I just don't know.

Lloyd: But you knew Lee Kimbrough. Did you know another black man named Buck Kimbrough?

Scarlett: No, I knew his brother. His brother used to drive an old truck for John A. Simpson Furniture Company. I mean it was an old Dodge. He kept that one for years.

Lloyd: And there was a black lady named Jennie Blackwell, and her husband died and she married a man named Smith. And your parents lent her some money. This was in her land records. Her name was Jennie Blackwell Smith, and she put a mortgage on her land and borrowed some money from your parents. This would have been in the twenties. And I think that probably her son died,

and she was paying for his burial. His name would have been Jessie or Jessiefit Blackwell.

Scarlett: I didn't know 'em.

Lloyd: You've never heard of them?

Scarlett: No'm, I didn't.

Lloyd: I think your parents lent her the money to bury him. I don't know what happened to him. I thought you might know something about him.

Scarlett: Nope, I didn't know them.

Lloyd: They may not have talked to you about it. You were probably pretty small then.

Scarlett: I guess so. Being 1918 when I was born, I was pretty young, I guess. It was in the twenties.

Lloyd: (Telephone rings.) Just a moment. (Mrs. Scarlett answers the phone in the next room.) Okay.

Scarlett: Somebody calls sometime. They don't even answer. Let me—excuse me.

Lloyd: Okay, just a moment. (Shuts off recorder.)

(Interview resumes after the phone conversation.)

Lloyd: Okay. You mentioned Cass Ussery, the caretaker on the ferry...

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am. The bridge...at the bridge. Raised the bridge up and down.

Lloyd: And you knew him well?

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am. He lived, he lived over there in a house. We lived a mile below the bridge in the Danaher place. And he was the caretaker. He lived right there in a little house by the bridge, the old bridge.

Lloyd: After you returned from the CCC—what was that in the late thirties?

Scarlett: Let's see.

Lloyd: Mid to late thirties?

Scarlett: I'm pretty sure it was. Late thirties, maybe.

Lloyd: And did you go back to farming or...?

Scarlett: No, I public worked. Worked for the furniture store—John A. Simpson, Hempstead Furniture, Knox Walker, the ol' Knox Walker Furniture Company.

Lloyd: What did you do for them?

Scarlett: Just repair work mostly, set up gas stoves and stuff.

Lloyd: Until you went into the service?

Scarlett: Yes, ma'am. No, I worked for the railroad before I—No, I worked for the railroad after I went in the service.

Lloyd: Oh. Okay. After you came out of the service. Okay. All right.

Scarlett: Yes'm.

Lloyd: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to mention from that time or..?

Scarlett: Well, let's see. That's about all I know of the old folks that was out there. The Ollies and all that.

Lloyd: You knew Mr. Warbritton?

Scarlett: Oh, yeah. I knew him real well. Went to school with his kids. Charles, Betty Ann, and Maude. The other one, Charlene. We used to go up there and visit with them all the time.

Lloyd: Let me ask you this. You may not have known this man, but you may have heard about him. A man by the name of Ward Marshall. He owned eighty acres there, just immediately north of the Warbrittons.

Scarlett: Colored fellow? Walker?

Lloyd: Marshall, Ward Marshall.

Scarlett: Marshall. Well, I don't recall him.

Lloyd: And then his children lost their land to a relative they had borrowed money from. His name was Louis Marshall. Now your Dad knew him. He said in one of his affidavits that he knew him in the late twenties.

Scarlett: Yeah. He might have known.

Lloyd: But I just wondered if you ever heard your Dad speak about Ward Marshall.

Scarlett: No'm. I haven't.

Lloyd: Well, that was a long time ago. You may not have known him.

Scarlett: If it was in the twenties, I'm sure it was.

Lloyd: Or Sam Gamble. Did he have large farming interests?

Scarlett: He didn't have hardly anything when he married Ruby Parker.

Lloyd: She had everything?

Scarlett: Yeah. Well, Homer Parker was her husband. And he...they like to lost everything. He willed—I mean he--I don't know—borrowed money or somethin', and he like to lost all the land, the mules, and everything. And that's when Sam married her, and they farmed and went on with the farm. And I guess got back what they owed. They used to live in a big ol' two-story house.

(Side A ends.)

Scarlett: They built a two-story house close to the river over there. And that's where they lived after they got married.

Lloyd: Would that have been down on McFadden Road or another area?

Scarlett: No'm. It wasn't the McFadden Road. It was the river road like, going to go to the bottoms through there—ol' McEachern—no—Johnson part of the—and back over there to the—the road used to come out from the--right this side of the bridge and go through there all the way up the hill to the old McFadden Road.

Lloyd: Did you know Mr. McFadden?

Scarlett: No'm, I didn't. I knew Dalbeys. Did you ever hear of the Dalbeys?

Lloyd: No, I hadn't, but did they...?

Scarlett: They owned some land up there. They bought the old McFadden place. Dalbey. Sterling Dalbey.

Lloyd: Did you ever hear of the McCoy Plantation?

Scarlett: Oh, yes. I know the McCoys. I knew them. They was out—seemed to me like they was close to Dexter back on the old McFadden Road.

Lloyd: Yeah. They had a lot of land out there. I haven't studied them yet, but we're going to be studying them.

Scarlett: Yeah, the McCoys. Did you say McCoys? Bob McCoy?

Lloyd: Well, there was an J. A. McCoy, and then later his land was owned by Mr. Niven, you may have, D. B. Niven.

Scarlett: Oh, yeah. David Niven. Yeah. The Niven farm. That's where I think—the Niven, Daddy used to farm for the Niven farm.

Lloyd: Now he owned it when the Arsenal took it.

Scarlett: Yes.

Lloyd: And he was a man in his early seventies at the time.

Scarlett:                Yeah. Niven, David Niven. And that's where I said that the guy that used to play the guitar, the old man from the dance...

Lloyd:                 The dances at Fletcher Ollie's dance hall?

Scarlett:               Yes. Haynes was their name.

Lloyd:                 Haynes, Jeff Haynes.

Scarlett:               Yeah, Jeff Haynes. Sho' was. That was the old man. That was his daughter Notie that I said was my first girl friend.

Lloyd:                 Okay. They lived on the McCoy Plantation.

Scarlett:               Niven, I believe. I believe the Niven.

Lloyd:                 Were they tenants there or...?

Scarlett:               Well, they farmed, I think.

Lloyd:                 When did...did your Dad stay on his farm out there?

Scarlett:               Yes, ma'am. The old home place used to be right out there at the old McFadden Road. Just this side of the Arsenal.

Lloyd:                 And how long did he continue to work for the Arsenal?

Scarlett:               Well, I really don't know. I don't know whether... See I was probably... He probably was quit whenever I went--came back from the service. He worked there two or three years probably. Til they got all that paper straightened out—houses and deeds.

Lloyd:                 That was a lot of work I'm sure.

Scarlett:               Yeah.

Lloyd:                 Well, is there anything else that you can think of that you would like to tell me about that time?

Scarlett: I'll try to think of some of the other people that lived out there. Said you didn't know the Bushes, and they owned land out there just this side of our house.

Lloyd: What about Herbert and Roxie Ray? Did you know them? They were black.

Scarlett: No'm, I didn't. Oh, Ray. Ray? Do you have one name of Johnnie Green?

Lloyd: I've heard that name.

Scarlett: He lived just this side of the airport where the old airport used to be. First house this side—there used to be another old bridge out there. They built a new bridge there. I remember my Daddy and Bill Cook—I was telling about—the Junior Cook—that had the fisherman—his Daddy he was raised under the free bridge, born under the free bridge. But him and his Daddy, Daddy, it was a narrow road then, a lil' ol' road, hardly room enough for two cars. But they passed each other on that highway in old Model T Fords. I was surprised that they didn't hit each other.

Lloyd: Did you know the Shepherd family? They were wholesale grocers in Pine Bluff, and they owned a piece of land out there too. I think it was W. F. Shepherd and Sons.

Scarlett: Well, I knew a Shepherd...

Lloyd: And Grover Shepherd was one of the sons.

Scarlett: Naw, I knew the Shepherd that used to run the grocery store over there just this other side of the bridge. They were Puddephatt and Shepherd. For years, they run that lil' ol' grocery store.

Lloyd: I'm not sure if it's the same one. Probably is.

Scarlett: Puddephatt and Shepherd. Mr. Shepherd used to live in the house just below the store.

Lloyd: Well, these Shepherds—it was a father and three sons in the grocery business.

Scarlett: Yeah, they was wholesalers, Shepherd wholesalers.

Lloyd: Right. And Edgar Shepherd was one of the sons, and he got killed. He fell into a hot vat.

Scarlett: Ohhh.

Lloyd: It was terrible. That was about 1930.

Scarlett: I didn't know.

Lloyd: Okay. All right. Is there anything else...?

Scarlett: Allan Shepherd, Allan Shepherd is the one I'm talking about. Allan Shepherd.

Lloyd: This is a different group then. Different group.

Scarlett: Yeah, yeah. Bound to be. Shepherd 'n Puddephatt.

Lloyd: Is there anything else that you can think of?

Scarlett: No, that's all I can think about.

Lloyd: Okay. Well, we want to thank you very much for talking to us.

Scarlett: Well, you're welcome. There ain't been nothing to it.

Lloyd: It's been very helpful. Thank you very much.

Scarlett: Okay.

(Stopped the tape. Mr. Scarlett had some more comments, and I resumed taping.)

Lloyd:                    You mentioned that blacks and whites worked together in the WPA.  
How did they handle that? I mean that was a time of segregation.

Scarlett:                Well, I don't know whether it was any, I don't remember of any  
blacks that was on my job.

Lloyd:                    Blacks and whites did not work together. They worked separately.

Scarlett:                I guess. I don't know. I don't remember now. I don't remember any  
blacks that worked with that crew.

Lloyd:                    Okay. Well, we thank you very much.

Scarlett:                Okay. I hope I helped you some.

Lloyd:                    Thank you.



