

**The David and Barbara Pryor Center
for
Arkansas Oral and Visual History**

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Arkansas Memories Project

Ila Adcox

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

March 18, 2008

Amagon, Arkansas

Objective

Oral history is a collection of an individual's memories and opinions. As such, it is subject to the innate fallibility of memory and is susceptible to inaccuracy. All researchers using these interviews should be aware of this reality and are encouraged to seek corroborating documentation when using any oral history interview.

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Transcript Methodology

The Pryor Center recognizes that we cannot reproduce the spoken word in a written document; however, we strive to produce a transcript that represents the characteristics and unique qualities of the interviewee's speech pattern, style of speech, regional dialect, and personality. For the first twenty minutes of the interview, we attempt to transcribe verbatim all words and utterances that are spoken, such as uhs and ahs, false starts, and repetitions. Some of these elements are omitted after the first twenty minutes to improve readability.

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

- Em dashes separate repeated/false starts and incomplete/redirected sentences.
- Ellipses indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.
- Italics identify foreign words or terms and words emphasized by the speaker.
- Question marks enclose proper nouns for which we cannot verify the spelling and words that we cannot understand with certainty.

- Brackets enclose
 - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds, such as a doorbell ringing;
 - annotations for clarification and identification; and
 - standard English spelling of informal words.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.
- All geographic locations mentioned in the transcript are in the state of Arkansas unless otherwise indicated.

Citation Information

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Ila Adcox on March 18, 2008, in Amagon, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: My name is Scott Lunsford, and I'll be interviewing—uh—Miss Ila Adcox here at her home in Amagon, Arkansas. Today's date is March the eighteenth, two thousand and eight. And this videotape is being done by the—um—um—David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History. The tape will reside in the Special Collections unit at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville in the Mullins Library. And Miss Adcox, I—I need to ask you now if it's okay with you that we're videotaping this interview with you?

Ila Adcox: Yes.

SL: Thank you. And I—I do want to thank you for letting us just come in and take over your house and—and you giving us this day. Uh—we've already had a great time—uh—doing this, so it's—it's really, really good. We're gonna be tweakin' [tweaking] the lights just a little bit—um—make everything—um—uh—just right. Um—so—um—first I should ask—um—when and where you were born, and if you could—um—first, let me ask you this.

Can you s—uh—say and spell your entire name—your full name?

IA: Ila Rado Adcox.

SL: How—okay, that's *I-L-A*. And then how—what's that middle name?

IA: *R-A-D-O*—Rado.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: Adcox. *A-D-C-O-X*.

[00:01:35] SL: All right. Thank you. And Miss Ila, where were you born?

IA: At—at Guy, Arkansas.

SL: And do you remember what year that was—what date?

IA: It was Januar—oh—oh—May the twenty-sixth, 1923.

SL: All right. So—um—I bet Arkansas was quite a bit different in 1923, in the early twenty—or late [19]20s and early [19]30s. What was—uh—Guyer [Edit: Guy] like back then? Do you—how long did you live there?

IA: Uh—I lived there till I was six year old—five year old, I guess, and we came to ar—uh—to Uno . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: . . . Arkansas.

[00:02:17] SL: Now, what were your parents' names?

IA: Uh—Timothy Leander Junior and Maudie Junior.

SL: So your mother's name was Le—Lean—Leanders?

IA: No. Her maiden name . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: . . . was Roussel.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: But—uh—Maudie—Maudie Lou Chrissy Eugene if you wanna
[want to] know all of it. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah, I do. I do. [*Laughter*]

IA: And—and—uh—she was a Roussel before she married, and she
married a—first time a Young, and—uh—they had two children.
And one of 'em [them] was Mike's [Beebe's] grandmother—uh—
Madge Young [Kaminski, IA's sister]. And Nora [Young, IA's half
sister] passed away when she was about fourteen, I guess—
thirteen or fourteen.

[00:03:18] SL: Um—do you remember your—your mother's parents
at all? Did you ever get to meet them?

IA: Yes. My grandfather [IA Edit: Elijah Patrick Roussel]—that's the
one we lived in the house with till he died, you know.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: And—uh—yeah, we came here in [19]39—thirty—I think it's
[19]39—and lived with him till he died.

Kris Katrosh: I need to make one other small adjustment.

[Unclear words]

SL: Okay.

IA: And—uh—see—I—I can't remember what year he died in. But, anyhow, he—uh—passed away, I think, in [19]40 [IA Edit: 1934]. I'm—I'm not for sure.

[00:04:00] SL: Uh-huh. Um—what—what was it that your mom and dad did for a living when you were living in Guyer?

IA: We worked by the day or—or sharecropped for—uh—people. You know, those farmer . . .

SL: Was that cotton or . . .

IA: Cotton and corn or—for the feed for the animals.

SL: Uh-huh. And—um—had your—uh—grandparents done the same? Is that . . .

IA: My grandfather was a woodsman.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: And he just made ties, and that's what he did all of his life.

SL: Made railroad ties.

IA: Uh-huh. And—uh—so that—that's all I know, and my grandmother never did work outside the home.

SL: And so she kind of ran the house . . .

IA: Yeah.

SL: . . . then.

IA: She d—mh-hmm. That's right.

[00:04:48] SL: And—uh—were you livin' [living] with both your grandparents in Guyer with your mom and dad or was it . . .

IA: No. My grandfather—uh—was—was a widower when he passed away, you know, and—or when we lived with him.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: And—uh—that's why he just wanted a home of his own and us to take care of him till he passed away.

[00:05:12] SL: Now, what about your grandparents on your daddy's side?

IA: My grandparent—grandfather on my daddy's side was—uh—I reckon I was about three when he passed away, and [*unclear word*] all I can remember—just—they run a store at Pickles Gap if you know [*laughs*] where that's at.

SL: No, where is pick . . .

IA: Okay, that's up from . . .

SL: Is it next to Guyer or . . .

IA: It's up around—on the other side of Conway somewhere. I don't know where, but anyhow, it's on the map.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: And—and they run a store.

SL: Had a little general store there?

IA: Yes.

[00:05:45] SL: Hmm. Well, how did your mom and dad meet? Do you know?

IA: Uh—my mother was taking care of—h—her aunt on her daddy—her father's side. And—uh—I think my father was a—a-runnin' [running] a—a mail route, but they did that on a jenny or a horse, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: But he did the bag mail. He didn't—he didn't—uh—letter mail or nothin' [nothing] like that. It was all bag—would deliver it from one post office to the other post office. And I think it's from DeValls Bluff to Weldon or somewhere that way, but they—I know it taken him two days to do the . . .

SL: The run.

IA: . . . mail route on a—on a don—on that jenny or a donkey, whatever it was.

SL: So were they in—um . . .

IA: And she was taking care of her aunt and—that was afflicted, and they met there in—at—uh—DeValls Bluff.

SL: Uh—was her—uh—aunt—had the flu—influenza or . . .

IA: Her aunt was crippled—a—most of her life. I don't know what she . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: . . . had—uh—uh—joints, and back then they didn't know what to call it. It may have been arthritis.

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: But it was swollen joints all time, and so she was just—al—a cripple. So Mother stayed there and—taken care of her for the room and board for Mike's [grand]mother and her sister or his aunt, rather.

[00:07:22] SL: His aunt. Uh-huh. Um—well, do you know how old your parents were when they married?

IA: Not for sure 'cause I never did see the marriage license but . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: But I—I know my sister—half sister was about—uh—eight—seven or eight years old, so that woulda made it—she's born in nineteen five [1905] and—probably around 1910.

SL: Yeah.

IA: No, nineteen nine [1909], I guess.

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: 'Cause my ol—other sister—my own sister was born in 1910, so [laughs] . . .

SL: That's a big difference—thirteen years.

IA: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

KK: Hey, Dwight, is that ?shoe? noise bothering you at all or are you okay?

[Tape stopped]

[00:08:15] SL: So let's see. We were talking about—um—um—your mom takin' [taking] care of the aunt that—w—was sick.

IA: Was crippled.

SL: Or had the trouble with her knees and her joints.

IA: Mh-hmm.

SL: Um—and—um—uh—your dad was—uh—uh—deliverin' [delivering] bag mail, and your mom and dad met in DeValls Bluff.

IA: Mh-hmm.

[00:08:40] SL: Um—do you know anything about their romance or . . .

IA: No. The only thing I remember her was sayin' [saying] that they had to go in a boat to get outta [out of] town, and she had to get on a log while he could get around through the brush. So undoubtedly they had a hard time gettin' [getting] off—get to the wedding. [*Laughter*] That was to ?her? clergyman or to justice peace that married 'em. And his—so that—I remember her tellin' [telling] that.

SL: Were they married in DeValls Bluff or . . .

IA: Oh, I think that's where this went 'cause it was—there—back then there's overflows sure enough when—when there—it'd come a-rain and everything like that or waters come up wide.

[00:09:25] SL: Now, what—what river would that be? Do you . . .

IA: That would've been—uh—that would've been White River.

SL: White River.

KK: Did you say she had to float on a log?

IA: Huh?

KK: Tell him again about the log thing. I didn't quite hear that. What was that about, now? She had to float on a log to get there?

SL: On their wedding day they had to get in a boat, and she had to be on a log while he was movin' [moving] the boat.

IA: I'm—I'm sure it was just ordinary dress, so she didn't get it—have a wedding dress on. It just . . .

SL: Right.

IA: Back then—'cause—yeah. Yeah, that's what—she got on a log to—till he could get around the brush and on the other side. And so that's—that's—that's on the way to the wedding. That's what she told me.

SL: [*Laughs*] So the brush was so thick, you couldn't stay in the boat—had to get out of the boat, and there was a log sittin'

there, and he got the boat around and then you'd just get back in the boat. That's a good—that's a good river story there.

[*IA laughs*] I've—I've done the same kind of thing before. I

[*IA laughs*—I know what that took. So—um—got married in DeValls Bluff. And so how soon did they move to Guyer?

IA: How . . .

[00:10:33] SL: How soon did they move to Guyer after they got married?

IA: I—I really don't know.

SL: You don't?

IA: I don't—I don't know—uh—where they moved after that . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: . . . or anything like that. Uh—but I guess I wasn't payin' [paying] much attention [*SL laughs*] when they's tellin' me things.

SL: Well, th—that's all right. We—you know, that's why we're doing this now. [*IA laughs*] You know, so all the kids and all the grandkids and great gan—great-grandkids . . .

IA: Yeah.

SL: . . . will have this. Um—so—um—they get to—um—um—Guyer and—uh—they're working the—uh—sharecroppin'

[sharecropping] fields. W—Was your mom doing that too or . . .

IA: I think that my—uh—father worked—uh—his father let him have s—ten or—I don't remember how many acres, but, anyhow, he had twenty acres when we lost it all—when my half sister had spinal meningitis. And so I—I know he was a-farmin' for hisself at that time.

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: But later years we far—farmed with sharecroppin'.

[00:11:45] SL: So they started out with their—with their own little—uh—plot that his dad had—had given them to work. Is that . . .

IA: Yeah.

SL: . . . the way that worked? And—uh—your half sister came down with meningitis—spinal meningitis?

IA: Spinal meningitis. And so they—the doctors was there all the time, you know, ever day—sometimes twice a day. They made house calls then. And—uh—so he—he was there, and it just cost the farm.

SL: Were you—uh—how old were you then?

IA: I—I wasn't born at that time.

SL: You weren't born then.

IA: Huh-uh.

SL: So that . . .

IA: My sister was just—uh—she's born in 1910, and I think that was

about 1911 or [19]12 or somethin' [something] like that. So maybe—maybe it was later than that, 'cause she was small when—uh—when her half sister died.

[00:12:44] SL: So—um—they lost the far—the—their farm—uh—just payin' the bills for the doctors and the . . .

IA: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . treatment?

IA: Mh-hmm.

SL: Golly. So—uh—after that then they started workin' [working] other—other folks' fields and . . .

IA: Sh—workin'—sh—sharecroppin' for other people.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: Uh-huh.

[00:13:08] SL: And—uh—was your mom involved in working the fields, too, or did she stay at home?

IA: No, she stayed at home and worked—at—did the work at the house.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: Milkin' [milking] the cows and things like that, you know, and takin' care of the children.

SL: So . . .

IA: It wasn't a easy life back then.

[00:13:28] SL: No. [IA laughs] It wasn't. Well, first of all—'course, there wasn't any electricity.

IA: Mh-hmm.

SL: There's no run—runnin' water.

IA: Mmm.

SL: Um—and I'm sure they were probably very small houses—very small shacks.

IA: Mh-hmm.

SL: Did they—did they have to follow the crops or did they stay in one place? Did they . . .

IA: They stayed in one place.

SL: They did?

IA: Uh-huh.

[00:13:53] SL: Um—so you came along in 1923.

IA: Twenty-three. My brother and his sister—twin sister—came along 1920.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: And she lived to be four year old.

SL: I see.

IA: And she died—died at age of four. But—uh—Nora died a few years before that, you know, 'cause my brother and my [half] sister [Maedean Louise Quattlebaum Beebe] is ten years apart.

And my brother and me are five years apart, so Nora died in fore—fore my brother was born, and my—his twin sister. So I don't know exactly what year.

[00:14:45] SL: Mh-hmm. So—um—what is—do you have—this may be hard, but do you—what's your earliest memory that—that you have?

IA: Have the—the what?

SL: Your earliest memory. Wh—wh—what do you remember? Do—do you remember the ver—what's the very first thing you can remember?

IA: [*Sighs*] Well, I—I just don't try to go back that far. [*Laughs*]

SL: Well, just maybe close your eyes and just try to visualize it. I mean—uh—you know, it'd probably been—you probably were four or five years old.

IA: I—I can remember us all gathered up on a creek bank, a-washin' [washing]—goin' to my grandmother's—uh—and grandfather lived on one side of the creek and we lived on the other. And people would gather down there and wash from this runnin' creek, and us—us children would—would get to wade in the water and our—and get the cr—bucket of water and put it in the wash pot ?till? we boil the clothes. So that was really a lotta [lot of] fun to us, but I'm sure it was a lotta work for them.

SL: So they'd get down to that creek and they'd—they'd start a fire and boil the water in the pot.

IA: And they had their clotheslines down there on the creek, and it'd be a washday. Maybe two families would wash down there and their children would play. But they didn't get to play in the water very much—I mean, just go get a bucket of water. Might stir it up, so . . .

SL: That's right.

IA: Yeah.

SL: They wanted to keep it from getting muddy.

IA: So—but, anyhow, that was a thrill for us, you know, to go and wade in that water on the rocks 'cause the water was coming over the rocks and you'd catch—catch the water and carry it to the pot.

SL: Um—did they do that more than once a week or . . .

[00:16:38] IA: I—I don't remember but in tho—that was—that was a good washday for 'em in summertime, you know. You'd get down there and hang your clothes out and—and, naturally, you had to carry 'em back to the house. Uh—we didn't—we didn't do it with a wagon and team. They either did it in a basket or a—or—or a sack or flour sack or somethin' like that to carry their clothes in and . . .

SL: How far was that creek from the house?

IA: Oh, it's about a quarter of a mile.

SL: That's not too bad.

IA: Uh-huh.

SL: It's still pretty good haul.

IA: No. No, it was—it was goo—it was—it was about halfway a
tween our mother—our grandmother and grandfather's house
and our house. And so it was—it was a pleasurable day for us.

[00:17:25] SL: Well, let's talk about the house that you were livin' in
then.

IA: [*Sighs*] That time I remember an—I remember it was a—uh—it's
a two-room house with two fireplaces—one in one end of the
house and one on the other and a hall between where they ha—
slept in the hall in the summertime when it's cool.

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: And we didn't—you know, wasn't mosquitoes or anything at that
time, so we—I remember that. And I—my brothers and I were
reminiscing over some of the things, and he said, "We never did
ha—live in real good houses." I said, "Well, I don't think the
people—other people had good houses [*laughs*] back then."
They just somethin' that's, you know, throwed up, and they
didn't have fancy houses then.

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: Yeah. So anyway. Why, it was—it was different than it is now, I'll say that.

SL: Well, they had—did the hou—house had a wood floor?

IA: Wood floor. Uh-huh.

SL: Mh-hmm. And—uh—was it basically—uh—two rooms and a hall or . . .

IA: Two rooms—well, we had a living room and a kitchen together and then the bedrooms was off—it—across the hall we used in the summer—wintertime . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: . . . where the other fireplace was at.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: And so that was the only one I—that's the only house I can remember—uh—really bein' [being]—to me, it was fun to have a fireplace in each end of the house.

[00:18:55] SL: You bet. And did they—uh—was the kitchen ever outdoors? Did they ever cook outdoors at all?

IA: No, we never did.

SL: Uh—it was always indoors?

IA: All indoor.

SL: And—uh—did y'all have a—a well or a—a—s—s . . .

IA: Dug well. We had . . .

SL: . . . and a cistern? Did you have a cistern as well or . . .

IA: We had a—a—s—I guess it's a—we had a dug well and then we had one—uh—well that you dropped the—the bucket down and you pull lever up . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: . . . and empty it in your bucket that way. And—uh—that was—that was—uh—good cold water's in that one.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: The other'n [other one] was the one when it'd rain and you have a trough to catch the water in that, and it run off the house and . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: . . . down there. Which I always wonder how many tadpoles we drank.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, that's—that's good. And then did you have your own garden plot where you grew your vegetables and . . .

IA: And a orchard and all like that. We had that.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:03] SL: What'd you have in the orchard?

IA: We had apples and peaches and plums at that time. And Mother always put up a lotta canned stuff every year, and we never did

have to go to the grocery store for canned food.

[00:20:22] SL: Did y'all have a—so you had some kind of fruit cellar thing dug in?

IA: Sh—yeah, they had a fruit—store their stuff in the winter where it wouldn't freeze.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: Yes. And they had that, and so we didn't have to worry about our potatoes and things like that a-freezin' in there—sweet potatoes. And we had our own cow to milk, you know. So we . . .

SL: What about the—did you . . .

IA: Chickens on the farm and . . .

SL: Hog—did you slaughter a hog every . . .

IA: We didn't have hogs.

SL: Didn't have hogs?

IA: Huh-uh. Not back when I was a kid. We didn't have fences or somethin' or other to keep 'em. We didn't—we just had chickens and things like that in there.

SL: So you didn't have like a smokehouse or . . .

IA: No.

SL: . . . anything like that?

IA: No. Later on we did. And when we got older, why, we had a

smokehouse, but it was after we got up in—teenagers or something like that.

[00:21:22] SL: Um. So—and then I guess—was it a kerosene lamp or . . .

IA: Kerosene lamp. And my mother was always 'fraid [afraid] of storms, and there'd come up a little cloud—she'd go to the storm house. My dad was always so scared of anything in there that moved, and he'd do like that and matchbox hit his foot one time and he said, "There's a snake in here, Maude." [*SL laughs*] He—she—he should've done just like that when he hit the matchbox again. Now he was leery of the storm house down there. They were dug and then boards over the top or logs, and then tar paper or somethin' other, you know, to put over it to keep from leakin', and enough dirt that it wouldn't seep through. But he was always 'fraid a snake would be asleep in there.

[00:22:20] SL: So do you remember ever going to the storm house?

IA: Oh, yes. If it ever come up a cloud, we was in the storm house. [*Laughs*] And we slept in there till the cloud—maybe the next mornin' when we get up. But I don't think my daddy slept very much. [*Laughs*]

SL: So did y'all ever experience high winds and a tornado or . . .

IA: No.

SL: No.

IA: Didn't even know—wasn't no—nothing about like that then. Wasn't no messages give out or anything like that. [*Words unclear*] We just—Mama was just—was a weather watcher.


SL: Uh-huh. So—but you don't ever remember losin' a house or anything . . .

IA: No.

SL: . . . due to the storm?

IA: Now, seem me like it hit my sister's house or somethin'. They was goin' to the storm house, and I know it blowed Dane [Huskey, IA's niece] up agin a tree, but I don't remember, you know, just whether it was a storm—real bad storm or just strong wind and all. But they did have some storms—did a lot of damage there, but I don't know—but I's a kid and don't remember whether it was called a tornado or what.

[00:23:30] SL: Well, now, you probably were get—I guess you were six, seven years old when the Great Depression hit.

IA: Well I 'magine [imagine]—well that was when we had moved to
 down here—to the bottoms. And I remember goin' to school and they had a soup line, they called it, and they had hot chocolate for the children and had that alphabetic soup. And the teachers would fix the soup and the hot chocolate for the children. And I

guess the government take—furnished that. I was too little to know what it was all about. But anyhow, I know we looked forward to that alphabetic soup and that hot chocolate.

SL: Chocolate.

IA: That's the second grade that I remember that.

[00:24:25] SL: So now what schools—what school did you go to? What was your first school?

IA: Well we went to Long Creek's School there. But where we had the soup, it was [*pause*—well, I can't remember the name of that schoolhouse. They made a dwellin' house out of it later. But anyhow it's—it was up north of the [*pause*—the one there that I was just talkin' about. I'm gettin' blank.

SL: So now what—where were y'all living when you started goin' to school? Were you still—were you—had you moved to . . .

IA: Where we were living when we . . .

SL: When you started going to school. Where were y'all?

IA: At Uno.

SL: At Uno.

IA: Yeah.

[00:25:23] SL: Now, tell me where Uno is.

IA: That's 'bout [about] four miles up the road.

SL: From Amagon?

IA: Yeah. And so there was a li—they was a store and a drugstore there. And so they—my grandfather started to catch a bus from Newport one time, and he told the lady he wanted a ticket to Uno. She said, "I'm sorry, s—I don't know where—I *don't know*." [Laughter] So we got a kick outta that.

SL: That's like "Who's on first, what's on second?" Yeah.

IA: Yeah. [Laughter] I don't know why—how that ever got its name. Uno. It may have been someone that couldn't think and say "You know." But anyways, that was a odd name. [Laughs]

[00:26:15] SL: So in Uno, is that where the Long Creek School was? Is that?

IA: Yeah. Yes. It was . . .

SL: And was that a one room . . .

IA: It was a half a quarter from there.

SL: And was that a one-room school?

IA: No, it's two room.

SL: Two rooms.

IA: Two-room school.

SL: And how did they divide up the classes in that?

IA: The—from the fourth grade on up to the eighth, they had a teacher take care of them, and the first grade on to the fourth, they had a teacher for those. And they always had a stage play

at the end of school and they—we thought we's at a movie.

[*Laughter*] Us littler ones did.

[00:26:51] SL: Uh-huh. And did they have electricity in that school when you were . . .

IA: No.

SL: No?

IA: No electricity.

SL: And what about heat? What'd they do for heat?

IA: They had the old potbellied stoves.

SL: One in each room.

IA: One in each room. And they had the little shelves up on the walls with the lights with reflectors behind them.

SL: Yep.

IA: It was kerosene light.

SL: Mh-hmm.

IA: And you'd be surprised how much you can see better if you got something bright behind some of those.

SL: [*Unclear word*] reflector.

IA: Uh-huh.

[00:27:23] SL: Yeah. Well, do you remember much about that school? How many kids went to that school?

IA: I figure we'd had about sixty 'cause it . . .

SL: That's . . .

IA: . . . was pretty well—you know, with the first grade through the third to the third to the eighth—fourth to the eighth, why, there was quite a few children in the school. I know when they turned out school there was a yard full. [*Laughs*]

[00:27:54] SL: Now, did they let the kids out to work with the crops on the harvest and all that?



IA: We had a split term at that time. I—that was for—more so for the children to get out in the spring, and the ones that's big enough to chop cotton or anything like that, they could work that way in the fall if cotton pickin' was startin', but they didn't get to stay with it till the cotton fields was gleaned over, you know. But they had a certain time to start school. But anyhow, they could work and help buy their own clothes. And that was the way that families with—big families takin' care of their family, 'cause their children had to help get out there and make the living—at least buy their school clothes and stuff like that.

SL: How much pay was it a day?

IA: Well I remember 'em a-tellin' about twenty-five cents a day, and cotton was—I think you got forty cents or somethin' like that a hundred. So—but it didn't—sack of flour didn't cost a dollar then—so—a ten-pound sack. But still that was small wages,

wasn't it? [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Four days for a sack of flour.

IA: Mh-hmm.

SL: So how long was the choppin' season?

IA: Choppin' season started in May and they's always—June—and they's always through by the fourth of July.

SL: Mh-hmm. 'Bout six weeks.

IA: Mh-hmm.

[00:29:49] SL: And did they—what about—was there any other time kids were let out to help with crops? I mean, was there a plantin' time where they got out too, or it was just always harvest?

IA: The schoolchildren didn't get to do that. The adults did that part.

SL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

IA: But it was two months out of the year that they . . .

SL: Set aside.

IA: . . . they got—uh-huh. Two or three. Anyhow, a eight-month term back then, and so it's divided up for—in two sessions, you know?

[00:30:23] SL: Were you a good student?

IA: Now, I don't know whether I was or not. I never did get no

whippin's.

SL: Well, that means you were pretty good. [*IA laughs*] Did you like your teacher?

IA: Most, yes. I thought my teachers was—hung the moon.

SL: Well, you know, they probably did. [*IA laughs*] I mean, you think about having to teach that cross section from first grade to fourth grade or third grade.

IA: Mh-hmm.

SL: That's quite a few . . .

IA: I'm sure—mh-hmm—I'm sure they had a lotta problems with some of 'em. It—I was taught at home to listen to adults and obey 'em. So I tried to not give 'em no problems.

SL: Were both the teachers women?

IA: Most of 'em. My—I've went to one or two that was men when I was small. But they was still good teachers to me.

[00:31:30] SL: So did you go to—you went to more than one grade school? You started out at Long Creek and . . .

IA: Yeah, I went to—I even went to Amagon School. I's sixteen, I think, at that time. But I went—Denton Island and at ?Cash? and Long Creek and there was a ?Ham? School. I think was the name of that. But anyhow, I'm not for sure. But anyhow, when we moved around I'd always go to school at the places . . .

SL: At the local . . .

IA: Yeah, local . . .

SL: . . . community school. So you moved around four or five times then . . .

IA: Yes.

SL: . . . while you were in grade school. And was that because your dad was . . .

IA: Day work . . .

SL: . . . daddy was working for different folks?

IA: Yeah. Uh-huh.

SL: And it was—and y'all just put the house—you just moved into a house that was close to the work.

IA: Yes, or on . . .

[00:32:34] SL: And—but it was all around this area. Is that right?
Did you ever move very far from this area?

IA: Up around Cash.

SL: Now, where is Cash? Tell me where . . .

IA: It wasn't a—oh, that's about fifteen miles from here.

SL: That's about as far as you all . . .

IA: Yeah, we never . . .

SL: Yeah.



IA: Yeah. We farmed on Cache River there far—two years that we

sharecropped for a guy, you know. And he furnished a team and we furnished the labor. And we did that for two years up around Cash, and that's the only time that I can remember us farmin' out—my daddy—we live—on Denton Island—well my daddy worked at the barn, and we worked on the farm. And I carried water for a lotta cotton pickers—cotton choppers. Now that's a harder job than choppin' cotton, where you carry ten-quart water buckets and have to pump it. Maybe car—go a quarter of a mile or half a mile to pump it and then they'd be at the other end. And all the hoe hands was always thirsty. And we did that fore I got big enough to chop cotton. And I don't hanker to do that anymore. [*Laughs*]

[00:34:04] SL: Well now, so boys and girls hauled that water then.

IA: Yeah, they sure did.

SL: And how old do you have to be before you're old enough to chop cotton?

IA: Well I made a half hand when I was eleven year old, so I made a half what the grown-ups did. And so I know I was ten when I was carrying them water buckets, and them water buckets just heavy and leg ache at night. That was hard work. Our field boss was real nice. He'd say, "Don't you waste that water. If she carries that to you, you just take what you gonna drink and

don't pour the rest of it out. It's too hard for her to carry it." So I appreciated that.

[00:35:02] SL: So these different schools that you went to—were they all about the same or were some . . .

IA: Schools?

SL: Yeah, were some of 'em one room or were they all two-room schools and . . .

IA: They was—sometimes we'd have a man-and-his-wife school. And the man would teach the grown—the older ones and the women'd teach the younger children. But most of the time we had women teachers. But I'll say a third the time we had maybe men teachers.

SL: [*Clears throat*] Did you have a favorite subject in those schools that you liked?

IA: [*Laughs*] I liked geography, and I didn't care too much about history. I don't know why 'cause I like it now.

SL: Uh-huh. Weren't real thrilled with math?

IA: Math—I was slow in math. 'Cause I just—I was pretty good at spellin' back then but I—slow in math. But it was hard for me to get my multiplication tables when I was a kid.

SL: So on a typical school day, what time did you have to be at school?

IA: Hmm, we had to be there by eight o'clock at least. If we had two or three miles to walk—two miles—we had to leave just a little after daylight sometimes [*laughs*] to get there. And we got home at five.

SL: At five.

IA: Right.

SL: That's a long day.

IA: It's eight hours, which—we had a recess and books and recess again. That kinda broke up the studyin'. And we really played hard when—you know, when we got out there. And I guess that made us enjoy gettin' back and sittin' down and restin'.

[00:37:12] SL: Did you have to do anything at the house before you went to school each mornin', other than . . .

IA: We didn't have to before we went to school, but we had our chores to do when we come in. And mine was gettin' the water in, and my brother was fill up the woodbox. We cooked on a wood cookstove. And we had to have firewood in there for breakfast cookin', so we had to have that woodbox full, ready for my mother to cook and all. Yeah, we had our chores to do.

SL: So you and your brother used to go to school together.

IA: Yes, and my nieces and nephews.

SL: And tell me again how old was your brother in relation to you?

IA: He's five years older than me.

SL: Five years older.

IA: Uh-huh.

[00:38:10] SL: So you got to school by eight o'clock at least, and then you studied for a while—did your lessons for a while and then had a recess and came back and studied. What about lunch? What'd you do for lunch?

IA: At noon we had thirty minutes off. And we carried our—in our little dinner bucket. And well, Mother'd always fix us maybe a chocolate pie or chocolate roll or somethin' like that and then a boiled egg. Somethin' like that—we'd have—we could—cooked, you know. We never did—I don't remember ever takin' cornbread and beans. I've heard other people say they did.

[*Laughs*] But I—we didn't. She always fixed fried pies or cinnamon roll or somethin' like that.

SL: Mh-hmm. And a boiled egg.

IA: Boiled eggs. [*Laughs*]

SL: And what about an apple or a peach?

IA: We didn't have that because you didn't get to go to the store very—we got them Christmastime.

[00:39:14] SL: I see. And then you'd go back to doin' the lessons and then you'd get a recess and then you'd go back doin'

lessons, finish out the day at . . .

IA: The what?

SL: You'd—after lunch, you'd do more lessons and then you'd get another break and . . .

IA: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

IA: We had to have our lesson up for that period, you know, because when we got back we had to get our nose in the book and be sure that we could read it and—or spell or whatever we had to—or math. And, yeah, we had certain times to get everything done.

[00:40:14] SL: And was all your—what we call homework today, was that all done at the school or did you have to do homework at home?

IA: No we had—we had homework at home by the coal-oil lamp. And there was a lot more togetherness then than there is now because all gathered around one lamp [*laughs*].

SL: Uh-huh. And so you'd get home, and you'd do your chores, and you'd have dinner, and then you'd do your schoolwork.

IA: Yeah, before we go to bed.

[00:40:23] SL: And you're a couple of miles away from the school, so you were probably up and at 'em by five thirty or six every

morning?

IA: We's up by six anyhow and—to get it—and we had to have our clothes all out ready to put on next morning, you know. And so we wasn't takin' 'next' or at nap, when they hollered get up, you's ready—you better get up. [*SL laughs*] You didn't lay there.

SL: If you laid there, what happened? You'd get . . .

IA: We got a spankin'.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: So [*laughs*—but we knew that. Mama's voice was stern. When she said somethin', she meant do it right then. She just—we never give her no back talk or nothin' 'cause she was stern.

[00:41:16] SL: But she kept you all fed.

IA: Hmm. Did what?


SL: She kept you all fed.

IA: Oh, yeah.

SL: And . . .

IA: She kept us fed.

SL: And y'all went to school with clean clothes and . . .

 IA: Yeah. And there—one outgrow somethin', the other'n got it, and that ways we—well I—there's always hand-me-downs.

SL: Mh-hmm. Was probably a lot of sewing.

IA: Yeah. She did her ho—own home sewin', yeah. She made coats and quilts and things like that besides our dresses and all. And she made my brother's shirts. She'd order material, you know, and—shirting material and make his shirts. So it wasn't—and jeans and things like that was—and underwear was ready-made, but the shirts and everything else was homemade.

SL: Did she have a sewin' machine or . . .

IA: Sewin' machine.

SL: With the treadle pedal thing?

IA: Yeah, old treadle type.

Bruce Perry: Hey, Scott.

[Tape stopped]

[00:42:21] SL: So, let's see, where were we? We were talkin' about sewin'.

IA: Uh-huh.

SL: And how everything but the underwear and the jeans were—your mom made.

IA: Ever . . .

SL: And she made the dresses, too?

IA: Yes, she made dresses and slips and things like that. She always—they taken the flour sacks and bleached 'em out and their—they used that for their slips and girls' panties. But now

the men—the boys got ready-made panties and shorts and things like that. But it's just—it was a different time back then because you didn't go to the store for everything. You had to make do with what you had at home.

KK: Any quilting bees?

[00:43:18] SL: Did y'all do quiltin'? Did your mom do quiltin'?

IA: Do what?

SL: Did she make quilts?

IA: Oh, yes.

SL: And did the rest of the . . .

IA: She . . .

SL: . . . women in the community—did they have—did they get together and make quilts?

IA: No, she did them herself. And Madge never did help 'em to quilt or anything like that. Mama would do that by a kerosene—coal-oil lantern. 'Course, she'd hang it up high where she could see because she's afraid of turnin' the lamp over.

SL: Yeah.

IA: So she did that with a coal-oil lantern. And we didn't have those with gaslights in or anything like that. But I don't know how she managed to do it, but she did. She done a good job of quiltin'.

SL: Did you—did she teach you how to sew and quilt and . . .

IA: Yes.

SL: . . . all that, too?


IA: Yeah.

SL: And can and . . .

IA: Yeah, and I can and quilt and do everything else that way—
anything that needs to be done, I do it.

[00:44:33] SL: How'd y'all get to town when you did go to town?

And what town did you go to? I mean, I guess . . .

 IA: We went to Grubbs, and that was nine miles from Denton Island.

SL: Uh-huh.

IA: Okay. The bunch would—back then, it was—Dentons owned that whole farm back there, and it was day workers. Well they had twenty-some teams. Well the people would gang up. Three or four of 'em would get in one wagon and go and get groceries on Saturday 'cause they had to work all through the week, and Saturday they got off. And they'd all go together and get groceries and come back. And so the last one that delivered the groceries had to put the team away, you know, had to take 'em up and walk back from wherever it was at, you know?

SL: Yeah.

IA: But anyhow, that's the way they got their groceries—about every two weeks there on Saturday. It—if you got without anything

through the week, you done without till you went to s—next day you didn't run to the grocery store like we do now.

SL: Yeah. [*IA laughs*] Yeah, nine miles's a pretty good little trip.

IA: Yeah.


[00:45:47] SL: What were the roads like?

IA: They was just rough. They was just ol' [old] dirt roads, no gravel roads or nothin' like that. Sand road. Mama'd take notion for—to go see her grandpa or s—her dad—somethin'—when they lived at Oil Trough. She just had us to follow along behind her, and we walked places like that. To me, that was the longest trips I've ever seen—been on. I thought I was—lived on the other side of the world nearly on the—got over there and I thought the sun's just, you know, is going down. I thought when we crossed White River from Denton Island to Oil Trough down there, I thought we's on the other side of the world. And I said how small I was from there. She'd taken us—she'd be a-way ahead of us walkin'. She'd say, "Kids, am I walking too fast for you?" [*Laughs*] But she was little short legs and goin' fast and maybe just give out. She didn't care for takin' eight- or ten-mile walk or to—for a twenty-mile walk like that if she's wantin' to see her dad. And that's the way she did it.

[00:47:17] SL: Did y'all have a Bible in the house growin' up?

IA: We had daily Bible readin'. She always read the Bible to us at night. And so I appreciated that.

SL: Could—did—could your daddy read?

 IA: N—my daddy couldn't read anything. His mother died when he was little and his daddy didn't send him to school, so that was why he carried the bag mail, because he didn't have—deliver. But he got paid for it. So he did what he could get paid for. Now that's—it was hard for him growin' up, you know, 'cause his daddy wasn't interested in his education. But he could keep book. He could keep time with his—how many hours he'd worked or how many days he'd worked. He always had that down with a long mark for a full day and a half of a mark down for half a day, and he always had that down pat when payday come around. So he had his system of doin' that.

[00:48:33] SL: So your mom would read Bible to y'all every day?

IA: Yes.

SL: At supper time or after supper?

IA: It was just before bedtime.

SL: Just before bedtime.

IA: Mh-hmm.

SL: Was there a favorite story that you liked out of that Bible or . . .

IA: No, she just read what she thought was—that we could

?absorb?, you know, when we's smaller that way.

SL: Mh-hmm. And . . .

IA: But she was faithful to read that Bible, though.

SL: And did she do that the whole time while you lived at that house? In tha—in her house?

IA: Oh, we was growin' up when we had our nieces and nephews in there, why, they was in there. They moved out when we were, I guess, about—the oldest one was fourteen. They'd decided that she could make it for 'em, you know. And so she did—she moved out and she did—Madge did milkin'. When—she walked a mile and a half to milk night and mornin' for a lady that separated milk and sold cream. And she'd get the skim milk for her children. I said that wasn't getting very much strong milk in that because it's got the biggest part of the cream outta there. So that'd be 'bout like skim milk today, you know, but they run that through a separator and separated the cream from the milk.

[00:50:14] SL: Did y'all go to church every Sunday?



IA: Yeah, we didn't have a congregational church. It was just all different denominations. But it—you know, that—we just had the church every Sunday. And—but we wasn't one certain religion. It was just readin' the Bible and literature like that. So . . .

SL: So there wasn't any—was there a preacher that—or was it someone in the local community? Did y'all take turns giving the sermon . . .

IA: We had s . . .

SL: . . . or were there sermons?

IA: We had song leaders and like that and had preachin' once in a while, but most time it was just Bible lessons and someone'd get up and teach the little children, some would teach adults, and some would teach the primary class. And . . .

KK: Can't be moving around while she's talking.

SL: What about singin'?

IA: Singin'?

SL: Yeah.

IA: Well we had some good singers back then, so we had singin' teachers come in—teach you the notes and everything that we—so they did great on that. And we had some that would bring—set their piano up and teach the children notes to play a piano, you know. So that was a thrill to us—hear that.

[00:51:46] SL: Were there any—in your all's house were there any musical instruments—guitar, harmonica, banjo, anything . . .

IA: No.

SL: . . . like that?

IA: Didn't have anything like that—just a p . . .

SL: Did—were there traveling minstrels that would come through and perform ever?

IA: They didn't. Not while I was up there. Which I guess was there ten years on that place.

SL: That's the Denton farm.

IA: Uh-huh.

SL: And there was an island that—were y'all livin' on that island?

IA: Yeah. Denton Island. Uh-huh. Yeah.

[00:52:24] SL: How many folks lived on that island?

IA: Well they—I don't remember. There's about seventy or eighty kids in school. So—but they come—some of 'em come for two and a half, three miles, you know, because the schools wasn't close together.

SL: Yeah.

IA: And so the houses was pretty close together at that time, and they all had pretty good-size families during that [*laughs*—those years.

SL: So you said that you ended up—you also went to school in Amagon.

IA: Yeah, I was sixteen then when I moved to Amagon.

SL: And where did you live in Amagon? You weren't in this house

and . . .

IA: We lived up two mile and a half up railroad dump where Mike was born.

SL: Yeah.

IA: Mh-hmm.

[00:53:26] SL: Well, let's—so you were sixteen years old, and is that how old you were when Mike was born?

IA: What?

SL: Sixteen? Were you sixteen when Mike was born, or how old were you?

IA: No, I's—I was twenty-two when Mike . . .

SL: Oh, you were twenty-two.

IA: Two—twenty—twenty-two—twenty—let's see, he's born in [19]46 and I—?boy?—I's 1923.

SL: Yep.

IA: So I was twenty-three year old, wasn't I?

SL: Yep.

IA: Uh-huh. So anyway, why Barbara's fourteen days la—old—la— younger than him, and she was born in [19]47, and he was born in [19]46. So he was born the twenty-eighth of December and she's born the thirteenth of January.

[00:54:33] SL: Now—well, let's talk a little bit about what was goin'

on with y'all when Mike was born. Now, when did Mike's mother enter the picture? When did she . . .

IA: She came down on Christmas from Tuckerman 'cause she was stayin' with her sister. She came down from Tuckerman to visit, and so I don't know whether she didn't know when her due date was or what, but anyhow, she was caught there when Mike decided it's time. [*Laughs*] And so anyway, why—and I was there. And back here then I was—we lived on the upper end of this farm is gumbo, and after a rain your wa—rubber-tired wheels or your metal wheels would catch all that dirt and we'd start draggin' mud. And your wheels'd be a-slidin'. And we didn't go out very much in the wintertime that way. So I was over there where I could get out to—when I had my baby, and so Maedean [Louise Quattlebaum Beebe] was there when she had Mike, 'cause Mike just come unannounced. He just decided it's time. And so he—I think she stayed two weeks there. And her mother [Madge Young Kaminski] was in Detroit [Michigan], and her sister was in Tuckerman. And we just almost raised her [Maedean Louise] from a baby on, you know, till she's, I guess, ten, twelve. And when she'd go to her mother's she'd cry to come back home to Mama [Maudie Junior, Maedean Louise's grandmother and IA's mother], you know, she called her. And

so Madge told 'em—said, "Well, it's just miserable on her." Said, "She'd rather be with you as be with me." And 'course, Madge had to work hard and leave 'em a lot, you know and so that was another thing—she missed the attention. And so when she went back to Detroit, why, I don't know—I never did know her husband [Lester Kendal Beebe] very well. I just met him one time.

[00:56:59] SL: Now, this is Mike's . . .

IA: Mike's dad.

SL: . . . daddy.

IA: Uh-huh.

SL: But you met him one time?

IA: Well, she married and come down here—and—on a visit, and I just saw him that one time. It was on a visit and then they went back to Detroit. And so I didn't get acquainted with him.

SL: Well, tell me about—so was it—now, what was Mike's mom's name?

IA: Louise is what her n—they called her. It was Maedean Louise, but she didn't like the first name, so she took up Louise.

[00:57:42] SL: Uh-huh. And was it just you and Louise at the house when she went into labor?

IA: Well, my father had gone to talk to the guy to go get the doctor,

and he was just a young man across just—oh, 'bout as far as from here to where that house burned down there. And she—my mother said, "Well, ?Lee?," said, "did you give him her maiden name or"—he didn't know—she didn't know whether he knew the married name or not. And she went over there to be sure that they did. And Mike come while they was gone. He didn't have time to wait for the doctor. So anyhow, Mama come in when—and the lady, too—to help take care of Mike, because they knowed it wouldn't very much longer for time for it to be there and he'd come while she's gone. That's how come he'd have to take care of him. So that's why I told you, you do what you have to do when you forced to.

[00:58:44] SL: Right. Right. Well, so it wasn't just a real easy delivery, was it?

IA: It was until the—till he got tangled up, and . . .

SL: In his umbilical cord?

IA: Yeah. But that was when I told her to hold up because I didn't know what may kill him, you know, and held him back till he—we got the navel cord—it was out to where you could see it was around his neck. So it was one way if you—well you tighten it up more. If you go the other way, you loosen it up. So Mother got turned loose, why, it's just like—run like a . . .

SL: Unravel.

IA: Yep. Like a horseshoe and so—on the stob. So I said tha—Mike come out—he said, "I didn't know that." I said, "You wasn't able to cry at first." But anyhow, he's—first thing she said to him—said, "Well, hello, Butchy boy." Butchy boy. [SL laughs]

SL: So let's talk a little bit about the house that he was born in. Was it where you were livin' at the time, or who was livin' at that house?

IA: Mo—my mother lived there. And daddy. But I just went back over there 'cause the roads was so bad here to where I could get out to the doctor when my baby was born.


SL: So you were about to have a baby while . . .

IA: Yeah.

SL: . . . you were deliverin' Mike.

IA: Yeah. Yeah, I was—fourteen days afterwards. So—and . . .

[01:00:25] SL: Well what kinda house was it that he was born in?

 IA: It was a tie slab. It was where they'd sawed off making the ties, you know, rounding the tie—squaring the ties up. The bark was off, but it was just different lengths—different thicknesses. And then they had boards over those cracks, and it was seven and a half foot up to the ceilin'. And it was cypress shingle house. And they put tar paper on the outside and then brick sidin'. And

inside they papered it with that old paper—long time ago they called it ?wall right?. It was rolled tarp—rolled paper. And that's what it was fixed on the inside with. So there's four—just four beds in there. Three big beds and a small bed and cookstove and a heatin' stove and it's sixteen by sixteen. Now you couldna [could not have] got this junk in here in this at all—not all of it. [*Laughter*] But anyhow, we always managed to make room for one more. We'd always done that.

SL: So Louise . . .

KK: Tape change.

SL: Oh, tape change. Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:01:48] SL: All right, now, where were we? Just got Mike Beebe born and did—so he and Louise, his mom, took off for Detroit 'bout two weeks later. Is that . . .

IA: Two or three weeks later. Somethin' like that.

SL: And did—was she here when—were they here when you had your baby?

IA: No.

SL: So it was less than two weeks.

IA: She probably—she was at Tuckerman at that time. She . . .

SL: Oh.

IA: I think he was about a month old when she went back.

[01:02:18] SL: I see. Okay. Well, what can you tell me about Mike's mom?

IA: Well, she was just a hard worker and all. She worked in cafe all time, and she was a good waitress, too. I mean everybody wanted to get her to wait on 'em. So she never let you run without anything on your plate. She'd come around, "Can I help you?" or "Can you need something else?" So anyway, she—if they didn't ask for her, why—if they didn't get her they'd wait and get her when she got time to wait on 'em, or a lotta times they wouldn't let anyone else wait on 'em but them—her.

[01:03:09] SL: How often did you get to see her and Mike through the years?

IA: When she lived in Detroit I didn't get to see her very much, you know, because she didn't get a vacation. Now, his grandmother would bring him back home and visit with him, and maybe she'd stay two weeks with him, you know. And so Mike really loved to get out on the farm. He really enjoyed it. And he's just smart as a tack. He can—he never forgot nothin'. He's—I think he taken after his grandmother—great-grandmother on that. I don't think that ma—his grandmother could remember anything. After she had spinal meningitis she couldn't ever remember

things like she had before. And so anyhow, he's gifted with good memory.

SL: So would you see them maybe once every couple years or . . .

IA: Oh, I—sometimes I'd see 'em about that often until—I don't know how old he was when he come back and started school at Tuckerman. But then I got to see him quite a bit then—not real often, but I had children and—goin' to school and he didn't have no way to go—if I didn't just see him—just stagger up on him out there at the cafe or somethin', I didn't get to see him.

SL: Yeah.

IA: 'Cause his mother never could drive. She never did have a hankerin' to drive.

[01:04:51] SL: That's interesting. So how much did you know Louise before Mike was born?

IA: I didn't.


SL: You didn't?

IA: Huh-uh. After tha—she went to Detroit and went to school there, I didn't know anything about her, only I just know that she was a good worker. Hard workers. And I don't know whether she ever finished—I don't think she finished high school. Anyway, she—I know she went through the eighth grade, ninth. But the boys didn't finish high school, but Dane did.

[01:05:52] SL: Well, let's go back—let's talk about your life just a little bit more here. Is there anything that—can you remember anything that your father told you when you were growin' up that really kind of stuck with you that maybe pointed you in one direction?

IA: My father what?

SL: That your father told you or said to you. Did you father ever tell you any stories or . . .

 IA: Oh, not very many. Only one time he like—he got robbed on his mail route and they'd had a story out that this man and his daughter would—stranger—people'd go missing and they'd stopped and stayed at that house and—on that mail route through there. And my dad said he went in to bed one night and he got—he put what money he had in his sock in his—and slept with his socks on. And said in the night they come in and takin'—and come through the window and all and come 'cross the trunk there and said they felt all over and didn't find no money. Daddy said, "If I'd have moved or I'da let on like I's awake, I'da probably got killed."

SL: Ooh.

[01:07:18] IA: And that was somethin' like that, and I can tell you a real cute—somethin' funny that happened—that people up there,

they didn't have any recreation. They had to make their own recreation on Saturday night. And they's young men, and they'd go from house to house and they'd get the well buckets out of the well and call someone to the door and throw water on them. [SL laughs] But our neighbor, who was real sick, and my— Madge and her children was layin' on the pallet—and her husband—and Papa opened the door. Well, they was—they had missed somebody one time because he come to the wrong door. So they had two buckets that time. And they had one at the back door and one at the front door. And so they's all layin' on the pallet there, and Papa went to answer the door thinkin' that the lady next door that was real bad was—might be needin' help or dyin' and somethin', and he got the door and that [makes whooshing sound] cold water hit him in that—throwed it all on him and all over the people in the floor there, you know. And Papa said, "Doggone, if I had my gun I'd shoot you." [SL laughs] And those people was his good friends and ten, twenty years later they come to see us from Faulkner County to—over to Denton Island. So anyhow that was just fun for them.

SL: [Laughter] That was about as mischievous as they could get.

IA: Yeah. And they had pokeberries in some water one time, and they come in—a man—old man and old woman—and they


threwed them pokeberry water on 'em and the man thought—the woman thought the man had been shot and's bleedin'.

[Laughs] And she fainted [laughter] and they had to come in take care of her. So that kind of ended up some of their . . .

SL: Shenanigans.

IA: . . . some of their clean fun they was havin'.

[01:09:33] SL: Well, you know, it is—life was so—it just seems generally life was hard, that—it was—you just had to work hard just to do the basic things, just to be clean and to get educated and to get food on the table and have food through the winter. And it just seemed like you were workin' all the time. And the—having a day off and having some fun was probably very, very valuable.

 IA: [Laughs] Yeah. They's—there was a lot of mischievousness on Saturday night. Yeah, but havin' fun—I don't know—we'd get our work done or anything, and with as many as we had, we could have a lotta fun together, you know, 'cause my nephew is about the same age as me. I was from May till August older'n him. And my brother was a year older than my niece at Tuckerman. And then my sister had two babies younger'n that and we just had a ball, you know, and—at home. And I was the only one—I was always the tomboy of the family, and I had to

do the climbin'. My brother never could climb. He's afraid of heights. And I's the only one put the stu—swing up in a tree and I'd climb up a tree around and drag a chain up there and hang it around and come down—and then come down the chain. And my mother would turn her back. She knowed I's gonna fall and get killed. [*SL laughs*] But anyway, I survived. And so if there was any tough stuff like that they wanted done, they wanted me to do it or climb a tree or something.

SL: Well, you're still that way.

IA: Well, I—if you b—live by yourself you've got to do things for yourself, so . . .

[01:11:34] SL: What about the river?

IA: The r— . . .

SL: Did you do much—have any—did you—what happened with the river. Did you ever . . .

IA: The river?

SL: Yeah. Did you ever fish or swim . . .

IA: We didn't . . .

SL: . . . or baptize or . . .

IA: We never got to go around the river very much. Mother was always 'fraid [*afraid*] to—that we'd get drowned and she'd say, "Stay out of the water till you learn how to swim." And so you

don't learn to swim if you don't get around water, so

[*laughs*] . . .

SL: That's right.

IA: But anyway, after we got grown we stayed around the river a lot and fished and all. But I always loved to go fishin', and I'm gonna make my lost time count 'bout three weeks from now—about seven days fishin'.

[01:12:26] SL: You got—you like cat fishin'?

IA: Mississippi—it's big bream.

SL: Big bream.

IA: But my husband and I did cat fishin', so we always had our freezer full of catfish. And there—well, one time we went fishin' and it was kindly cool, and I was a-runnin' the line—he was a-runnin' the boat and I was a-runnin' the line. And I got up there, and I said, "It's hung on a log," and he said—I said, "I can't get it up." And he said, "Oh," said, "It's not on a log." He'd feel it with his boat paddle—he could feel that fish a-jerkin', you know. Well, he said, "Don't let loose of that line—that hook." [*SL laughs*] So I had it tight, and he come on up there and he pulled a little bit and he give me be the cant hook to pull it on up a little bit. Well, that fish come up 'bout that far [*raises hand about 2 feet off floor*] out of the water, and I believe he

had that much [spread arms wide] water throwed [*SL laughs*] on me, and he just liked to drowned me. Well that was a forty-nine pounder. So anyway, we got—we had that one and three or four more that's pretty good-size fish to show when we come back, so that was the kind of fish . . .

SL: Was that a blue cat or a flathead or . . .

IA: Flathead.

SL: Flathead?

IA: Yeah. So they was good . . .

SL: That's good eatin'.

IA: Yeah, they're good eatin'.

SL: Big steaks.

[01:13:56] IA: We get them ol' big yellow cats, you know. And they can horn you a lot when you catch—tryin' to catch them. You gotta get a holt of 'em just right, and if you don't get 'em in the mouth, they can really bite you good, too. I usually had my ?leather?—rubber gloves on, though. But anyhow, I really loved that fishin'.

SL: So y'all'd set trotlines in the evening . . .

IA: Trotline.

SL: . . . and run—would you run 'em at night or run 'em in the mornin' or . . .

IA: Run 'em in the mornin'. They'd—if a fish is bitin' at night, you know, why, we usually had some on every trotline we had out.

SL: Hmm. Would you use little bream—little perch for . . .

IA: We used perch or goldfish or whatever, you know, like that. We'd go get—a whole lot better than ol' catfish bait. I couldn't hardly stand that stinkin' stuff.

SL: Yeah.

IA: That'd take the fun out of 'cause you couldn't keep from gettin' that on you. But anyway, if we couldn't get live bait, why, we'd use somethin' like that.

[01:15:02] SL: Well, let's talk about your husband for a little bit. When did you all meet?

IA: We married in forty—let's see. Well I was younger'n [SL laughs] —[19]42. And so we had two children to—and I had two by my previous marriage. Then he had three. So we fixed 'em up and mixed 'em all together and had a big family. But they got along pretty good, and my youngest stepson, he thinks as much of me as he coulda ever thought of his mother. But anyway, he visits me more, and if I needed anything he—when his was daddy was sick, "You need any money? Well, let me know," you know? So there's not very many stepkids like that. But his mother left him when he was little, so his grandmother

taken care of him till me and Aldon [Adcox] married, and so he was just proud to be out at Amagon. And he made good for hisself, and so I was proud of him. The other two—one's in Greers Ferry, and one's up there in St. Louis [Missouri], and they've both got nice homes. So I was proud they made it. But they didn't have the struggle like we did when we was growin' up.

SL: No.

IA: Makes a difference.

[01:16:51] SL: What did your husband do for—your second husband do for a living?

IA: He was a welder for while till he got asthma so bad that he couldn't stand that weldin' smoke and everything. And so he sold his shop out to my oldest son, and so that's when he put me to work—carpenter work. He couldn't work unless I was workin' beside of him. So [*laughs*] he had to have a flunky with him. [*Laughter*] But anyway, well I knew a little bit about it anyway when I started in, so I didn't have to be a full-pledged flunky.

SL: I bet you knew a lot about it. So—but you had an earlier marriage, too.

IA: Do what?

[01:17:50] SL: Did you have an earlier marriage, too?

IA: Yeah, I had a—when I married him, his mother was—had a stroke and so—his brother was afflicted. Had typhoid—I mean, had infantile paralysis a little. And his daddy was a little bit older than—well he's sixty-one, but he thought he was old at that time. But anyway, I married and went in and took care of them as long as she lived. But she had a stroke when my boy was three we—no, he was just five weeks old, and she lived till he was—from the twenty-fifth day of August that he was born till the twenty-seventh day of—in April, and the twenty-seventh day of August she died. So someone had to set and take care of her on the bed. Back then they didn't have rails or—she didn't—they wouldn't want her to go to the hospital, and he took her out there three days and she stayed, and she was wrestlin' and fallin' off the bed, and he didn't sleep none or anything so he brought her back home. And so we had someone set around the clock with us. One of her children would come and stay with us, but I stayed with her all day long. I've made bread settin' on the bed—made biscuits settin' on the bed, because if I had left her, she'd fall off. So I didn't have it easy when I first started to get—first started off with marriage. But anyhow, I toughed it out. [01:19:42] So [*laughs*] then when my daughter was



twenty-one month—twenty months old, why, I had tuberculosis, and I had to leave her for nine months.

SL: Hmm.

IA: And so he had it before I did, but he wouldn't go to [Arkansas State Tuberculosis Sanatorium at] Booneville or anything. And denied they's getting a bad X-ray, rather. So I got down there and checked it out, and there wasn't no record of him havin' it—one sent down there. And I kept on till he come down. Then he walked out, and I had to go back home and take care of him until he died. And so that's—that was kinda rough because my mother taken care of both of my children for a while till my oldest boy had appendicitis. And he had—was in bad shape there, and it didn't heal up 'cause his appendix almost bursted. So I had to stay with him in the hospital for a little over a week. And so the doctors gave me a bed right there with him, you know, and told me I needed my rest. But I made it and taken care of him—and I taken care of my husband till he died, and I never did break down with tuberculosis anymore so—but I had a hole about like a hen egg in my lung when I found out I had it, which is . . .

SL: What—did they used to put people in an iron lung with those?

IA: Huh?

SL: They'd put people in an iron lung with that or . . .

IA: Uh . . .

SL: With tuberculosis, would they—they'd . . .

[01:21:39] IA: They didn't—they didn't quarantine you or anything like that then.

SL: Yeah.

IA: They had a sanatorium to . . .

SL: Right.

IA: . . . go to.

SL: Right.

IA: But they gave me a operation. They'd cut my lung loose here [points to pit of left arm] all the adhesions—and pushed it all over on one side—closed that up where that—it healed up. And I've done anything I was big enough to do ever since. [*Laughs*]

SL: That's a miracle.

IA: So . . .

SL: That's funny how that worked.

IA: Some of the things I'd tackle, I don't know whether I'm big enough or not, but I get it done. [*Laughter*] But anyway, when you're by yourself you got to, or you don't get it done.

[01:22:17] SL: Is there anything that you'd wanna say to your kids or your grandkids?

IA: The grandkids?

SL: Yeah. Anything.

IA: Well I'm . . .

SL: Anything you'd like to tell 'em.

IA: I'm just proud of 'em, I'll say that. I've got one that's made a schoolteacher and one's a dozer operator, and I don't get to see my ones in Texas very much, which—but they've all graduated from college—three. And two in Russellville are—there's one in college there and one finished college there. And I guess I was the only grandma that I know of that had a football player daughter—granddaughter—a football player there in Fayetteville. So she is really good and tough. And I don't know whether she's playin' this year or not, but last year she did and year before last. And she came in with bruises like nobody's business. But anyhow, she's tough. And . . .

[01:23:27] SL: Now, what's her name?

IA: Her—Kabria—well, what is it? Dorn.

SL: Dorn.

IA: Kabria Dorn is only—only girl on the football team.

SL: Fayetteville High School or junior high or [IA: Van Buren Junior High School] . . .

IA: Junior high.

SL: Junior high.

IA: Yeah.

SL: I'm gonna look her up.

IA: Okay.

[01:23:49] SL: I know where she got her toughness.

IA: You know who's . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] I know where she got her toughness.

IA: I just wonder. [*Laughter*] Well, when her mother was down there at the [gubernatorial] inaugural ball, why, we got on the elevator. And so her—happened so that her coach was on that elevator with us. And they was really surprised. And I got to hear a lot of tough stuff during that time [*SL laughs*] that she done. Said she wouldn't—boy, she wouldn't say nothing. If she got hurt she'd just tough it and go on, you know. And I said, "Well, maybe they's timid with her, you know, and didn't run into her like they would a lot of 'em, you know?" But she's—she just tough. [*SL laughs*] And I went and stayed with them in Tennessee—baby-sit for two weeks with her. And so—while their mother and daddy was on vacation and her uncle and me stayed and taken care of her. I can tell you then she was tough. She was just a—I guess in second grade, but nothin'—but she was rough with them boys. Made it rough on 'em. [*Laughter*]

But I didn't dream of her ever bein' a football player. Well, anyhow, you can find out there about her and—Kabria Dorn. And so she's a pretty little girl—just dark—black-headed and pretty. She may dress like a hippie. I don't know. She don't dress like kids used to, I guess. Fact, more junk they get on 'em the better they look, you know.

[01:25:32] SL: [*Laughs*] I don't understand that either. [*IA laughs*]

Well that's a good story. Is there anything else you want to say to your kids?

IA: Not that I know of—only I'm just proud of my sons and oldest son's in Texas and he's got a cattle ranch.

SL: Is that Laverle [Edwards]?

IA: That's Laverle. And so he's done good for hisself, even though he's had a lotta wives. That's the one that was supposed to hand all those boxes down with no names on 'em. [*Laughter*] But anyhow, ever one of 'em got one but the last one, and I'll probably have to make her one.

SL: Well, if you only feel obligated. [*Laughter*]

IA: So anyway, she's a sweet person, too. I said he got some—some sweet wives and some that wasn't worth havin', so I guess, you know, that he just didn't get the right rib.

SL: Well maybe I'll get to meet him someday. I have talked to him

on the phone a couple of times now.

IA: Yeah.

SL: He seems like a really nice man.

IA: Well, I'm disappointed at him for not getting those pictures back that I . . .

SL: Well, he—you know, he's told me he's gonna make me copies, so . . .

IA: Okay. Yeah.

SL: . . . we'll—we can—we'll have 'em, so that's good.

IA: He can tell you that and he'll forget about it, though.

SL: Well, I'll call him. I've got his number now.

IA: Okay. [*Laughs*]

SL: We'll keep after him.

IA: But . . .

SL: Well, okay, is there anything else?

IA: Oh, not that I know of, only I know I'm proud of Mike.

SL: I think we've done—I think you've told us . . .

IA: I just hope he . . .

[01:27:05] SL: Well, let's talk about Mike and Ginger just a little bit.

IA: Well, I haven't never got acquainted with Ginger very much, but she seemed like a sweet person.

SL: She is. I got to spend a couple hours talking with her, kind of

like I'm talkin' with you. She's very, very strong religious upbringing' and very civic oriented and active—well she's had to cut back on some of that since she became First Lady [of Arkansas], but she has done a lotta good for a lotta people and . . .

IA: Yeah.

SL: . . . I think that she kind of likes to be more in the background.

IA: Yeah.

SL: But I do think that . . .

[01:27:46] IA: But Mike's bringin' her out in the limelight. I've seen him when he's—when they's doing a commercial or something together, and I thought that was real sweet of her.

SL: Well, she's really beautiful. I think she's really beautiful inside and out. I just . . .

IA: Yeah.

SL: I get that impression so . . .

IA: I told Mike when he was bein' inaugurated in there and they's— all those speakers out there and those planes a-comin' over. And when they let off that sound barrier, you know. It liked to scare Ginger to death and she screamed and grabbed him. [*SL laughs*] And I said, "I bet he hadn't never got a hug like that." [*Laughter*] But it startled her. It—anyway, it was kindly a

surprise to 'em at the time. And said it sound like they may fall right down there. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

IA: But that was kinda exciting. Mh-hmm.


[01:28:44] SL: Well, have you got any advice to give the governor?

IA: What?

SL: Have you got any advice for the governor?

IA: Huh-uh.

SL: None? [*Laughter*]

 IA: I—all I know is that I just told him I wanted him to make a good lawyer, and I wanted him to make a good governor. And I think so far he is. And everybody around here thinks he's doing great so—some of 'em that was Republican voted Democrat for him, so that showed that they was ready for a change.

SL: I don't know anybody that's not proud of him.

IA: Huh?

SL: I don't know anybody that's not proud of him.

[01:29:25] IA: Well, do you know Dr. [J. D.] Ashley and his wife told Mike when he was goin' to college, "My home is your home anytime you take a notion to come." And I said that spoke well of him, you know. And Dr. Ashley didn't have no children that—his stepchildren. He said, "I'd give anything if my boys was like

Mike." And so I said that always made my head swell a little bit, I guess, when they said that because I knew Mike had had a hard life tryin' to—you know, you can't make it on a waitress's pay hardly. And so Mike has done good, and he appreciated what I done for his mother. And so I was just—I told him that Dane couldn't do nothing like that, so I said, "Who else was it to do it?" [*Laughter*] She never did know how to take care of sick or nothing like that. And I guess I've always done that. I used to go and give shots when—one lady would give shots—a lady one night and the next night I'd sit up and take—give shots to 'em. And they didn't have hospital insurance, but the doctor'd give 'em some medicine to give 'em shots at home and so I—we'd take and turn about like that. But people don't do that anymore. When you're sick you don't—they don't expect you to—they expect you to go to the hospital and get it taken care of. And so they just don't do that. Well, I know y'all are due out. I've got an eye waterin' like everything. I got infection in that eye . . .

SL: Oh.

IA: . . . two years ago and it's—it never . . .

SL: Uh-huh. It still waters up sometimes?

IA: It—but it's nothin' that he said would make me go blind or

anything. But I—since my mother went blind and my sister went blind . . .

SL: You're worried about it.

IA: It kind of bothers you when you don't have but one eye.

SL: Yeah.

IA: So this one over here never did develop and so it makes me wonder if—and I don't know how in the world I'd ever manage blind, 'cause I can't feel my way in the dark, so I know I couldn't get very much done. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. I'll bet you'll be okay.

IA: [*Yawns*] Just have to not worry about it and think that everything'll be okay.

[01:32:09] SL: Well, everything is gonna be okay. Listen, I want to thank you for all your time today.

IA: Well appreciate you . . .

SL: You've told some great stories and some good American history.

IA: Yeah.

SL: And a good picture of what—how hard people had to work back in those days, and it's valuable to gather . . .

IA: Well . . .

SL: . . . that story.



[01:32:26] IA: Mike didn't come up the easy way, either, so . . .

SL: I know that.

IA: So he knows what it is.

SL: I know that.

IA: He told me—he said, "Aunt Ila, I have dug ditches, shoveled dikes, and I've done just a little bit of this and that." I said, "Well, Mike, that just makes you tougher."

SL: Yep, it does.

IA: So if he's experienced some of that stuff, he knows what hardship is to where he can help someone else out with hardships. And I hope that he continues doin' good and don't get no black marks agin him and nothing like that. But . . .


SL: Well, you can't make all the people happy all the time, but he's doing a good job of keeping most . . .

IA: Oh, yeah.

SL: . . . everybody on the same page.

IA: That's right.

SL: And keepin' 'em focused.

 IA: Yeah, some people gonna complain about somethin' no matter . . .

SL: Yeah.

IA: . . . how good it is, they'd find somethin'—some fault in it.

SL: Yeah.

[01:33:19] IA: You know. But my mother'd always told me that—
"Look for the good in somethin'." Said, "You know," said,
"sometimes you may have to look harder to find the good in it,
but it's best to look for the good and not the bad part." So I've
tried to teach my kids that, but sometimes it don't always work
that way. But anyhow, you do your part. You hope you've done
the right thing.

SL: Well, okay. I think I'm—I'm gonna let you off the hook here.

IA: Okay.

[End of Interview 01:33:56]

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