Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Charles Warbritton

Interviewer: Peggy S. Lloyd

Location: Archeological Survey Station
Rust Technology Building
University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

Date: June 5, 2000

Situation: The eastern gate of the Pine Bluff Arsenal and the community scattered along McFadden Road just northeast of Pine Bluff are known as "Warbritton." The name comes from the family that owned an eighty-acre tract in the vicinity before the Arsenal came to Pine Bluff in the early 1940s. The Warbritton family had to sell their homestead to the United States government because it was within the bounds of the proposed Arsenal. Their tract was part of a rural community inhabited by African-Americans and Euro-Americans. Dr. John House of UAPB is examining the area for sites of possible historic significance. Mr. Charles Warbritton of Hot Springs agreed to come to Pine Bluff, walk over the site of his old home, and provide Dr. House with as much information as he could. Accompanied by Peggy Lloyd and Dr. House's assistant, Mary Farmer, they spent part of the morning walking over the site. It was Mr. Warbritton's first visit to his old home place in nearly sixty years. It was, of course, much changed with only vestiges of the former occupation. After leaving the Arsenal, the group drove to the Warbritton Gate for photos and went into Pine Bluff for lunch. After lunch, the party returned to Dr. House's laboratory at UAPB where Peggy Lloyd interviewed Mr.

Warbritton about his childhood home, his family, the neighborhood and the period from the early 1930s through the post-World War II era.

Focus of the Interview: The Great Depression in Jefferson County, Arkansas, and the coming of the Pine Bluff Arsenal

Lloyd: To get your permission to record your information they [the Arkansas Center for Visual and Oral History] just need you to say your name and say "Well, I agree to do this." And then we'll send you a copy of what we gather up here. So if you would do that, give me your name and …

Warbritton: My name is Charles Warbritton and I have been with these people today out on the old home place. And very little could we make out, but I think that I have given them an idea of what the—how everything was laid out and you have my permission to use this information in any way that's needed.

Lloyd: Would you tell us a little about your family, Mr. Warbritton?

Warbritton: My family, when we lived there on McFadden Road, consisted of three sisters, my mother and dad and my mother's mother. And by the time that the war came and we had to move from this place, my two older sisters were already gone, so when we moved to town, there was five of us that actually moved to town. And we bought a small place on what was known then as Short Barraque Street in Pine Bluff, and later on Martha Mitchell Freeway came through and took it. We have dealt with government and highway departments quite extensively. And I feel like (laughs) that in doing so, we have come out the little end of the horn.

Lloyd: When did your family move out to the Warbritton home place that became part of the Arsenal?

Warbritton: Well, it was probably 1932 because I had just started school. I was born in 1926, and I was about six years old at the time when we moved to the country and what my dad purchased there was land with no buildings at all on it. And he had timber cut off the place, made into lumber and that's what the house and nearly all of the buildings that was on the place came from.

Lloyd: So there were no buildings out there whatsoever?

Warbritton: There was nothing on the place whenever we bought it.

Lloyd: Where did you go to school?

Warbritton: I went to school at Dollarway.

Lloyd: Did the bus take you or did your parents take you?

Warbritton: Well, there was times—it was supposed to be a bus route down the old McFadden Road to the Hardin family which was on the old McFadden farm, but there came times that the bus could not make it down that road and at times like that either my dad or, most of the time, it was one of the Hardins that came by in a wagon with mules pulling it and took us out to the highway, out to 79 Highway. But it was a bus route, and eventually they got it, got the road fixed, to where he could make it even during the winter, but I've seen it a many a time bogged down in the middle of that road.

Lloyd: Was it just a dirt road, no gravel even?

Warbritton: It was pure dirt when we moved there, but over the years they finally got a little gravel on it, enough to hold up the vehicles.

Lloyd: Tell us about your family's farm there. What did your dad raise?

Warbritton: Well, we raised a few cattle, quite a number of hogs, and a field of corn, but mostly the place was made up of about three acres there of blue Concord grapes. We put in a young orchard of over 150 trees, mainly peach but also apple and pear and pecan trees. We had a few of everything. And then we had about an acre of strawberries, and we also had all kinds of tame berries—boysenberries and young berries and tame blackberries.

Lloyd: It sounds like a lot of work. Who planted all those fruit trees and berry vines?

Warbritton: I helped Dad, and we put them out.

Lloyd: Your father also had a job in town, didn't he?

Warbritton: Yes, yes, he worked six days a week as a barber at shops in town there.

Lloyd: Did he work as a barber all of his life?

Warbritton: Yes, yes. His whole life was as a barber. He never worked at anything else. Aw, yes, he did too. I'm sorry. He and one of my uncles, at different times, did do concrete work for the highway department. They put the culverts and bridges in out 65 Highway between Pine Bluff and Little Rock back in the, had to be, late twenties and early thirties. We were still living in town when he was doing that. So barbering is what he

learned as a youngster and finally went back to it and went into it with his own shop.

Lloyd: Did your mother have a profession or area of work?

Warbritton: No, no. Mom was the anchor. She's what held us all together, she and her mother, little Granny.

Lloyd: What was your grandmother's name?

Warbritton: My grandmother's name on mother's side was Betsy Jane Meadows.

Lloyd: Your parents were originally from Prairie County, Arkansas, weren't they?

Warbritton: Uh, yeah, they, up near Des Arc. That's where they came from, and Mom's family originally came from out of eastern Tennessee. I'm not sure, but I think that my grandfather and his bunch came out of Oklahoma.

Lloyd: Your father's father?

Warbritton: Yes.

Lloyd: Do you know when they came to Arkansas?

Warbritton: No, I don't, honey.

Lloyd: If I say the word "depression" to you, what does that bring to mind?

Warbritton: It was an awful lot of folks out of work that was begging for jobs or bits of food, just anything, anyway you could help them, and we were very, very fortunate during that time that we had gotten on the farm and had gotten things halfway started. And after we had been there a couple of years, then we had things well in hand because we raised nearly

everything that we ate. The only thing that had to be bought was sugar, salt, pepper, coffee—stuff like that. And mother used to take five dollars on Saturday and go to town and buy two big sacks of groceries for five dollars. And, actually, we felt like we lived high on the hog. I can remember people driving up in front of the house there, probably customers of my Dad's or friends that he knew. He'd holler out to them, "Come in and see how poor folks live." Well, if they stayed around long enough for a mealtime to come up, Mother would go to the smokehouse and come out with a big cured ham. We had ham and sausage. We also had beef that we put up in half-gallon jars and all the vegetables and milk in the world that anyone ever wanted. So I think about back in those times. I'd kinda like to have some of them po' folks' times.

Lloyd: So you feel that your family wasn't really so much touched by the Depression.

Warbritton: We weren't affected by the Depression.

Lloyd: What did your mother buy in town? You all raised a lot of your own things. What would she buy?

Warbritton: Like I said, it was usually salt, pepper, sugar, coffee. That was about it.

Lloyd: So your father's work really…as a barber he continued to work steadily.

Warbritton: Yes, and he provided the five dollars for her to go on Saturday and shop.

Warbritton: And really I can't ever remember a need during that time. We always had plenty. People would come visit and no problem to put on a big spread for however many.

Lloyd: What about friends, relatives or neighbors, were they touched by this downturn in the economy?

Warbritton: Well, I'm sure that that there were a lot of them like the Stewart family. They didn't have a steady job that I know of and Laura Stewart worked, a lot of times she washed and ironed for our family and was paid off in canned goods and stuff out of the garden to feed her family. And yes, there was a lot of 'em that were affected that just didn't have hardly enough to eat in that area at that time.

Lloyd: Did you know any of them?

Warbritton: Oh, yes.

Lloyd: The Stewarts were a black family.

Warbritton: The Stewarts was the black family that was next to us there.

Lloyd: If they had work or if they were working, what did this family normally do?

Warbritton: The mother, like I said, she worked out, worked for us, washing and ironing and cleaning and cooking some and the rest of that family—by gosh—they didn't do doodle-de. Set there and they was like a baby bird setting there with their mouth open ready for Mama to bring it and put it in it.

Lloyd: How many were in that family? Do you recall? Were they all children or…?

Warbritton: She had kids from her oldest—about that time that I was raising melons and selling 'em when I was probably ten, eleven, twelve years old, in that range—her oldest was in his early twenties and then from there on down there was just kids and then there was some that, as I remember, weren't hers but some that she had taken in.

Lloyd: Do you know what happened to that family?

Warbritton: No, I don't. Not really.

Lloyd: What about the Ollie family? They were also other neighbors of yours.

Warbritton: Yes, the only one of that family that I know anything about was Fletcher Ollie, and, when we lived there, he ran a dance hall the other side of the Hoovers from us. And then when the Arsenal came, he moved closer to town on the same side of the road and all.

Lloyd: Was his dance hall just open on weekends?

Warbritton: No, they—he sold cold drinks and beer and had the dance hall. They had a—just a piano was the only thing that was a permanent part of it. Then at times they would have drums in there, and they would have guitars and different horns. It was not the same all the time. But there was nothing regular about it, the bands.

Lloyd Did different groups come in or did he play himself? Where did they get their music?

Warbritton: Fletcher played the piano. I know that. But as far as the rest of the group, I don't know how they were brought in.

Lloyd: Do you think he made a good living from that?

Warbritton: No, but he made a pretty fair one from bootlegging whiskey.

Lloyd: Was there a big market for that?

Warbritton: Oh, yes, yes. And my Dad, I guess, was probably one of the favorite customers. He drank an awful lot back in those days. Seemed to know every bootlegger in the county. We could mention some kids' names that we met through school, and (imitating father)"Who'd you say that was? Why that must be kin to ol' so and so, that danged old bootlegger out there," he'd say. We told him time and again, "Dad, you must know every bootlegger in this county."

Lloyd: So it was pretty widespread in the county?

Warbritton: Oh, yeah.

Lloyd: They resisted prohibition in this area?

Warbritton: Oh, yeah. Yeah, there was a lot of it made back then.

Lloyd: What about after Prohibition was over? Did they continue making it then?

Warbritton: I think that they did. 'Course, after Prohibition, by gosh, then they still had to pay the law to let them operate, so it just went on the same. The only thing was that they had to compete with bonded whiskey, which, most of the time, was cheaper than what they were selling.

Lloyd: You said they had to pay the law. What? Just local?

Warbritton: Local. Under the table. You know.

Lloyd: So that they wouldn't arrest them or anything like that.

Warbritton: Raid them. Yes.

Lloyd: You mentioned that you all had—you didn't have any problems eating well during this time. What about if anybody got sick? What happened then?

Warbritton: Well, and a funny thing. Especially after my uncle and aunt moved out of the little house across the road, then we got the sharecropper, the old colored fellow and his wife. Now if they got sick, Dad took them into town to a doctor.

Lloyd: What were their names?

Warbritton: Name was Basie Williams.

Lloyd: Okay.

Warbritton: But if one of us kids got sick, Mama was the doctor, usually. Well, I felt it then, and I still feel it today that the colored that we came in contact with was treated much better than we were ourselves.

Lloyd: By…?

Warbritton: By our parents.

Lloyd: Really! Now you say he was a sharecropper. Did he work for your Dad?

Warbritton: Yes. He sharecropped there on the place, grew corn. We never raised any cotton there 'cause cotton was a crop that wouldn't grow well in that hill country.

Warbritton: But once you dropped over in the old riverbed there, it was cotton country.

Lloyd: So I know your Dad had his fruit trees, and he had his grapes and you talked about broomcorn. He grew broomcorn?

Warbritton: Yeah.

Lloyd: What else was he growing out there?

Warbritton: Well, he grew quite a bit of regular corn. We raised peanuts in the field over there, and then it was mainly the fruits.

Lloyd: Now, when he had a sharecropper like Basie Williams, what were the terms of their arrangement? Do you know what—how they agreed on…?

Warbritton: I'm not real sure what the arrangement was, but he, Basie, was always one of my favorite people in the world. He and I just had a ball together. He taught me a lot about animals and about farming and all and things that have been with me all the years.

Lloyd: For example, what did he teach you about animals?

Warbritton: Oh, he taught me how to care for horses, how to watch and care for hogs and cattle too. So –I've never—since I've been grown, I've never grown any cattle, but I've had horses, and I've had hogs on the place there where I am now. But the old fellow was very instrumental in it. I remember one time we had some pear trees on the place. Kidlike, I got me a couple of pears before they was really ripe, ate those suckers, and I'm telling you I purty near come up with my toenails. Sick! And ol' Basie said, "Charley," he says, "you've got to remember," said "that them thangs are just one a day and," he said, "you come to me and," said, "we'll go pick you a good one, one that won't make you sick." And so there for several years, I'd always go to Basie. I said, "Are they ripe yet?" "Naw, suh, they're not just ripe enough to eat yet." And he'd keep me off of 'em,

I guess, and when he finally said they was ready to eat—boy—we'd go and get us a pear every day.

Lloyd: How old were you at that time?

Warbritton: Oh, probably nine, ten, eleven years old, somewhere in that area.

Lloyd: Was he an older man?

Warbritton: Yes, he was quite old.

Lloyd: So they didn't have any children.

Warbritton: They had children and had a grandson that lived for a while with them. But as far as their kids, I never, I don't know.

Lloyd: And you said you felt like your parents treated them better than they treated you.

Warbritton: Yes, I did.

Lloyd: Why do you say that?

Warbritton: Well, like I said, when Basie or his wife got sick, boy, Dad would bundle them up in a car and haul them to town to the doctor.

Lloyd: Did your father pay for their treatment?

Warbritton: Oh, yes. Yes, sir. And then when one of us kids got sick, well, it was up to Mama. I can't—the only time I can remember going to a doctor is when I chopped that end of that thumb off with a chopping ax. (Holds up a scarred thumb.) Took me in to a doctor that time, and then I cut an artery here in this arm. (Holds up left arm.)

Lloyd: Oh, my goodness.

Warbritton: No, it's not. It's in this arm. (Holds up right arm and points to a two-inch white scar.) Pointing to the wrong arm. There it is right there. See that scar.

Lloyd: How did you do that?

Warbritton: With a knife. I had a real sharp, keen-bladed knife in this hand. I had just been plugging a watermelon and a dang lil' ol' pig got in the yard. And I grabbed up a stick and still had this knife in this hand. Went to beating on the pig to get him out of the yard and swung it around into that knife. I mean the blood just flew. Little Granny come out and saw me bleeding. By God, she reached up and got a bunch of cobwebs—spider webs, wadded up a bunch of it, threw that thing back and slapped them webs on there, and then went in the kitchen and come out with a box of table salt. Threw that arm back and just poured it full of salt. Boy, I squalled like a panther, but, you know, it didn't hurt. Didn't hurt and that wound never got sore. Just healed right up and that was it.

Lloyd: Well, she was using good remedies then. You didn't get an infection?

Warbritton: Nope.

Lloyd: Did anybody get seriously ill? Did you have any of these serious illnesses out there?

Warbritton: Not that I can ever remember. Not when we was growing up.

Lloyd: And she continued to live with you all the time that you were out there?

Warbritton: Yes, yes. When I remember—well—she used to live out there off of Dollarway—my grandmother and her oldest son, my mother's oldest brother. We was on that road there today. But, whenever Uncle Rast died, then she came to live with us. By that time, we had moved to the country there. Then after we moved to town, she moved to town with us.

Lloyd: Wha…excuse me.

Warbritton: After the Arsenal took over, then when we moved to town, Granny moved with us. She fell, broke a hip, and, I guess, was in a bad way for several years before she died.

Lloyd: Were your parents both from farming families?

Warbritton: Well, I don't know that my Dad's family farmed. Like I said, his father was an old country doctor. And made the rounds out around Des Arc, Hickory Plains, all through that area up as far as Conway.

Lloyd: Where did he get his medical training? Do you know?

Warbritton: That I don't know.

Lloyd: When did you first hear about the Arsenal coming in at Pine Bluff?

Warbritton: Right after the war started. It was rumors that floated, as I remember, around for several weeks. It finally came out in the paper that we was gonna have an Arsenal at Pine Bluff. Then we found out within a few weeks that it was our property that they was after.

Lloyd: How did you find that out? Did you just read it in the paper or did somebody contact you?

Warbritton: I don't remember anyone doing any contacting. Like I said, the realtor there that—in Pine Bluff—that had been trying to buy the property from Dad turned out that he was the appraiser on this property out there.

Lloyd: That was Mr. McNew?

Warbritton: McNew.

Lloyd: Your father, as I understand it, he agreed—the government gave him a purchase option and he agreed to it.

Warbritton: Well, huh, I don't know what you call an option. I guess that's if somebody's got the knife to your throat and asks do you want to live because there was no way of doing any bartering or anything on the offer that was made. But then and I still feel like that we was greatly wronged by our government for letting this happen. I mean that they knew that that property was worth a lot more than what was offered, and yet the offer was we'll give you so much but you be off before the first of the month.

Lloyd: And how much did they pay you?

Warbritton: Thirty-six hundred and fifty dollars.

Lloyd: And that included eighty acres and what else was on that eighty acres?

Warbritton: Was that six-room home, all of the—a big chicken house, a brooder house, a hen house, log barn along side of two wells, at least 150 fruit trees, about three acres of Concord grapes plus all types of tame berries that we had. There was a lot of work that went into building that place to what it was and the price paid was far, far from being anything near what it was actually worth.

Lloyd: How do you think that they reached their figure, their price?

Warbritton: I really don't know how the figure was reached because we found out, later after we had moved to town, we found out that Hoover, who only had twelve acres and an old house that he'd started building and the foundation had rotted before he ever got a roof on it. He got more for twelve acres than we got for eighty. And I knew that that wasn't right, but this is all kind of leading into politics.

Lloyd: How so?

Warbritton: Well, things that your government will do to a person and then after we moved to town and there on Short Barraque Street. Then here comes the Arkansas Highway Department and they want that! But they don't want to buy Mother a place as near what she had there in another part of town and move her. She wanted to do that. No, no, we can't do that. Said you know that people got to make way for progress. She told the fellow, "I've had all the damn progress I can stand in my lifetime."

Lloyd: When was this? How soon after the Arsenal was this?

Warbritton: Then, after when we moved to town. I'm not sure. Whenever that Martha Mitchell Freeway came through Pine Bluff. We had lived there. Aw, we'd lived there several years and added a couple of rooms on to the house when we bought it. But then I had married and gone and Mother and Dad had divorced. So she was there alone.

Lloyd: Oh, your parents divorced?

Warbritton: Yes. After I got married, they divorced.

Lloyd: Do you think the move from the farm out there had anything to do with the break up of their marriage?

Warbritton: No, not really.

Lloyd: But they were married a very long time, weren't they?

Warbritton: Married quite a while. I don't know how many years Mom and Dad was married. (Pause.) Never stopped to try to figure it out.

Lloyd: How did your neighbors out there feel about the coming of the Arsenal? Other people in the community out there?

Warbritton: Ones that their places was going in the Arsenal didn't think much of it, for sure. They weren't ready to be uprooted, have to go and find some other place, some other way of making a living and all.

Lloyd: You say you only had, what, thirty days' notice to get out.

Warbritton: Had less than thirty days. Best I can remember they finally told Dad. He was going at them about the timber, wanted to cut the timber and sell the timber on the place. Well, they dogged him around there for a day or two and finally said, "Well, all right, you can sell the timber." Well, when he went and tried to sell the timber to different logging companies, they didn't have enough time to do anything. So I don't know what happened to the timber. It was standing when we left.

Lloyd: Oh, what kind of timber was on the land there? Was it…?

Warbritton: There was pines right… There was a grove of pines right to the left of the path that led from the house to the barn. There was probably fifteen to eighteen trees that were of a size that two grown men couldn't

touch fingertips around them. They were probably four, four and a half, maybe five feet through.

Warbritton: Big, big stuff. If I hadn't have seen my Dad and another man try to reach around those, I'd have thought the trees was huge 'cause I was so little. But I saw what two grown men trying to reach, touch fingertips, couldn't touch.

Lloyd: You don't know if that timber was later cut by the Arsenal or what happened to it?

Warbritton: Well, it had to have been because it's not there today, not in that area.

Lloyd: And you say the house was later sold?

Warbritton: The house was sold and moved to Pine…into the city not long after we left there. And it was moved out on West Sixteenth Street. I can't remember the number now, but it was purchased by the city of Pine Bluff for the residence for the then mayor, Howard Steed.

Lloyd: It became the mayor's personal residence?

Warbritton: Yes. Well, I don't know. I suppose it belonged to the city. They—as I understood it—they were ones that purchased the thing and had it moved for the mayor to have a place.

Lloyd: How did your father feel about President Roosevelt?

Warbritton: That I don't know. I couldn't answer how he felt about Roosevelt. And don't ask me how I feel about Clinton because I could go on for about a day and a half. Naw, Clinton, when he was just a little fellow, used to play with my son that was killed in Vietnam.

Lloyd: Oh, that's right. You are from Hot Springs, aren't you?

Warbritton: They were in the same class at school.

Lloyd: Did you live near him?

Warbritton: Not, no, not really, but he used to come over there in front of my house and meet the kids there. And they'd get out in the street and play ball and all. And, when they didn't play to suit Bill, then he'd just take his ball and go home.

Lloyd: What was your son's name?

Warbritton: My son that was killed in Vietnam was Thomas Franklin Young, and the older boy was Mack Young. For several years he worked as a disc jockey at different radio stations and finally he worked at, I believe it was, KARK Four, the TV station that he worked at for a short time. Then he had to move. He went into Missouri to the University of Missouri to get his doctor's degree. And after that, he was following that vocation when he was killed.

Lloyd: You said he was killed in a private plane crash?

Warbritton: Private plane, yeah.

Lloyd: Your son that went to Vietnam, was he in the Army or the Air Force?

Warbritton: Marines.

Lloyd: Oh, he was a Marine?

Warbritton: Yeah. We sent him off to college at Conway. Hendrix, I do believe, try to remember. And he stayed up there about four or five months. Come home and said, "Well, I've joined the Marines." I said,

"Son, I sure wish you had talked to us before joining." "Well, Dad, I just feel like it's the thing I need to do. You fought for your country, and I feel like I need to, too.

Lloyd: When was this? 1964?

Warbritton: Right at the start of the Vietnam War when the United States got into it. And so I told him, I said, "Well, you're smart and you can do well staying in the States and training, doing the training. "Yeah, I know," he said. Well, after he was in the Marines and come back, I said he was transferred out to El Toro, out there just south of Los Angeles. And, they had him set up as an instructor. But he didn't like that. He wanted to go to Vietnam. I said, "Son, you'd better stay where you are." But he went back and volunteered. Well, the next thing we knew, we got a notice that he was going to Vietnam.

Lloyd: And he was killed at Hué?

Warbritton: Yes.

Lloyd: Was that in the Tet Offensive?

Warbritton: Yes. Yes. He was a mighty good kid, just a little headstrong, but I guess. Never could get it out of him.

Lloyd: Well, you were the youngest of a family of four. You had three sisters. What did those girls do on the farm out there when you still lived out on the…?

Warbritton: Well, the youngest sister Betty and I we did the milking, the taking care of the hogs, and all the barn chores. And also did, whatever was, hoeing around some of the vegetables and the corn and all. She and I did

some of that. And then the two older sisters, the middle girl was strictly house. She did some of the cooking and the house things. And then my older sister, she was with us in the field and all and helped in the house. But it's—it was a funny thing. In every family, there's "Us" against "Them."

Warbritton: Well, it was me and my oldest sister against the other two.

Lloyd: Huh! How did that happen?

Warbritton: The old and the young. Well, I don't know. But anyway whenever anything happened, if I got hurt, I never called the mother.

Break. Side A ends.

Lloyd: Okay, I think we're all right now. I was trying to watch for that, but I think I may have missed it. We may have missed a little bit of that. You were telling me that you didn't have any plans for going on to college or studying.

Warbritton: Naw, really when I came out of the Service, I really didn't have anything at all in my mind. I worked… At that time, I worked with my uncle on roadwork, building culverts, and headwalls and different things of concrete there for a while. And, and I got married and we moved to Hot Springs. Well, I went to a mechanic's school then under the GI Bill. And learned all that I knew about automobiles and all. And worked at that for a good many years. And at that job when I first started into it, thirty dollars a week just looked huge.

Warbritton: Well, I kept on at it and treated people the way that I would like to be treated and at different times, along toward the last of my mechanic

career, I've seen weeks that I've made four and five hundred dollars. So it can be done if you build your business out of honesty and trust. Get people to trust you.

Lloyd: So you would say that GI Bill was a good program.

Warbritton: It was for me. Yes, it was.

Lloyd: Did you graduate from high school?

Warbritton: I didn't graduate before I went in, but then I came back and took the GED test and got a diploma.

Lloyd: What about your sisters? Did they finish high school?

Warbritton: All of my sisters finished high school. The oldest sister finished high school in Hot Springs and the other two, Charlene and Betty, graduated here in Pine Bluff.

Lloyd: How did she happen to graduate in Hot Springs?

Warbritton: We had some—had an aunt and uncle over there that—I don't know exactly why that they wanted her to come over there and—I don't exactly know what the attraction was, but I do know that she graduated from Hot Springs High where the other two sisters graduated over here.

Lloyd: So, she went away to school in a way.

Warbritton: Yes.

Lloyd: And that's when you were still living out at the Arsenal?

Warbritton: No, we were living in town at that time, I think.

Lloyd: How old were you when you all left the place out there?

Warbritton: I was fifteen when we moved off the place at the Arsenal.

Lloyd: And so the girls were older?

Warbritton: Yes. Yeah. Betty married right out of high school. She had just graduated when she and Charles married and (pause) little sister Charlene married a man from Cleveland, Ohio.

Lloyd: How did she meet him?

Warbritton: Through the Arsenal. He was in the Army at that time and was a truck driver at that time. And I don't know exactly how they met. But then my oldest sister she married an optometrist from Bunkie, Louisiana. A doctor! And, oh, Mother thought that that was the greatest. Marrying a doctor!

Lloyd: How did she meet him?

Warbritton: There again I don't know the circumstances of how they met, but they married and had two boys. And the man had a personality that he could sell refrigerators to the Eskimos. He could make more money in twenty minutes than I could make all month. But he got too fond of the bottle, and, when he got on the bottle, then he got mean. And after I came out of service there, he and my sister were having problems—she was having problems. She'd show up back at Mom's just every so often and he'd gotten drunk and mistreating her and the boys. And I said, "Well, you make up your mind what you want to do. You needed to get away from that sucker and divorce him." (Imitating sister.) "Well, I hadn't got any money." I said, "Don't worry about the money. I'll furnish the money whatever it takes." "But," I said, "you need to get to a lot happier life than what you're living now." So finally, she gave in, and I did, I furnished the money for her to go and get a divorce from him. And when

he disappeared, we never heard a thing in the world about that man from now on. But then she got, Liz went down to—aw, shoot—way down in southeast Arkansas there on 67 Highway. No, 165. Down below Portland, almost to the Louisiana line. But anyway, she found another fellow there, and he was a little younger than she was. After the wife and I had married—just a very short time, well, she and Dewey married. And I can remember one day my Mother said, "Ahhh," said "there's your sister married that little ol' country boy down there. Don't know nothing and all." I said, "Mom, you ever happen to think that there's a lady right here across town that's probably saying the same thing? Except she's saying it about your son!"

Kinda set her back on her heels and she never opened her mouth to me any more after that about Dewey. But as it turned out, Dewey was the best thing that ever happened to that woman. They had many, many years of happy times and all. Moved to California to the little town of Livermore, raised the two boys. They both turned out real good. And she had strokes. Got to the point that he had to just take care of her, everything. He stayed right in there, by gosh, and took care of that gal. And, finally, she kept calling, asking me when I was gonna get out. Well, I finally got out there, and just about four days she stood up there and laughed and whooped and hollered and we had the best talking time you'd ever dreamed of. After four days, it was just like, it was just like she pitched in the towel. She wouldn't eat. She wouldn't drink. And we begged her, Dewey and I did, "Honey, you're gonna have to eat

something." "Uhh, I don't want it, don't want it." And, finally, we put her in the hospital on the seventeenth of January. She stayed there until March the eighth and died. And then it wasn't about three years later that Dewey started having problems, by gosh. Me and my daughter—she was very fond of Dewey—we went out and was in the house whenever Dewey died. But I did get to see him and he was able to talk to me and all about the second day we was there. And I got to tell him how much I appreciated what he had done for my sister. It's not often that you get to do things like that, you know. It seems like you're always shoving things aside. I'll do that tomorrow or next week and all, and the first thing you know next week don't never come. I've done that with several of my friends that I've just hated…had it in my mind "I gotta go by and see John." And, by gosh, before you get there, he's done gone. And it just—I don't know—it does something to me.

Lloyd: Now your sister Betty, she lived away from the family for a while when she was a child?

Warbritton: Yes. She lived with one of my mother's sisters, Aunt Laura. And she lived with her there back about the time she graduated from high school. I'd say from, maybe, the tenth to the twelfth grades that she lived with my aunt. She returned the favor. When my aunt got old and got sickly, by gosh, she took her to her home there in San Diego, and she was there until she died. So…

Lloyd: You mentioned the Scarlett family too that they were neighbors of yours. And…where did the Scarletts live in relation to your house out there?

Warbritton: Their place was out on the road before you get to the gate and was on the right-hand side of the road.

Lloyd: Coming from Pine Bluff?

Warbritton: Going toward the gate, they were on the right.

Lloyd: Okay. So they were outside the Arsenal?

Warbritton: Yes. Yes. The Arsenal didn't get that property that they were on. And really I don't know whether they owned the property, whether they were renting the property or what it was all about. But that's where they lived for years when those kids were going to school.

Lloyd: Were they a big family?

Warbritton: Two boys and three girls, I believe it was, in that family.

Lloyd: I know Mr. Scarlett-- he seemed to know the area really well. He gave a lot of information to the Arsenal about when they were checking the title on the lands there. He gave a lot of information to the Arsenal about ownership in the area. Was he a farmer?

Warbritton: The only thing I ever knew he did was bootleg.

Lloyd: He was a bootlegger?

Warbritton: Yeah.

Lloyd: Really?

Warbritton: I never caught him doing any work that you'd actually say was work, a job.

Lloyd: What…did he make whiskey from corn or…?

Warbritton: I don't know how he…I know about Fletcher, what--how he was set up. Dad found the still over on our property. Went to him and told him, by gosh, to get it off and "I mean now and don't be over on me at all 'cause if I catch you, I'm gonna shoot you." He spelled it out to him, I guess, and we never had any problems after that with Fletcher.

Lloyd: Well, did people just sell it out of their home or…?

Warbritton: Oh, yes, yes. Still do.

Lloyd: Still do.

Warbritton: Only today it's pot, weed--you know--drugs. I think I've got one very close to where I live now. Hadn't been there long, but there sure is an awful lot of after-midnight traffic. And that's a pretty good sign.

Lloyd: Yeah. Is there anything else that you can think about that you would like to speak about or talk about?

Warbritton: No, don't, I just, when you get wound up—by gosh, I just let go till I run down, and I guess I'm about run down.

Lloyd: Okay. Well, thank you. I appreciate you very much, your allowing me to talk with you.

Warbritton: Well, I have enjoyed it immensely. I enjoyed the trip out to the old home place, and I've enjoyed the company, surely the company.

Lloyd: Well, thank you very much.

Warbritton: Yep.

Lloyd: Thank you.