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Oral History Interview: Bertha May Asbury

Bertha May Asbury

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BA: Now, I went to school, I, I started when I was six year old, and, ah, the schoolhouse burned down and burnt my primer up, and I cried all night long, and they threatened to whup me if I didn't shut up (laughter). And, I did over my primer, and, ah, Jim Dean, my stepdaddy, he threatened to beat me to death. They, you see, it woke them up, the light shine, you see
[BR: Uh huh.] the schoolhouse was right across the river from ours, and it lit our house all up and woke them up, and they got up to see what was happening. Of course, they, that woke me up, and I got up, and I come in screaming about my primer that I had left it at school, and he said, "If you don't hush, I'll, I'll wear you out," said, "I'll buy you a primer." Well, the schoolhouse burned down, and they had to finish up the school in our house in one room of our house. [BR: Oh really?] Yeah, a month. They just lacked a month of being out, the school did.

BR: What was the school like? Was it all one, just a one-room school?

BA: Just one-room school and a big old belly pot stove [BR: Uh huh.] coal stove, and, ah, you know, we had good school, and, ah, there was about 20 or 25 people.

BR: Was the teacher a man or woman?

BA: Well, we first had a, that year, the first year I went was a man. [BR: Uh huh.] Dale Fischer was his name, and, ah, but we, I went to men and women both, you know, during my school period. I went to the ninth grade [BR: Uh huh.] in, ah, in the grade school.

BR: In that, in that same school, one-room school?

BA: In that same schoolhouse, uh huh, and, ah.

BR: Now, that school was in Kanawha County?

BA: That school was in Kanawha County, uh huh.

BR: What was the name of it?

BA: Ah, Ivydale.

BR: Ivydale.

BA: Ivydale was the name.

BR: Where was it? It wasn't, there's a place calley Ivydale now. It's not

BA: No, it's not. The schoolhouse isn't even there now. They sold the old schoolhouse to Bailey's, and they tore it down and moved it away. It's not even there anymore. It's on Poca River. [BR: Ah, that's what I wanted to know.] That's where it's at on Poca River on Pocatalico River they call it.

BR: What was the school like? How did the teacher punish you and things like that when

BA: Well, they teach you, well, they would stand you in the corner [BR: Uh huh.], and they'd paddle ye. [BR: Uh huh.] They had a paddle. I never did get no paddlin' [BR: You didn't.], but I stood in the corner (laughter) for laughing.

BR: What were some of the things they taught? You said your primer, I guess they taught reading and

BA: Yeah, yeah, they learnt me, the pictures, you know [BR: Uh huh.], all about the pictures, the animals and things in the primer [BR: Uh huh.] and, ah, the words all in it. I learned it off by heart [BR: Uh huh.], but I finally did get my primer again (laughter). I thought I was gone. I told them I, why, I 'll be through school if they'd burnt my primer up.

BR: I bet that would be a tragedy, though, at that time, because they didn't have any way to save it. They didn't have a fire department.

BA: They didn't have nothin'. No, it just burnt to the ground.

BR: Did they ever find out what happened?

BA: No, they never did find out who burnt it nor nothing. It was three o' clock in the morning.

BR: Well, did they think that the fire was started or

BA: Well, no, I don't see how it could have, because they always banked the stove, you see, with, ah, coal of a night and covered it, you know, good, and, ah, they never did have no idea how it caught a fire. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, of course, we didn't have no fire departments at that time. [BR: Couldn't call anybody.] Couldn't call anybody, not even a telephone.

BR: You said it was across the river. [BA: Yes, yes.] Did you have to walk across a bridge?

BA: Ah, no, had to cross in a john boat. [BR: Oh, really?] Yeah. [BR: Oh.] Uh huh. When the river was up big, why....

BR: Well, did someone take you down and cross you in the boat?

BA: Well, I took myself, but they did, you see, when I was real little but after I got bigger, I took the boat over myself and, ah, only when the river was too high and then my daddy, you see [BR: Uh huh.], then he would take me of the morning [BR: Uh huh.] and come and get me of the evening. But, I just went right straight across the river from my house where I was raised. [BR: Really?] Uh huh.

BR: Well, now, did you, ah, at school, did you take your lunch? Did the people take lunch or go home and eat?

BA: Now, I went home, I took my lunch most of the time. Uh huh.

BR: But they didn't cook any hot lunches or anything like that?

BA: Oh, no. Hot lunch, nobody, didn't have no place to cook it unless you would have cooked outside. [BR: Uh huh.] No, everybody took their lunch with them. [BR: Well.] And, they had to carry water fer, oh, I expect a quarter of a mile, our drinkin' water [BR: From, to the school.] for, to the school. [BR: Uh huh.] We could take our water bucket, two of us would go and get water. Me and Dellie Asbury was the ones mostly always get to go, because we'd go to her house, you see, to get the water. And, well, I went to that school 'til I graduated, I said, you know. [BR: Yeah.] Wasn't no high school then [BR: Uh huh.], such a thing. Well, ah, they was a college in Charleston, but I didn't have nobody to stay with up there, and I couldn't go.

BR: Uh huh. About what time was it? About what year was it?
Can you remember?

BA: When I started to school? [BR: Uh huh. During this time]
Well, I started, you see, I was borned in, ah, 88, and I in
six year I went to school [BR: Uh huh.], and, ah, it was nine-
teen hundred and, ah, what [BR: Ninety four.] ninety four,
yeah, must have been. [BR: 1894.] Yeah, uh huh, and, ah,
I went on then until I, well, I was about 17 year old when I
quit [BR: Uh huh.] in the ninth grade [BR: Uh huh.], and then
I, of course, I got to courtin' then.

BR: That's what I wanted to ask you about. [BA: Yeah.] What was
the, you know, people now start dating, ah, when they're 15,
16.

BA: Oh, no, ah, you didn't do that then. You had to slip around.
[BR: Oh, really?] Oh, I courted. [BR: Well, how did you
slip around] Oh, I'd go to my girlfriend's house, you
see [BR: Oh, uh huh.], and he was her first cousin, Brownie
was. [BR: Oh, uh huh.] And, I'd go there, and there's
where we would meet [BR: Oh.], and we'd do our courtin'
there, and I'd go on back home and that would be it. So
[BR: Oh, when your mother found out about it, what did she
do?] Well, she didn't find it out. [BR: Oh, she didn't not
until you got married?] No, she found it out before that,
because, ah, I got to letting him come to the house [BR: Uh
huh.], you see. Why, we slipped around about three years,
though, and courted. [BR: She didn't know.] She didn't
know it, nobody didn't know it, and then, ah, we went together
five year before we got married. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, then
we got married, and we went to Char--lived at Charleston [BR:
Uh huh.], and, ah, we had two children [BR: What.] born at
Charleston.

BR: What did Poppy do then when he worked there?

BA: Well, now, at first, well, he worked in a livery stable, and
his dad had a livery stable on Virginia Street, and he worked
at that and then at about two o'clock, eleven o'clock of a
night, he'd come home and go to bed and sleep 'til about two
and then he'd get up and go over to C & O Depot and meet the
mail by, ah, horse and wagon and bring the mail over.

BR: Oh, my, he worked two jobs then.

BA: He worked two jobs, yeah, and we lived up there, and we had the two children. And, ah, after that then, why, we come home on Christmas after Woody was born then, ah, but he was born in February. The next Christmas I got so homesick I didn't know what to do, and we come home. I was sick of Charleston, and we come home. My dad come and got me in wagon and, ah, we was all day long coming from Charleston out home [BR: Uh huh.] and, ah, so, we, ah.

BR: Oh, where out home? What did they call it then out in the country?

BA: Well, it was just Route Four [BR: Route Four.] Kanawha County. [BR: Uh huh.] Uh huh, and, ah, well, we come home, and then Brownie, he come for Christmas. I come on before Christmas, and then he come and then Brownie got to beg--Jim got to beggin' him, you see, to stay. Well, Bob Asbury got an empty house, and so we moved out there in that little house right around from my mother [BR: Uh huh.], and, ah, I was in paradise. Well, we lived there 'til, ah, we bought a place down on, on down the river [BR: Uh huh.], oh, about six or seven mile on down the river and, ah, an old house, and we moved in it. And, we lived there then until we built a new house [BR: Uh huh.] on the point around from the old one [BR: Uh huh.], and, ah, we lived there then until all eight of the children was born and, ah.

BR: Why, building a new house, I bet that was hard to do at that time wasn't it?

BA: No, it wasn't. Lumber was cheap.

BR: How did you get it built, though, did all the people help?

BA: No, we hired a carpenter, Will Wilkinson [BR: Oh, oh.] built it hisself. It wasn't no trouble, and it didn't take him no time to build it. Let's see, it was, ah, a five-room house and a big front porch and then, of course, after the kids was all born, you see, we had to add on to another room on the back and a big back cement porch. [BR: Uh huh.] And, we had a cistern. We didn't have no well. We had a cistern. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, well.

BR: Did you have a garden then?

BA: Oh, yes, we had a garden. We had all them big river bottoms in corn and watermelons [BR: Ummmmmmmm.] and tomatoes, and everything, sweetpotatoes. We growed everything [BR: Uh huh.] that way, and I canned up everything [BR: Did you?] that we raised.

BR: Well, did you ever make any apple butter?

BA: Oh, I made apple butter, and I made soap, homemade soap. I made.

BR: How did you make that?

BA: Oh, with lye. I'd take ashes, wood ashes, and run through a barrel, let the water go through it and get make the lye and, ah, catch that, you see, and then save the fat from when we'd kill hogs [BR: Uh huh.], and we would, ah, make a big kittle of soap and then, ah, I'd make then in the spring, I'd make a big iron kittle full of hominy with that (inaudible) corn. [BR: Uh huh.] Best stuff that ever was (laughter). Now, back then we had eatins'. [BR: Oh, probably a lot better than we have now.] Well, we raised our own beans, enough to do us, dried beans and canned ones [BR: Uh huh.] and, ah, corn and wheat, we raised wheat. We'd take it to mill and have it ground. We never had to buy no flour nor meal.

BR: Was there a mill close by or did you have to

BA: Oh, yeah, no, we had to go about ten mile to the mill, Sissonville [BR: Uh huh.] to, ah, get it ground. [BR: Uh huh.] But, ah, we'd go in the fall, you see, and take the wheat and the meal and the corn and we'd, we'd, ah, get the, ah, oh, six or seven barrels of flour. [BR: Uh huh.] That would be enough to do us, you see [BR: All the winter.], all through the winter, and, ah, all through that depression. Brownie, you see, was working in the mines after we come back out in the country. [BR: Uh huh.] Why, he got a job in the mines and worked there all of his life [BR: Uh huh.] after that. And, of course, he didn't make very much, two dollars and a half an hour, a day [BR: Oh, a day.] was all he made. [BR: Uh huh.] But, Lord, that was big money to us. [BR: Uh huh.] It was mine, it was all ours. We raised everything we et

BR: Uh huh. and, ah.

BR: Well, you, you, I've heard you talk about owning, ah, the property. You said you owned the mineral rights of this property.

BA: I do, I do yet.

BR: You still do.

BA: I'm on 80 acres, is all I own now. BR: Uh huh. Uh huh.

BR: What were the coal companies like then? Were they hard to work for or

BA: Well, ah, now, Brownie owned a coal mine over Raymond City, you see BR: Uh huh. is where he done all of his work. BR: Uh huh. They didn't have no mines on our farm at all. BR: Uh huh, uh huh. They just drilled a well, you see, here about three year ago up there, and it wasn't much good. Never did get very much out of it. But, I have to pay taxes on it. BR: You still do? Still do have to pay taxes on it. BR: Uh huh. And, ah, it, ah, now, all through that depression, why, we didn't suffer for anything. BR: I wondered about that. We, we raised, we raised everything BR: Uh huh. that ah. BR: You didn't have to buy very much anyhow Why, coffee, sugar, we'd, we'd buy salt by the barrel BR: Uh huh., and we'd buy sugar by the barrel, light brown sugar. BR: Uh huh. And, ah, we'd course, we'd buy coffee, and we had our own chickens, and eggs and raised our own hogs for our meat. We always had our own bacon. We never did have to buy none of that, and if we'd take a notion for a piece of beef, we'd just kill a steer BR: Uh huh. and if we'd take a notion for mutton, we'd kill a sheep (laughs). BR: Uh huh.

BR: That, that would really be different.

BA: Well, it was. It was a whole lot different that what it is now. We didn't eat out of cans like we do now.

BR: Did you, ah, have a grocery store close by? Was there some kind of general store or something where you could go?

BA: No, wasn't no the closest store we had was round on Kelley's

Crick. 'At was about four or five mile. [BR: Uh huh.] But, we didn't go too often, about once a month. [BR: Uh huh. You didn't need to.] No, no Brownie drawed his payday, you see, every two weeks, but we'd hold on to the money as long as we could (laughs) [BR: Uh huh.] without spending it. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, and, a lot of people suffered, though, through that depression. [BR: Depression.] Yes, they did, the ones, you see, that hadn't raised a lot of stuff. [BR: Uh huh.] We raised watermelons. I'm telling you they was, they'd weigh 50 pound. [BR: Oh, really?] And, cantelopes, and crowds would come in there on Sunday and that bottom would be full of people.

BR: I wondered if you sold any of them.

BA: Oh, yeah, that's what we raised them for to sell. [BR: to sell, uh huh.] Yeah. [BR: But, you kept plenty for yourself.] Oh, we used all we wanted, you see, while they was in. That's something you can't do nothing--oh, I made watermelon preserves. Brownie loved them. [BR: Oh, really?] He was the only one, though, that did, but I'd always make, you know, plenty for him because he like them so well. But, I didn't like them. None of the kids didn't like them either. I thought they had a sickening taste, but, ah.

BR: How did you make them? [BA: Make them?] Watermelon preserves.

BA: You just peeled them and cut off all that old rind off of 'em and let them set in the sugar over night, the way I'd make 'em and get up the next mornin' and put them in a big dishpan and start them to cookin', and, ah, they'd just boil down thick, the syrup would.

(Pause)

BR: Did you grow any apples?

BA: Oh, yes, we had plenty of apples. We had a orchard, and we, we would can apples and make apple butter and, ah, apple preserves and apple jelly, and then we had a big apple house wed built. We'd hole them up for winter, so we'd have, you know, apples all winter. And, ah, we'd put potatoes in there, too.

BR: That's how you stored them.

- BA: Yeah. We didn't have no cellar nor, nor, you know, and we didn't have no deep freeze nor nothin' like that [BR: Uh huh.] then not even a refrigerator.
- BR: Did you have electricity then?
- BA: No, oil lamps and coal fires [BR: Uh huh.] is what they had.
[BR: Uh huh.]
- BR: Well, you, you mentioned to me one time about, ah, everybody getting together and peeling apples
- BA: Well, that's about all the entertainment we'd have was people would, you know, have a apple peelins' [BR: Uh huh.] and bean stringins' and everybody would gather and go and peel apples, and then when they'd get through, why, they'd let them dance.
[BR: Oh.] Yeah, we'd have a square dance, and, ah, they, ah, bean stringin' the same way, you know, just the neighbors all around would gather in and help one another out that way with their beans and apples and stuff. And, we even growed black-eyed peas [BR: Oh, really.] and we'd shell, beat them out in the spring and eat them. [BR: Uh huh.] They're good!
[BR: They are?] Oh, I love 'em (laughs).
- BR: I don't think I've ever eaten any.
- BA: I don't expect you have, but I have. I love 'em.
- BR: We'll have to eat some together sometime. [BA: Well.] When you have these square dances, ah, what were those like?
- BA: Oh, they was just real old-timey square dances. Four, you know, four, four girls and four boys and a caller.
- BR: Where did you get your music?
- BA: Oh, somebody would have a banjo or fiddle or something or maybe beat on a dishpan. [BR: Oh.] We'd make, they'd make some kind of noise, and we'd keep up with it.
- BR: Uh huh. Did you all have any kind of instruments, musical instruments
- BA: Yeah, my husband played the violin [BR: Uh huh.], and I played

the organ, second on the organ [BR: Uh huh.] at home, but, you see, when I'd go to them square dances and things, why, they didn't know I was going. [BR: Oh ...] No, I'd have to go with my neighbors. Uh huh. I'd have to go with my neighbors, you see, to that. No, my stepdaddy, he, he wouldn't let me go to a square dance. He called it belly dancin', belly rubbin', and, ah, I never will forget I went one time. They call it Utah now over here on Mud Branch [BR: Uh huh.], and they was an old Lawrence, ah, Slater lived there, and he had ah, a square dance. And, we was all just a dancin', having' the biggest time that ever was, and I broke through the floor and skinned my leg clear to my knee. Course he had to know then when I went home what had happened. [BR: Uh huh.] But, you know, one of my neighbors, Deana Bailey, that', ah, one of our neighbors, she was awful good. She had a girl, too, and she would go with us, you see, to places like that [BR: Uh huh.] and look after us [BR: Uh huh.], and, ah, oh, we had good times. I thought we had good times then.

BR: Can you remember any of the songs back then that you or somebody would play?

BA: Ohhhhh. I can't, you mean, ah, at the, at the. [BR: On the fiddle, any songs they might play on the fiddle.] Ohhhhhh, yeah, Turkey in the Straw. [BR: Oh, Turkey in the Straw.] Turkey in the Stray was what they played. Yeah, yeah, and they'd call the Figure Eight, and, ah, and, oh, I don't know. It didn't make no difference what they called. Just so we was out there on that floor a jumping up and down having a good time.

BR: Well, that was when you were younger, then [BA: Oh, yeah.] after you were married [BA: Oh, after I was married.], did people still get together for entertainment?

BA: Now, the only entertainment we ever got together with then was quiltin'. [BR: Oh.] We have quiltings', you see [BR: Work together.], work together that way. Invite, you know, six or seven women in to quilt [BR: Uh huh.], and I'd cook all day the day before, and then we'd quilt, quilt that day. And, ah, we'd just do that amongst all the neighbors, you know [BR: Uh huh.], all around, and I pieced quilts all my life 'til I'm, I'm ^{gettin'} sick of 'em (laughter).

BR: A lot of people wish they could do that now.

BA: I know it. Well, if I could see good [BR: Uh huh.], I, I wouldn't mind, you know, piecing quilts. I could get somethin' for them now [BR: Uh huh.] where I could use the money now if I had it. [BR: Uh huh.]

BR: Back then you did it all by hand, didn't you?

BA: Oh, yes, all by hand. Yeah, but, now, I made all my kids clothes, me and Mommy, my mother together. She's make the boys' shirts. [BR: Oh, really?] Yeah. And, but the girls. [BR: You make any by hand?] No, she had an old sewing machine [BR: Uh huh.], an Old National. I gave it to 'Nervy or, and she let it set up there in that old smoke house, and I think they threwed it away. [BR: Well] Hauled it off. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, yeah, Mommy could make a shirt just look like a bought one. [BR: Oh, really?] I never could make a shirt, but, now, I could make girls' dresses. [BR: Uh huh.] I made all their dresses that they wore to school and everywhere. [BR: Uh huh.] And, then sometimes the preachers would come in, you know, and we'd have church over at that schoolhouse. [BR: Uh huh.] Didn't have no church. [BR: Oh, you didn't have a church building?] No, didn't have no church close to us at all, but they would hold a revival for a week or two over there. [BR: Uh huh.] I never will forget the Mormons used to come so much. [BR: Oh, really.] Yeah, and they would stay at our house. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, they would, we'd get to go to church every night [BR: Uh huh.] and, that just tickled me to death.

BR: Were they any Baptists in, ah, were there any Baptist Churches there?

BA: No, no, they wasn't. The closest, now, when I was just a girl about 15 and 16 year old, a Jim "Click" McClanahan was an old primitive Baptist preacher, and he preached up at Kelley's Crick. I'm a moving this thing. And, ah, he'd preach about once a month up at Kelley's, Kelley's Crick about, oh, about five or six mile [BR: Uh huh.]; and me and Dellie Asbury would walk and go up there just to hear him preach. [BR: Uh huh.] I don't know, I always did, I reckon it was just bred and borned in me to be a Baptist. I don't know what else, that's all I've ever wanted to be was a Baptist, that's all.

BR: Well, now, you go to a Primitive Baptist Church.

BA: I go, yeah, I joined the Primitive Baptist in '41. [BR: Uh huh.] Yeah.

BR: Well, tell me about the, the what do they call it, the social they have every year?

BA: They have a association. [BR: Association.] Uh huh. Well, every four year, you see, it's out here. [BR: Uh huh.] But, they have one every year. [BR: Oh, at different places.] At different places, but every four year it comes back around here at our church. And, I don't know whether it will be out here this fall or not. [BR: Uh huh.] It was at, ah, Turkey Crick last year.

BR: Well, tell me, what you do at those? I've, I've been to them before with you, but I don't remember.

BA: I know, I used to take you with me [BR: Uh huh.] when you was a little bittie thing, and you'd take my handkerchief, and you'd clean the benches. [BR: Oh.] Yeah.

BR: Well, everybody brought food and ate

BA: They do, they do. We have, ah, we call it the June Meetin'. [BR: Oh, uh huh.] You see, the first Sunday, Saturday and Sunday in June, and, ah, we have, ah, dinner on the grounds Saturday and Sunday, and, ah, then we take communion on Sunday [BR: Uh huh.] in June [BR: Uh huh.] and then, ah, for the association we always cook and take. [BR: Uh huh.]

BE: And, they have it for all day. [BA: Yeah. All day.] They stay all day.

BA: Oh, yes, stay all day. [BR: Uh huh.] Yeah, have seven or eight preachers there. [BR: All different people to preach.] Uh huh. [BR: Uh huh.] Yeah.

BR: Well, Mamma, when somebody died, how did they have a funeral? You said they didn't have churches

BA: Well, they, they preached the funeral at the graveyard.

- BR: At the graveyard. [BA: Uh huh.] Well, did they have wakes at, back then?
- BA: Oh, yes, they had wakes, and they, ah, the, ah, bodies stayed at the house.
- BR: Well, they took it back to the house where the person had lived.
- BA: They never preached a funeral until they got ready to bury them [BR: Oh.] and, ah, you see, I've, I've laid out three, three dead people. [BR: Oh, really.] Yeah, one baby and two women. Josh Hammond's mother and, ah, washed her and dressed her and then, ah, Viola Mylem.
- BR: Ah, tell me about the wake. How did people, ah
- BA: They just set up all night, a whole house full of people a drinkin' coffee, and talkin', and eatin'.
- BR: Uh huh. You said they didn't have the children, ah
- BA: No, they didn't take the children. Uh huh.
- BR: What did they usually do with them? They send them to relatives or neighbors?
- BA: Well, some of the family, you see, would, you know, somebody would stay at the house with them. [BR: Uh huh.] We'd always have somebody there to stay with them, but I never went and sat up all night at no wake. I went up to Viola Mylem's Wake and stayed 'til about 11 o'clock, and then I come home [BR: Uh huh.] and, ah. [BR: But, the family would stay up all night.] They stay up all night.
- BR: Wonder why they did that? Why was that a custom wonder?
- BA: I, well, they, I don't know. They didn't have no churches nor no funeral homes. I guess they had funeral homes in Charleston. Now, when my stepdaddy died, Simpson Funeral Home, they come out there and embombed him [BR: Uh huh.], and, ah, left him right there.
- BR: So, you still had the wake

BA: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah he was right there for two nights.

∟BR: Well.∟

(Pause)

BR: Could you tell me about what it was like when you were a young girl, when you were a child?

BA: Oh, yes, I can tell you. I was so selfish that I didn't have many friends. ∟BR: Oh, really.∟ No, I didn't. I didn't want but one girlfriend at a time, and, ah, anybody else that come to play with us, I'd make 'em go up to the house and stay 'til my girlfriend would have to go home and then I'd go down and get them and take them up to the playhouse, and I'd play with them. ∟BR: Well, you didn't have any brothers and sisters.∟ No, I didn't have no brothers and sisters, and I was selfish and hateful. But, I well, I don't know why I was 'cause I had good parents. They was, you know, real good to me. But, ah, anyway, I wanted my way about everything and the other girls, you see, would tear up my playhouse ∟BR: Uh huh.∟, and Dellie Asbury she wouldn't, she'd do what I'd tell her to do. ∟BR: So, you liked her best.∟ I liked her best of all.

BR: How did you have a playhouse? What kind of playhouse

BA: Oh, up on the hill back of the house a big lot of rocks, a row of rocks round there, and I didn't have no toys nor nothing. We just made everything, beds, and dressers, and everything out of all little rocks. ∟BR: All out of rocks.∟ Out of rocks and cornstalk dolls.

BR: Oh, tell me about that. I've heard about those.

BA: Yeah, well, cornstalk dolls, and then we'd get silks, corn silks, you see ∟BR: Uh huh.∟ and tucked on for their hair and stick little arms on them, and we had kids all over the hillside (laughs) ∟BR: Playing with that.∟ playing with that, playing with them cornstalk dolls.

BR: Well, you I see those now at Arts and Crafts Fairs ∟BA: Yeah, yeah.∟ and things like that to sell

BA: Oh, I could make them now.

BR: You could, well, I wish you would make me one (laughter).

BA: Well, Well, I guess you couldn't go to the store and buy. You'd have to go into Charleston.

BA: Oh, no. Uh huh. I, the first doll ever I had, why, I got it, I must have been eight or nine year old at, ah, Christmas play at school. BR: Uh huh. School teacher slipped and got it for me BR: Oh, and I was his, you know, pet BR: His pet, and he didn't have his name on it, but, ah, I didn't go up and get it so Santa Claus I had to go and get it from him. BR: Oh. I was afraid of Santa Claus, and I wouldn't go, so my mother had to go and get the doll fer me. BR: Oh, you were afraid of Santa Claus. I was afraid, and then the next doll I got I sold this Rosebud Save BR: Uh huh. and got a great big old doll, and the thing was about two foot and a half tall, and I kept that 'til my oldest girl was borned, and she tore it up. BR: Well, it lasted a long time. I had, ah, oh, I got, I got married when I was 21 year old.

BR: Uh huh. Well, tell us about your children.

BA: Well, I had eight. BR: Oh, my. Four boys and four girls, and I have got, ah, 39 grandchildren and 63 great-grand children.

BR: That's a big family.

BA: It sure is.

BR: And, you were an only child.

BA: What would it have been if my mother would have had eight like I did?

BR: That would have been a big family.

BA: It sure would have BR: Uh huh, and I guess it was just to be that way.

BR: Tell us about the children you had, you had four boys and four girls.

BA: No, they was mixed up. I had a girl first, Evelyn, and then

Woody, and then Jack, and then I had a girl, and then Jim, a boy, and then I had another girl, Madeline, and then I had Minerva, and then Edsel. [BR: And, he was the baby.] He was the baby. [BR: He was the last one.] And.

BR: Did you have a doctor come and help you deliver these children?

BA: Oh, yes, all but two. I had a midwife (inaudible) Asbury. [BR: Oh, uh huh.] I couldn't get the doctor.

BR: Well, did she stay in the community? Was she like helping other people in the community? She helped other women.

BA: Oh, yes, uh huh. Yes, she lived around on Kelley's Crick, and she come and stayed, oh, I think for about three days. But, she stayed right there with them [BR: Oh, really.], and, ah, she stayed until after the baby was born, and then they took her home. [BR: Uh huh.]

BR: But, you did have a doctor with some of the children?

BA: All the rest of them but them two [BR: Uh huh.], the two last ones.

BR: Who was he?

BA: Well (noise), what was that? My two first ones I lived at Charleston and old Dr. Tom Myers delivered them, and then the rest, the other four, ah, Dr. Will Glass from Sissonville delivered them. But, I never saw a doctor all the time I was a carryin' the child--the babies 'til time for them to be born. [BR: Oh, really.] And, then I would get the doctor. [BR: Uh huh.]

BR: Well, that must have been difficult, though, wasn't it?

BA: Well, no, it was nature (laughs). [BR: Uh huh, you just keep working right along.] Ever workin', and washin', and cookin' right on up.

BR: Did you have to work in the garden any?

BA: Oh, yes, sure, I worked in the cornfield and everything else.

BR: Well, didn't, my goodness, can you tell me about that, what, like when you, like in the spring, I guess, you started planting your garden

BA: Oh, yes, but, you see, all my children, you know, started being born on October, November, December, January, and February [BR: Oh.], and I was (inaudible). I didn't have no hot lunch, you see, but to carry them. [BR: Uh huh.] I mean I wasn't bothered with that. And, ah, yeah, we'd take them when they was babies I went down on the river bank and hoed sweet potatoes and things and have one of 'em, one of the others to watch it [BR: Uh huh.], put a blanket under it. And, I never will forget Jack was about to roll in the river and one of the kids, Woody or Evelyn, one come a screaming and hollerin' for me to run, and I got there he was right at the edge of the water, and I got so nervous I had to quit and take the kids and go to the house (laughter). I couldn't do nothing else. Yeah, we all hoed corn. [BR: I guess the children helped you ...] Oh, yeah, oh, yes, they all helped. Uh huh. I know one time we all, my oldest girl mostly stayed at the house, you see, and cooked dinner fer us. [BR: Uh huh.] But, one day Virginia, she decided she didn't want to go to the cornfield, and she was going to stay and cook dinner. Well, we come, she hollered, and we went to the house to eat our dinner. And, when we got there, she had a pot of beans sittin' in the middle of the table and a pan of cornbread sittin' on the table and didn't have another thing on the table (laughter). And, I, I jumped on her, I said, "Well, what in the world do you mean? What do you think we are, hogs?" And, she said, "Well, I cooked beans." I said, "Well, we want something else besides beans and bread. Get the butter and jelly, and stuff on the table and the plates and get them beans out of that pot in a bowl." Well, she did, she got it out and set the table right (laughter).

BR: I doubt that she did that again, did she?

BA: No, she never did do that no more. That broke her, I guess that was the easiest way out fer her she thought. Yes, she wouldn't have to wash so many dishes. [BR: Uh huh, well, that was good thinking.] I didn't like the looks of it. I don't like to eat out of a pot.

BR: Ah, you told me that when you were first married that you

lived in Charleston. [BA: Umm. I did.] Now, do you remember back about what Charleston looked like then?

BA: Ah, nothing like it does now. West Charleston didn't have no houses at all, was just a big bottom. [BR: Big bottom?] Big bottom of land. [BR: It's hard to believe.] Now, it's hard to believe. [BR: Uh huh.] Yeah. Now, I remember when they had a camp there for the soldiers in the Spanish-American War. [BR: Oh, really.] Umm. My uncle was, ah, in it, and, and we went to visit him. [BR: And, that's where the camp was?] There's where the camp was. [BR: Over on west side of Charleston?] Yes, on, yeah, on, on this side of Elk River. [BR: Uh huh.] All that wasn't no houses, none at all. [BR: Uh huh.]

BR: That must have been interesting for you to watch everything grow.

BA: Oh, I reckon so. You know, I just don't know anything about Charleston now. I don't go often enough. They change it so often, and I don't know where I'm at.

BR: Can you remember some of the stores that were new to you back then like new department stores as they can in and things like that?

BA: Well, let's see now. The only department store that I remember anything about was, ah, in Charleston. Let me see what, what was the name of that store? Well (inaudible), was there [BR: Oh, was it?] and Joe Prizer's was there, but that was after I'd growed up. [BR: Uh huh.] But, when I was a child, they was other department stores there, but I wasn't in them, and I don't; I don't remember the names of them.

BR: I remember hearing you talk about Aunt Dee, and she lived in Charleston

BA: She lived in the West, on the West side. [BR: Uh huh.] Uh huh, yeah, but after it started building up, you see, over there, you see, she bought over there and built her a home. [BR: Uh huh.] She first bought her a home up on the hill down there on West Washington Street and built a big nice home up 'ere, and then she sold that and bought up on Virginia Street [BR: Uh huh.] and, ah.

BR: She, she was an unusual woman, wasn't she? She did a lot of things in her life.

BA: Yeah, she did, uh huh.

BR: I remember you telling me about her coming out to the country in a car. [BA: Oh, yes.] Can you tell me about that?

BA: Oh, in a car, she would come. She didn't drive the car, honey, her husband drove the car. [BR: Uh huh.] Uh huh. Yes, they would come every weekend [BR: Uh huh.] out there. They come one Saturday night, and we'd done gone to bed, and my mother was aiming to go in the next day, you know, to stay a week with her. [BR: Uh huh.] And, when they come, why, she had a mattress in the back of that car. They's going to put it down on the floor to sleep on, and, ah, Mommy said, "What in the world, Ada, did you all come out tonight fer? What happened?" Said, "Just a little recreation." And, ah, well, Mommy said, "Well, I was a coming in tomorrow and stay a week with you." Well, said, "Get your duds, we'll go back." Said, "Elton," that was her husband, said, "load the mattress back in the car, and we're going back." [BR: Did she?] Yeah, they went back. [BR: Did they take your mother?] Oh, yes, Mommy went with them. [BR: Oh, my.] (laughter)

BR: Well, did she ever live, ah, out in the country, or did she always live in Charleston?

BA: No, she never did. Now, my mother's other sister, Aunt Madeline [BR: Uh huh.], ah, she come out and lived with Mommy fer, oh, two or three months out on Kelley's creek [BR: Uh huh.], but she didn't like it. She thought, you know, she could come out there and rent out house out and live out in the country, but she never had lived in the country. [BR: Uh huh.] And, but she went back, she went back, uh huh. She died there on Ohio Avenue is where she owned. [BR: Uh huh.]

BR: What, what did you think the first time you saw a car, guess that, can you remember that?

BA: Oh, yes, I remember seeing an old Ford, an old T-Model Ford. Well, now, I didn't scare me 'cause I had saw and people had told me so much about it that now the airplane, the first airplane I saw [BR: Oh, uh huh.] liked to scare me to death.

BR: Oh, really. Can you remember that?

BA: I can remember that well. Yes, I remember that well. It was, ah, one of them big old balloon kind, you know. [BR: Oh.] Good, Goodyear [BR: Uh huh.] it said on, on it. [BR: Uh huh.] And, it was going over, and I tell you, it like to scared us all to death. [BR: Uh huh.] We didn't know what it was up in the air like that. [BR: Uh huh.] You know, there hadn't been too much talk, you know, about airplanes like there had cars [BR: Uh huh.], and, ah, we had been expecting the cars cause everybody you see, oh, everywhere else had got 'em and had 'em. Course, you know, wasn't no surprise when we saw them but that airplane [BR: Uh huh.], it was sure a surprise to me.

BR: Well, I can imagine. [BA: Yeah.] Ah, I know when I was younger we always talked about taking a trip on a train, and we never did get to do that.

BA: I did. [BR: You did, but I never got to go with you, though.] I, my daughter lived up on, ah, New River [BR: Uh huh.], and I rode the train. [BR: Uh huh.] And, then I rode the train once to Huntington with Aunt Madeline and her husband.

BR: Was that when you were a young girl? [BA: That's when I was a young girl, uh huh.] I bet that

BA: Oh, that was a thrill. I guess it was. We went down there, and he rented a surrey, they called, that's what they called 'em [BR: Uh huh.], a two-horse surrey, and it had fringe all around it. [BR: Oh.] And, ah, we just drove all around, and they had, ah, well, it was a place for crazy people, and we was driving around there, and he stopped. And, some of the crazy people was outside in the yard, and he commenced talking to one of them, asking him some question, you know, my uncle did, and, ah, one of the guards seen him and he come to us and said, ah, he don't know nothin' about it, said, he'd one of the inmates here. And, ah, he said, ah, I'll get in the car with you and said, and drive around and show you all [BR: This was in Huntington?] Uh huh. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, so he got in and went with us, and we went-- Gallipolis was where it was at, honey. It wasn't Huntington. [BR: Oh.] We was at Gallipolis, and we went all around that old big place, and they had a big platform built and a

big fence around, built around it, you know, so the inmates couldn't fall off. [BR: Uh huh.] And, said ever Fourth of July they would take them out there, you know, and get, ah, music and let them dance. [BR: Oh, so this was the Fourth of July?] Yeah. Well, we was down there in May [BR: Oh.], and he wanted us to come back and watch them, but we never went back. [BR: Uh huh.] But, they had a nice big spring up on the upperside, and they had dippers a hanging up 'ere. Oh, I wanted a drink of water so bad when I saw that. I always loved spring water [BR: Uh huh.], and I asked could we get us a drink, and he said not here, said that's where they drink. They drink out of them dippers and things, said, ah, when we go back, said, I'll get you all a drink of water. [BR: Oh.] And, he was awful nice to us.

BR: Did you go down there to see relatives or did you go just for the trip?

BA: No, we just went for the trip, uh huh, just got up, caught the train at 5 o'clock in the morning and went down there and stayed all day long. [BR: Uh huh.] And, went to a restaurant, et our, my dinner, we called it dinner, you know, then, and then we et our supper, and me and Aunt Madeline et chicken and dumplin's both meals. [BR: Oh, really.] Yeah, and Uncle, ah, Uncle, ah, Webb, he et eggs and ham. He'd tell 'em he wanted his eggs turned upside down and his ham fried good and brown. I never will forget that.

BR: Well, did you stay all night or

BA: No, no, no we caught the train and come back. [BR: Uh huh.] I vomited all the way down there that morning. [BR: Oh.] Oh, I was so sick. I was lookin' out the window, you see, and everything was just a goin' a round and round [BR: Uh huh.], and it was early in the morning, and I didn't eat much breakfast I was so excited over getting to go. But, ah, when we got ready to come back, Uncle Webb got me a package of peanuts and a book, and he said, "Now you read that book and eat them peanuts and don't look out, and you won't get sick." And, so I did. I didn't get sick coming back.

BR: Was that the first train trip you'd ever taken?

BA: That was the first, uh huh.

BR: Uh huh. [BA: That was it, first one.] That was a nice trip then. [BA: Uh huh, yeah, yeah]

(Pause)

BR: Well, who were some of your neighbors when you lived over on Frog's Creek in that area? What were some of their names?

BA: Oh, Hammond's, and, ah, Older's, and, ah, Canterbury's.

BR: I've heard you talk about Centerberry's a lot.

BA: And, Mylem's, old Dr. John Mylem.

BR: Was he really a trained doctor or he just, ah, practiced?

BA: He, he, well, he was, he was an old timey doctor. He, he was good on typhoid fever and things like that, but I don't know whether he doctored anything else or not. I wouldn't have trusted him myself. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, McClanahan's. They lived right in the neighborhood.

BR: Were there a lot of people like if you heard the name McClanahan, would you have a lot of people that lived close to you with that same name, with families close together?

BA: Huh uh. No, no, they wasn't too close. McClanahan's wasn't too close to me. They lived down the mouth of Kelley's Creek. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, but these Hammond's, they lived right across the creek from me, and, ah, the Older's lived right across Poca River [BR: Uh huh.] just, we could, you know, holler over at one another. [BR: Uh huh.] And, Canterbury's lived right over on the point from us, and, ah, and, the My-- Mylem's lived right around the hill from us. They was close neighbors, but the McClanahan's wasn't too close. It was Hut McClanahan family, and he lived down at the mouth of Kelley's Creek [BR: Uh huh.] and the bridge, Kelley's Creek Bridge.

BR: Do a lot of these people still live there?

BA: No, Hut McClanahan is dead, and Josh Hammond is dead. These families all moved away from there, and they Mylem's is all gone from there, and, ah, the Older's, is, ah, all gone but one

boy. He lives in my old home place where I lived on Frog's Creek. He bought that off, you know, my mother. [BR: Uh huh.] And, ah, the Canterberry's, they ain't none of them lives there anymore. They live around on Rocky Fork and Martin's Branch. And, ah, they're just about all gone from around there.

BR: Did a lot of these people move out of the state or did they stay here?

BA: No, they stayed here in, you know, they just moved around Tyler Mountain, and, ah, Allen's Bill Road and places like that. [BR: Uh huh.] Their children, you see, the older people died off, and the children all got married [BR: Uh huh.] and moved different places. [BR: Uh huh.]

BR: Now, do you know very many of the people that own this property over there now? You said you knew who owned some of your property.

BA: (Inaudible) Older owns that. No, I don't know who owns the Mylem's, but now the Older's left the heirs, you see. They own that.

BR: Uh huh. Well, you, I know there's a family cemetery up the hill from there, isn't there? [BA: You mean, ah.] Where Poppy was buried

BA: Oh, that's our cemetery, the Asbury. [BR: The Asbury.] Uh huh, that's the Asbury Cemetery on Kelley's Crick.

BR: But, that's right on the top of the hill.

BA: Right on top of the hill. It's a pretty place after you get out there, but it's a hard place to get to. [BR: It's a beautiful place.] I know it is.

BR: So, does our family still own that property?

BA: Oh, yes, uh huh. A acre, and it's all fenced in. [BR: Uh huh.] Yeah, yeah.

BR: I guess it would be interesting to go out there and see all the different names. See a lot of family history.

BA: Yeah, there's a lot of people. Oh, yeah, there's a lot of the Bailey's and Asbury's and. [BR: Bailey's, now, how were they related?] They was all related to the Asbury's. [BR: Uh huh.] The Bailey's and Asbury's was part of them was first cousin and part second cousin, and they married amongst one another. [BR: Uh huh.]

BR: Well, what was Poppy's mother's maiden name? Do you know that?

BA: Uh huh. Let me think. Just give me a minute. Bobbitt. [BR: Bobbitt.] Uh huh. [BR: I didn't know that.] Dory Bobbitt. [BR: Uh huh.]

BR: Did she live in Charleston?

BA: No, they lived at Kelley's Crick. [BR: Oh, they lived there, they lived there.] Uh huh. Uh huh. And, then the Asbury's. [BR: I guess that's why he moved out there.] He moved, no, he, there's where he lived at Kelley's Creek, Jack Asbury did [BR: Uh huh.], and then after his family all growed up, she died, you see. She had twins and died, and after the kids all growed up, why, he moved to Charleston. [BR: Uh huh.] That's where he bought this livery. That's when he bought that livery stable that I was a tellin' you about, you know. [BR: Yeah.] Brownie worked in, he worked at that through the day and up 'til 11'o'clock at night then. [BR: You told me how he worked two jobs.] Yeah, and then he went and got the mail.

BR: Well, he had a brother Jesse.

BA: Jesse, well, he's dead, too. [BR: He's dead.] And, ah, all of Brownie's, ah, brothers and sisters are dead but one, and that's Minnie Casto.

BR: How many did he have?

BA: He had three sisters and one brother.

BR: Uh huh. Just one brother. Jessee was the only brother. [BA: Uh huh, Jesse, uh huh, Jesse was the only brother.] Well, Jesse lived in Charleston.

BA: Yeah, yeah, he lived in Charleston.

BR: And the Dot, the sisters did, too, didn't they?

BA: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, uh huh. [BR: They all lived in Charleston.] They all lived in Charleston. Yeah. His, Brownie's oldest sister married a Derrick, and, ah, and then the next girl, Mary, next sister married a Childers [BR: Uh huh.] Ben Childers. They're both dead, and, ah, Minnie, his youngest sister, married a Casto, Earl Casto, and, ah, he's dead. And, they just had the one child, and he's dead.

BR: So, most of his family is dead now?

BA: Yeah, yeah. He got married, Jack did, though, that's, ah, Minnie's grand--son. He got married and had, ah, three children. [BR: Oh.] They're all living, but they live back up in way back up in the country somewhere. I don't know just where they do live.

BR: Uh huh. Well, how, tell me, how old you were your birthday.

BA: I was 84 the 3rd day of January.

BR: The 3rd day of January. [BA: Uh huh.] Eighty-four years old.

BA: Eighty-four year old, and you know, you have, you have on this tape, I, I made the mistake, I guess. It said 1889, 1888. [BR: What when you were born?] Well, I, that's what it said, but I was born in 1889.

BR: Oh, well, you almost made yourself a year older (laughter). How do you feel?

BA: I feel good. Yeah.

BR: That's a long time, isn't it?

BA: Uh huh. I feel just as spry as a cat, kitten. [BR: You don't act like you're 84.] If I didn't have this broken hip, I'd be [BR: Yeah, I remember you breaking your hip.] in pretty good shape. Oh, I went to the square dance, no, I didn't go to a square dance. I went over to the Fort Harmony School where they have the music [BR: Yes.] Saturday night. [BR: Oh, really, you went there?] Oh, yeah, me and my daughter-in-law, Mary Belle [BR: Uh huh.] went over there, and, oh,

they really had good string. I really love string music.

BR: What kind, what they, what kind of music did they have?

BA: Oh, they played Blue Grass [BR: Uh huh.], and the West Virginia Mountaineer Boys was supposed to be there, but they got sick, and they didn't get to come; and they got another, ah, band from Huntington, and, ah, they done pretty good.

BR: Did they play banjos and fiddles and things like that?

BA: Well, they, ah, they, ah, you know, the Blue Grass Boys, they had, ah, a five-string banjo [BR: Uh huh.], and two guitars, and a bass fiddle, and, ah, a mandolin. [BR: Really?] Oh, it would just raise the hair on your head (laughter).

BR: Did you do any dancing?

BA: No, no [BR: You didn't dance any?], no, I didn't dance any. You ain't supposed to dance. [BR: Oh, you're just supposed to listen.] No, it says, it's got signs up in there, no drinkin', no dancin'. [BR: Oh, well.] Of course, I don't do either one. I can't dance. I used to dance, but I, I love square dancing, though. I love to watch them. [BR: Uh huh.] I do. I love to watch them square dance.

BR: Well, do you want to stop now?

BA: Anytime you get ready.

BR: Okay, thank you for giving me the tape.

BA: You're sure welcome Barbara.