



Richard Blackwell

Interviewed by Anne Kimzey

1. Introduction (00:46)

Blackwell: My name is Richard Blackwell, uh, I presently live in Parksville, South Carolina, I was born and raised on a farm which about a mile west-north towards [Mechanicsville [?]].

Kimzey: And what year were you born? When is your birthday?

Blackwell: Uh, I was born July 19th, 1927, uh, that doesn't seem like long ago to me, I used to-

Kimzey: How many children-?

Blackwell: Do I have?

Kimzey: Well, were in your family.

Blackwell: Uh, two children; my sister Mildred and myself, we were the only two, uh, she was seven years older than I am, so she was born in 1920, that makes it right-

2. Cows, gardens, & hogs (01:40)

Blackwell: I have milked a cow, uh, in fact, uh, as soon as I got big enough to milk; I think at the time Daddy was milking seven cows, uh, had one that was real gentle, and uh, he'd put me under that cow, I would milk it while he was milking the other six, so uh, I milked cows, uh, and we had hogs, everybody had hogs, everybody had chickens, we had chickens, and I had a garden, in other words we raised what we ate, and if we didn't raise it, we didn't get it unless some of our neighbors gave us some, that's one thing about it then, uh, everybody worked too, and you always had to look out for that rainy day, in other words have something, you know we could eat, you know we canned a lot, uh, well we had the hogs, so at times we had fresh meat, then uh, they would kill the meat in the cold, it would have to be cold weather, and dry, most of the time it would be dry, uh, then they put ham in salt and then hang them up, maybe smoke them, and put some sugar molasses on them, the cure, and uh, the sausage, um-

Kimzey: Yeah, I've seen a hog killed, they still do that where I live.

Blackwell: Um, they do, in places they still do.

Kimzey: Do they do it around here still?

Blackwell: Very few, there are very few, I think there might be one or two but I haven't seen anybody kill a hog in a while.

3. Chicken catcher (02:00)

Kimzey: So when you are catching this chicken you have this um-

Blackwell: [This [?]]

Kimzey: Long line here with the hook on the end.

Blackwell: That's right.

Kimzey: About the size of-

Blackwell: [this, this [?]]

Kimzey: A chicken leg right?

Blackwell: Yes, but this one was made out of welding rod, we didn't have a welding rod, uh, all we used, uh, was a piece of hay baling wire, which I, about half this diameter, let's say about one-sixteenth of an inch, and uh, we didn't- we tried to get it that way, but just with your hands you couldn't quite do it but you could get it where you catch a chicken, anyway-

Kimzey: And so why did you use that in a chicken coop; to go reach in and get one?

Blackwell: This one?

Kimzey: Yeah.

Blackwell: Yes, uh, we'd have chicken in the coop; always put them where we'd feed them a while, feed corn, or wheat or oats. Most of the time corn; corn made the best meat, and the chicken coop was probably about three and half or four feet square, something about that size.

Kimzey: Make them fat and have to sit in there?

Blackwell: Uh, they would be- they would be fat, in other words we wouldn't kill them until, you know, we got them fat, unless uh, company came unexpected somebody would have to reach in there and get one <both laugh> but uh, we'd reach in the coop with this, and the chicken; time you walked up, they run to the back side, you know, reach in there

and draw them up to you, and then catch them by the feet, have to hold their feet, booth feet-

Kimzey: Well, I was wondering why you needed a-?

Blackwell: [Or they would scratch you [?]]

Kimzey: Is that why you had to use this? Cause they would run to the back?

Blackwell: That's right, um-hum, that's right, in other words, you couldn't quite reach your arms far enough back to get them, you had to have this catcher to reach back a little further, uh, so that's-

Kimzey: So you'd drag them out and they'd be making a fuss?

Blackwell: Fluttering, and a-hollering, and a-kicking, that's right <both laugh>uh, children now-a-days, really don't know where chickens come from, I mean the background of it or whatever.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

4. Milk in the well (01:23)

Blackwell: Anything that would want to keep just cool, keep from spoiling right then uh, if you had well you'd put it in something to let it down in the well to keep it cool, or either put it in a spring if you had a spring.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Blackwell: Uh, milk you could draw it up out of the well, let down in the well, put it in a well bucket; what we call sink the bucket <laughs> have to let the bucket tilt over so it would fill up with water to let the bucket sink.

Kimzey: Oh <laughs>.

Blackwell: Alright, but you couldn't let it go down too far cause the milk would come out, we'd have to, you know, kind of position it just right down in the well, anyway, you'd leave a jar of milk down in the well to keep it cool, and when you were ready to drink, draw it out, it would- taste like it was cold then, I know it wasn't but it'd taste cold, and every once a while, uh, they'd burst a jar of milk and have to draw the well dry. Now that was a job, I remember us having to do it twice.

Kimzey: Oh no, what um, would it contaminate the well?

Blackwell: Just all the milk in it would look cloudy, so your water would be cloudy, and you'd draw it out-

Kimzey: Just pour it out-

Blackwell: You'd have to draw and draw and draw, I mean a while draw a well dry, cause the water would come back in just as fast as you draw it.

Kimzey: Um-hum and you just drew it until it wasn't cloudy anymore?

Blackwell: Well, you just- you may have to draw it off twice, <laughs> but I think one time would do it, or just put up with it anyway; what little was left, it'd be alright.

5. People leaving the farms (01:10)

Blackwell: And in the '30s; was in the '20s and the early '30s, that was during the Depression, and uh, the war; World War II; I don't know when that started but was in the late '30s, I'd say '38, or '39, or '40, somewhere along there, and that's when everybody left the farm going to try and make some money, building Fort Gordon, Fort Jackson, and work at the Charleston Navy Yard, and different things, uh, we hadn't really any money before that, so you know most everybody didn't have any money, had things to eat but not money, uh....

Kimzey: Tell me those forts again, that people went and built? You said Fort Jackson and Fort; what was the other fort?

Blackwell: Gordon.

Kimzey: Gordon? Oh, I see.

Blackwell: Yeah, Fort Gordon, and Charleston Navy Yard, there were people here that worked in the Navy Yard in Charleston.

Kimzey: Uh-huh.

Blackwell: And uh, so that's when everybody around left the farm, uh, I don't know anything, too much about, when the boll weevil first came, that's before my time.

Kimzey: Oh.

6. Making cane whistles (01:29)

Blackwell: Really we tried to- they grew on a creek in some spots and uh, we could always go and get us a fishing pole and hope we'd have enough to make us a cane

whistle, uh, you know canes are in joints, or grows in joints, and uh, with go out and try to fine one, maybe about three quarters of an inch in diameter, and if your joint, say was a foot long or- that would make it take too much air <Kimzey laughs> to make it whistle, so about being that length, so you'd cut it down to about the length you wanted it and uh, you'd cut the end off of it, not square but slanted, but uh, [that's the [?]] hole, and leave the joint like that, [closed [?]] up, like that, then with your slant; the end that you cut, you go back about three quarters of an inch from there, and cut you a little hole in it, in the cane, about a- say an inch and a half from the front end of it, where you blow on it to make the whistle, and you get you a stick and you whittle it down, uh, the length that you want, you slant it to fit the cane, and uh, try the stick up in the cane, that's all there is to it. If that didn't sound- suit you, you'd cut it off and do it again.

Kimzey: <laughs>.