



Helen Satterly

Interviewed by Gail Matthews

1. Recovering seat cushions (1:28)

Satterly: Well I made this needle point many, many years ago, I would do two. After I finished embroidering two of them, I couldn't wait and I would take them to the upholsterer and have him put them on the chairs, and had two more before I finally finished it. But um, it was a perfect mess, it was full of mud, uh...dead fish...live fiddler crabs were running around in there and I thought everything I had was gone and you know I took it very well.

I mean came in and it took me a long while to accumulate this stuff and um...I really wasn't shocked, I just saw it and I just accepted - I didn't think I'd see one single thing. But my daughter and her husband came down from Connecticut, cancelled a trip out west that they had planned and they had the stuff sent up there and he did most of the work on the furniture himself but um...he took the seats of these chairs off and had them done at a drycleaners.

Now you can see a few little brown spots around the edge but they were saved and this pulled screen was saved and uh...well I'm happy to have them, maybe just adds to the antiqueness [sic].

2. Moving her house (1:33)

Satterly: This was originally built, Gale, up on the upper Santee river, at the French Huguenots' settlement, [?], and it was dismantled. My great grandfather, I guess, bought this land. It was dismantled and brought down on flats and reassembled here and...and the exterior of this house - of course the back was added later, but the four rooms here, the four front rooms and the hall...um, was all reassembled here and in the exterior

structure there is no metal, I mean no nails, or screws anything, its all put together with pegs - its pegged and structured.

Now the porch was added later, my brother Jimmy told me this and uh, I didn't really know this until he told me he said 'you know the beams and so on under the house are all numbered, so they would know how to splice them together' and he said 'that porch was not the original porch.' The original porch, he said, was just in the center - it was a smaller porch and um...when the family came down they decided for this time they needed this long suite, so that's the first thing that went, the porch, it was taken away, it went right away. So I guess the old time people knew what they were doing.

3. Did not want to leave (00:38)

Satterly: You know I wanted to stay here in Hugo, because the water had never come up into the Dupree house before. It had come up in the yard, it had never come up in the house, and I thought, well I'll just stay here and it was a couple with a young child staying over there, I'll just go upstairs if it, um...if it gets dangerous.

But I didn't dream it would get dangerous, I didn't move a thing except the furs - left all my silver here and everything. I just didn't think water would come in this house. I would have bet money on it. People used to come here to get out of storms, but of course we had never had one like that before.

4. Midwives & nurses (00:33)

Matthews: When you say they were nurses, um...what was the difference between a nurse and a midwife? Was it like the wet nurse or it was...

Satterly: No, no a wet nurse nurses the child actually with the milk from the breast, but um...a midwife actually does the delivery - there's no doctor in charge. A midwife is in charge. She - and they say this is doing very well now, with people it's working out fine, a lot of people are having midwives now because apparently doctors don't ever specialize in obstetrics any longer.

5. Ferryman (2:43)

Matthews: There were some stories that you tell in, in Gullah?

Satterly: um-huh, um-huh...lot to tell

Matthews: I'd be real interested in hearing some of them...

Satterly: Alright, now let me see...I'll tell you first about, um...Ephram. Now Ephram was a black gentlemen who had worked for my uncle Lawrence McClellan and uh, when he got along in years Uncle Lawrence give him some property up on the Santee river.

No bridges then, and he told him, said 'now you can make a good living by ferrying people to and fro across the river who want to go to Georgetown.' So he did - Ephram built himself a little house and um...he would take people across the river, that's how he made his living. Well there was a gentleman up in the Berkeley county section, sort of Hell Hole - you know where Hell Hole is - and he was a Mr. Wilson, a very esteemable person but um...he was completely deaf and the blacks called him, for some reason, 'Deaf and Dumb Wilson.' He was by no means dumb, but they just called him 'Deaf and Dumb Wilson.'

So he sent word to Ephram that he wanted him to ferry him and his horse and buggy across the river the next morning. So when morning came Mr. Wilson drove up there and the Wilson's were sort of like the Hatfield's and McCoy's, they were, back then, shooting guns and all this kind of stuff. So um...he knocked on the door and Ephram answered him, but of course he couldn't hear, he was storm deaf and Mr. Wilson got mad and kicked the door in, came in, pulled a pistol on him.

So Ephram was telling Uncle Lawrence about that later and Uncle Lawrence said 'well Ephram what did you do?'He said 'I fall on my knee and I prayed, I say God, last night when it got bad I asked you to take care me through the night. You do um...but what said for you do um you let a shot poor bugger come and shoot me first day clean.'

[Matthews laughter]

Satterly: You understand?

Matthews: Yeah, yeah...[laughter]

Satterly: Lord took him literally...

Matthews: Just, just through the night...[laughter]

Satterly: Yeah, just through the night, times up...

6. Granddaughter to the doctor (1:14)

Satterly: But now this is very philosophical. I like this story, going back to Uncle Lawrence's...son who was as doctor, Dr. McClellan. And um...this black lady came one day with a granddaughter, who was, well I'd say 13-14, teenage year. So she wanted to see the doctor, and uh...his wife said 'Well I'm sorry he's gone out on a case, but he'd be in after a while.'

They had a little building out in the yard which served as an office and operating room. So she said 'just go in there and have a seat and he'll be along after a while.' So just for curiosity or friendliness she said um... 'What seems to be the matter with your granddaughter?' She said 'Mrs. Lucy, I bring this here gal to Dr. Eddie, I want him to satch her - I ain't like how her waist stangs.' Do you understand?

Matthews: No I didn't...

Satterly: I brought this girl to Dr. Eddie, I want him to search her, I do not like the way her waist looks...

Matthews: [laughter]

Satterly: How something 'stangs' – that means how it looks...

7. Three daughters (1:56)

Satterly: They were more or less isolated in the country - this is way, way back and they spoke Gullah almost entirely.

Matthews: The white girls?

Satterly: Uh-huh. And uh...communicated with each other by Gullah all the time. So uh...the mother got a little bit perturbed and she wanted them to get engaged and taken care of and married safely. So um...she told them - they lived on a plantation - she said

'now the next time' - gentlemen came out on horseback then to call - 'don't say a word, you are very pretty and if they are sufficiently attracted to you then they come back. If you open your mouth they will never come back here. You let me do the talking' So they all agreed, and the next time some young gentlemen drove over they always sat in the parlor and I guess they had wine or something and they were sewing - the girls looking pretty and domestic and all the kinds of things the mother wanted and all was going well until the mother, uh...until one of them - one of the girls - dropped her thimble. It rolled across the room and under the sister's chair. So uh...spontaneously she said 'Tro me dat thimble dat is beneath your chair.' Said gal [unintelligible Gullah]. The third one said 'Tank God I ain't cracked me teeth'

Matthews: [laughter] I got the first two but I didn't get the - uh, I got the first, what the first one said, but I didn't get the second...

Satterly: 'Throw me that thimble which is underneath your chair,' and then 'Don't you remember mamma told you not to talk,' and the third one - this was a common saying, "crack your teeth" means to start talking - 'Thank God I ain't cracked my teeth.'

Matthews: Is that a real story or is that like a...

Satterly: I don't know

Matthews: That's a great story...

Satterly: yeah

Matthews: yeah

8. Theory on Gullah origins (00:24)

Satterly: Very picturesque way of talking.

Matthews: Where do you think it comes from?

Satterly: ...I think it's a combination of things. Some of the islands in the Caribbean and some African and some French, makes it...you know they pick that up from the French settlers...

