LOUISE ADAMS

November 15, 1995

Kim Lacy Rogers and Owen Brooks,
interviewer

Rogers: Do we have your permission to tape this interview?

Adams: Yes.

Rogers: At the end of the interview, we'll be giving you a consent form so that we can deposit your interview in the archives. Is that all right?

Adams: Fine.

Rogers: This would be Tougaloo College and at Dickinson Colleges.

Mrs. Adams, were you born here in Madison County?

Adams: No, I was born in Lee County, in Lexington, Mississippi. Want my birth date?

Rogers: Yes, please.

Brooks: In Holmes County?

Adams: Holmes County. I'm sorry.

Rogers: When were you born?
Adams: October the 20th, 1924.

Rogers: What did your family do?

Adams: My daddy was a cobbler, shoe-fix, he fixed shoes. The reason why we were there because that is where he went to take his shoe training.

Brooks: Where?

Adams: At Lexington, Mississippi. See, he was a World War I veteran, and they were in Alexander, Louisiana, at the time in the hospital, and when he came home, they suggested that he go and take this training, because he was ill. He had tuberculosis, and they said that that would be the easiest way for him to earn a living. So he went to Lexington, and while he was there, I was born.

Brooks: Was this a vocational school or a high school or training institute at Lexington?

Adams: I think it was just a private place, so they told me. Where this man trained him, it was just a shoe shop, and he was trained.

Brooks: So he was sort of an apprentice thing.

Adams: Something like that.

Jewell: Did he get in the gas in the World War?
Adams: Yes, he did.

Brooks: He was gassed?

Adams: Yes.

Rogers: Mustard gas?

Adams: Yes, mustard gas.

Rogers: Did he ever tell you stories about World War I, about fighting?

Adams: Well, he wasn't in it too long, you know.

Rogers: Did he tell you stories about how the black troops were treated?

Adams: Yes, he did.

Rogers: What kinds of stories did he tell you?

Adams: Well, they slept on the ground most of the time, you know, and that's why he took pneumonia, when he slept on the ground. He didn't say a whole about it, you know.

Brooks: Was he in France?
Adams: No, he wasn't. He didn't even leave the United States.

Brooks: Oh, he didn't go overseas.

Adams: No, he didn't go overseas, right. But the biggest thing that they told us was when he got hurt, he was sick, and they found out that he was sick. His father knew that he was sick. He left home with a thousand dollars that he had saved and went and caught the train in Madison, I think it was.

Brooks: His father did?

Adams: His father did. He knew that his son—he was going to get his son out of the Army, because his son was sick. He was on way to Washington, D.C.. He did not get to see the President, but he saw a senator. I don't know his name, but he talked to somebody there, and after then, he came home, you know. Something that he said to somebody--

Brooks: He spoke to somebody in the federal government.

Adams: Right.

Brooks: And as a result, he was released.

Adams: After that he was released from the Army.

Brooks: Where was he stationed, do you remember?
Adams: No, I don't. It was somewhere in Virginia, yes.

Rogers: Fort Belvoir?

Adams: I'm not sure. I don't remember. All I know is they say that he was stationed somewhere in Virginia.

Brooks: Probably was Camp Lee. That's the biggest one.

Rogers: Did you grow up in Holmes County?

Adams: No, I grew up here. I was a year old when we moved to Canton.

Rogers: Did your father fix shoes?

Adams: Yes.

Brooks: Did he open a shop?

Adams: Yes, he did, he opened a shop.

Brooks: In Canton?

Adams: In Canton, on Hickory Street, and that's where we lived in the beginning, in the back of the office there, on Hickory Street.
Brooks: So he had his shoe repair in the front.

Adams: Right, and we were in the back, for a while. Then we moved to a place, it was kind of a garage-like shed right across in front of Mount Zion Church, where the Mount Zion Baptist Church is now on North--

Jewell: Northwest. The street you asked me, what was the name of that street that was familiar, and I told you Northwest Street.

Adams: Yes, and we lived there.

Brooks: He built a house, bought a house?

Adams: No, there was a shed, you know, a shack-like area.

Brooks: He rented it?

Adams: Yes, he rented that, and that's where they moved his things. Then we moved to--what's the name of the street where Miss Johnson?

Jewell: Frost.

Adams: Frost Street. Then we moved to Frost Street, and we lived there, I think it was about two years, because that's where my little brother was born.
Brooks: Younger brother?

Adams: Yes. We had only one, right.

Brooks: How many siblings?

Adams: In the family?

Brooks: Yes.

Adams: Five, but there were six with my little brother, because my little brother died.

Brooks: So there were four children, actually.

Adams: Five.

Rogers: Five children, and with the younger brother that made six.

Adams: Yes, it made six, right.

Jewell: Five girls and one boy.

Adams: Five girls, right. After, I think, about three or four years, I'm not sure, we moved to Caughlin [phonetic] Street.
Jewell: That's the street I live on. They lived up in front of the park.

Adams: Right, which was not a park then.

Brooks: How old were you when you got to Caughlin Street, do you remember?

Adams: I think—they say I was about three years old.

Jewell: In front of the trash pile.

Adams: That's exactly what it was at that time.

Jewell: Oh, the odor!

Adams: Yes.

Jewell: In our neighborhood.

Adams: My daddy fought so hard for so many years.

Brooks: They had a dump right there in--

Adams: Yes.

Jewell: City dump.
Adams: Right in front.

Brooks: Oh, it was the city dump?

Adams: It was the city dump.

Jewell: Right there where the park is up the street.

Adams: It was the only city dump at that time.

Jewell: The only city dump.

Adams: Yes, that's where we lived.

Rogers: So they put that right in your community.

Adams: No, we moved there. It was there, as far as I know, when we moved there, but he immediately started working to try to get it moved. Well, as hard as he was trying to get it moved, there were some of the people in the area that--

Brooks: Fought against you.

Adams: Were trying, yes.
Jewell: Somebody died from eating out of the dump.

Adams: Yes. Little daughter. Yes, Mrs. Ray Brown's daughter. She picked up a disease. I'm not sure, but I think they call it St. Vitus Dance.

Brooks: St. Vitus Dance.

Jewell: What is that?

Brooks: That's a nerve disease of the face, usually in the face. Your nerves allow you to have a quiver, sort of a quiver, a nervous motion in your face. I knew somebody when I was a kid that had St. Vitus Dance, my mother explained to me. But that's all I know about it. I just know somebody that had it, and they had it in the face.

Rogers: But her daughter died of that?

Adams: Yes, she died.

Brooks: Died of it?

Adams: Yes, she died. I'm not sure whether they, you know, said that's what she died of, but that's what she had. She was a twin. And that's why he had so much trouble trying to, you know, get it moved. He fought so hard.

Jewell: I think we used to get eggs out of there. Chickens from the poultry market.
Adams: Yes, right.

Brooks: Everything, clothes, furniture.

Adams: Wood, food. During that time--

Brooks: This was all over, not just--everywhere.

Adams: Yes. They would sell glass, you know. They'd beat it up and put it in tubs and things, and we would go over there, which my daddy tried to keep us from going over there, but we did.

Brooks: In Greenville, back in the old days, I remember like a black family would always live in close proximity to the dump, and that family was sort of in charge of the dump, and you had to go by that person. Was there somebody that was like in charge?

Adams: Not really in charge, but there was a lady that lived on the corner, her name is Pauline Thompson. Remember them talking about Miss Pauline Thompson? She had a son named Faydo [phonetic]. Faydo, I believe that was his name. Maybe they thought they were in charge. They were always there when the trucks came in, and it was something.

Rogers: Where did you go to school as a young girl?

Adams: Cameron Street, which is Nichols.
Jewell: Nichols, but it was Cameron Street.

Adams: Cameron Street then.

Jewell: Professor Rogers was the principal.

Adams: Yes.

Jewell: From Jackson.

Brooks: Is that Campbell Street?

Jewell: Cameron, C-A-M-E-R-O-N.

Adams: It's Nichols now, you know.

Rogers: Did you go the whole--

Adams: I finished high school there, yes. I went one year to Jackson State.

Rogers: Did you work growing up? Did you have to go to work when you were young?

Adams: No, no more than picking beans and selling--

Brooks: Was that grade one through twelve?
**Adams:** Yes, it was. My mother would raise a garden. We'd sell beans, and we would pick up glass in the dump, and we would sell that. Oh, yes, we picked cotton. Oh, I picked cotton from the time I was six years old. I started picking cotton when I was six years old because I wanted a box of Cheese Tidbits. [Laughter] My mama told me if I picked this much cotton every day, she'd buy me a box of Cheese Tidbits, and so I started picking cotton. I picked cotton until the year I went to college, yes.

**Brooks:** So, from beginning at six years old?

**Adams:** Yes.

**Rogers:** Was this after school, or was this during weekends?

**Adams:** Well, we first started off, we'd go after school, but then as I grew older, we would pick cotton starting, I think it was the last of August. I missed one month out of school. I never started school until first of October.

**Brooks:** Did you chop in the spring?

**Adams:** They fired me. I never did learn how to chop. My mama say I tried to cut the grass too thin, and I got fired out of the cotton fields. So I had to go back home and take care of the younger children while Mama would go to the cotton field and chop.

**Rogers:** They just felt you were a little bit too dedicated to it. [Laughter]
Adams: I guess so. [Laughter]

Brooks: I don't think you complained too strongly about that, though, did you?

Adams: Well, I wanted the money. [Laughter] But I never could learn how to chop cotton, but I learned how to pick cotton. I did pretty good.

Brooks: Did you have to grab the truck and go to the field, or was the field close enough?

Adams: Sometime they would come and pick us up, yes. Well, they pick us up in truck.

Brooks: The haulers?

Adams: Right. There was a man here--I can't think of his name. He would come and pick Mama and us up in his car, and he would take us to his field.

Brooks: You picked for black folks or for white folks?

Adams: We picked for white folks. Black folks, too.

Brooks: Black folks, too?

Adams: Yes, right. Mr.--okay, name of this funeral home up there at--

Jewell: By the dump.
Adams: Yes, but you know who owned that funeral home, his family--

Jewell: Earl High [phonetic].

Adams: No, no, no, no. The lady used to live right back here. It was Banks field home. Yes, Mr. Fred Banks, that's his name.

Brooks: Fred Banks. That's his daddy.

Adams: Yes, right.

Brooks: Oh, yes. He's the Supreme Court judge.

Adams: Yes. No that was his uncle, Fred Banks. He had an uncle named Fred Banks that we picked cotton for.

Brooks: Now, which one was that now? Was that the Supreme Court judge's father or uncle?

Adams: That was his uncle.

Jewell: That was his daddy's uncle.

Adams: I think so.
Jewell: Yes, that was my people.

Brooks: His daddy's uncle.

Jewell: That was his daddy. That was Fred, Jr.'s daddy's uncle. That was Miller Bank's brother.

Brooks: So he was a great uncle to the lawyer?

Jewell: Right. That was Miller Banks's brother.

Adams: He was the nicest person that you ever worked for.

Brooks: Mr. Banks?

Adams: Yes, he was, very nice. Every Friday they would bring us cheese and cinnamon sticks.

Brooks: And you used to pick for him?

Adams: Yes, we did.

Rogers: How much did you make when you were picking cotton?

Adams: I am not sure, but I think we made as much as thirty to fifty cent a pound, because I remember picking a whole week for two dollars, and I lost the two dollars. [Laughter]
Rogers: Oh, my Lord.

Brooks: Compare that to the Delta. Let's see, what was it, five dollars for a hundred?

Adams: No.

Rogers: Some of the ladies were talking about three dollars a day. It was twenty-five cents per hundred pounds.

Adams: Pounds. I think that's what it was, about twenty-five or thirty cents a hundred pounds.

Brooks: Thirty cents a hundred.

Adams: During that time.

Rogers: That's what Mrs. Giles said was the Depression years, twenty-five cents a hundred pounds.

Jewell: Because when we were kids, me and Sarah and them, it was two dollars. It was two dollars a hundred.

Adams: Well, you see it was quite a bit of difference in your age and mine.

Brooks: Two dollars a hundred when you picked?

Adams: Yes, I'm about ten years older than Jewell. I'm at least ten years older than you are, at least.
Jewell: That was in the fifties.

Brooks: In the fifties, yes.

Jewell: It was two dollars a hundred.

Brooks: That's what I was trying to remember, when I came to Bolivar what it was.

Adams: You see, when I was picking, it was in the thirties, you know, because the last year I picked was in '41, I think, in '41. No, it was in '42, because I graduated from high school in '42, and I picked cotton before I went to college.

Rogers: The ladies from the Delta, I guess it was Mrs. Carter said they were making three dollars a day.

Jewell: That was in the fifties.

Rogers: That was in the fifties. That was in the fifties for her, too.

Adams: See, I didn't pick a hundred pounds every day.

Brooks: Yes, everybody didn't pick a hundred.

Adams: No.
Jewell: So if you didn't pick a hundred you got paid--

Brooks: Much less.

Adams: Yes, right.

Rogers: I think according to the book about Mrs. Carter, she had her kids out there working from--

Adams: Well we were working, but mama, my mama was very good. Whatever we made, we got that. We didn't mix it with hers. She let us have our money individually, and whatever we made, she would let us use it. We would buy our sweaters and our shoes. Then whatever we couldn't buy, then daddy would pick up the rest. But he always encouraged us to--

Brooks: Try to make your own.

Adams: Yes, that's right.

Jewell: That was the difference in your--now, my daddy didn't want us to, but Mother did. So when I picked, I had credit at the store, and what I picked I had to pay off.

Brooks: Pay your own bill.

Jewell: Pay on my bill, because I was given credit for food, and by the time I paid for all the junk I had bought, I didn't have nothing when I got off.
Adams: Now, Daddy was very good, and I don't care how little you did, it was yours and he encouraged you. If you didn't pick but fifty pounds that day, he encouraged you. He was very good about that, and whatever you made, he would let you keep that, plus he would add to it in order to help you to buy your clothes to go to school with.

Brooks: Sure enough.

Adams: That's right.

Brooks: That's a lot of cotton you got to pick for a hundred pounds, you know.

Adams: Yes.

Brooks: Those things are long.

Adams: I remember the highest I ever picked was 147 pounds, and I was so happy I thought I had a million--

Brooks: In one day?

Adams: In one day, 147 pounds. [Laughter]

Rogers: That's a lot.

Brooks: That's a lot of picking. That's fast picking, too.
Adams: But my mama was very good.

Jewell: You'd go out there picking three and four at a time.

Adams: I know that's right. My husband said he always picked 400 pounds a day.

Jewell: [unclear] picked 300 pounds.

Adams: Yes, that's right.

Rogers: What was the old ballad, song, "Drop down, turn around, pick a bale of cotton, pick a bale a day."

Adams: There were families that would go and pick, the whole family would pick a bale. That's right. They would do that.

Rogers: What kind of things did you family tell you or did you hear, I guess, in the community about race relations?

Adams: Oh, race relations was rough. I remember that. When we would go uptown, you would have to stand in the back and wait until all the white people was served before you were served. If you were in a post office, if you were in the grocery store, if you were in a dress shop, you would have to stand in the background until all the white people got served when I was young, yes. I remember that.

Brooks: That's when you were a young lady.
Adams: Yes.

Rogers: Did your parents tell you anything, or did you hear things in the community about white brutality towards black people, or lynchings, or things like that?

Adams: Yes. There was a man—I can't remember his name, but he was lynched because he had a disagreement with the boss in the sawmill quarter, and supposedly he was--

Brooks: In Canton?

Adams: Yes. He was supposed to have been lynched.

Brooks: It happened during your time?

Adams: Yes, during my time, because of that, yes.

Rogers: When you were a young girl?

Adams: Yes.

Rogers: This would have been the 1930s, you would say?

Adams: Yes, it was in the late 1930s, that's true. My daddy was beat up because he was driving his car. He used to have a--
**Jewell:** He was one of the only black people had a car in Canton.

**Adams:** Yes. He would drive this car. He didn't have a license, but he drove that car back and forth from the sawmill quarter where they'd have ball games, and he was, you know, pulled down by an officer, and not having license, they beat him so in the face. He came home that night, he was so upset.

**Brooks:** He didn't have a license to drive?

**Adams:** He had license to drive, but he didn't have taxi license. Oh, yes he had--

**Brooks:** To haul people.

**Adams:** Yes, right. So they beat him. My daddy had a--he would speak up for himself, so I'm pretty sure he said something to them that they didn't like, and he was bloody all in the face. I had come back home then. I had a little baby, and the baby was crying, and that's what woke us up. He was very angry then. He wanted to go and find them, but we begged and pleaded and cried. The baby woke up. That baby is about fifty-two years old now. She woke up, and we pleaded and we begged and we cried and convinced him not to go, because we knew they would have killed him.

**Brooks:** He wouldn't come back.

**Adams:** That's true.

**Rogers:** He'd disappear.
Adams: Oh, yes, would've disappeared.

Rogers: Did you hear about other things like that where people would just get disappeared?

Adams: Not really, not really, you know, disappearing. But my husband, he got beat up the year that he lived in Brandon, in the Brandon area, and the year he went to sign up for the Army, he had gone--they had a group of boys in Brandon, Mississippi. They all went down in a car to sign up for the Army.

Brooks: Second World War.

Adams: Yes, he had to go to Camp Shelby, and they all met down there, and on their way back home--my husband has a big mouth, had a big mouth. He's dead now. His daddy raised them. They was kind of, you know, they wasn't afraid.

Brooks: He went down to Shelby?

Adams: They went to Camp Shelby, all of the cousins together in a car.

Brooks: That's quite a ways.

Adams: Yes. On their way back, some man, grocer or whatever--I can't remember his name, I guess I should, he asked them, "Did you pass?"

The other boys said, "Yes, sir," and he said, "Yes."

He asked him, he had walking stick attached to him, he said, "What did you say"?
He said, I said, "Yes." And he had a long stick, and he hooked it around his neck and was pulling on him. They were fixing a tire on the car, and when they finished, T.A. said when he got the stick from around his neck, he looked around and he was there by himself.

**Brooks:** The other guys left?

**Adams:** Oh, did they ever.

**Brooks:** Oh, Lord.

**Adams:** Oh, yes, and he had to go through--

**Brooks:** And left him there alone with the white man.

**Adams:** Oh, yes.

**Brooks:** How many of them were there?

**Adams:** Five. He had to crawl through woods after it got night, in order to get home, and he went to a cousin's house and they hid him there until they got him to his daddy's home, because otherwise he had to go through graveyards. They would have killed him.

**Brooks:** He was beaten in Rankin, or was he beaten down there in Forest County?
Adams: No, he was beaten in Rankin County. See, they had come back to Brandon, and they was fixing this tire.

Brooks: Oh, they were all in the back.

Adams: Yes, right. He was beaten in Rankin County. But he said his daddy, once he got home, he took him back to the people that had beat him up and told them that they didn't treat his son like that. His family was a group of people, they didn't back up too much.

Jewell: Neither did my people, too.

Adams: If they got beat--they all had guns and things. If they got beat, they got beat for a reason. He didn't say, "Yes, sir," unless he had a good reason. He was just that kind of people. Now, that's the closest I've come to having someone beat up.

Oh, my sister Sarah, Sarah, we were born across the street where the First National Bank is. She was about nine years old in downtown Canton, and this guy--can I call his name?

Jewell: Yes. Can she call him?

Rogers: Sure, sure, yes.

Adams: Guy's Drugstore person, and he pushed her, just reached out and pushed her off the street.

Jewell: Ben Jones, wasn't that Ben Jones?
Adams: No, that was Guy's Drugstore, during Sarah and them's time, it was Guy's Drugstore. You know, I was married then.

Jewell: But Ben Jones was over there by the bank.

Adams: No, I mean, we were crossing the street. He wasn't at the drug store. He just pushed her off the street, and she almost hit a car. I got so angry, I didn't go back in that drugstore no more after then.

Brooks: Was the person from the store that did it?

Adams: He was the head of the store.

Brooks: Oh, he was the owner of the store.

Adams: Yes, person that owned the store. He pushed her off the street. See, because I didn't know who he was at the time until I was told that's who he was. Yes, that's true. So that's why when somebody--I couldn't hardly look at Roots. I told them I lived it, you know.

Brooks: I know exactly what you mean there.

Adams: Yes, that's true.

Rogers: What do you remember of the war years in Mississippi, like the 1940s you said your husband was--

Adams: In the Army.
**Rogers:** Yes, he was in the Army. Did you get married before he went into the Army?

**Adams:** Yes, I did. I went all the way to St. Louis, Missouri.

**Brooks:** To get married?

**Adams:** Yes.

**Brooks:** You ran off?

**Adams:** No, I didn't.

**Brooks:** Yes, you did.

**Adams:** No, I didn't. My daddy paid my way.

**Brooks:** No, you didn't run off. [Laughter]

**Adams:** That's what the people said when I got back, say, "You run off," I say, "Ask my daddy." He gave me twenty dollars. He tried to talk me out of going, but when he got through talking--he talked to me one hour, and I didn't hear nothing he said until years later. [Laughter]

**Jewell:** Years later. [Laughter]
Adams: Years later, then it came through. Now, my daddy was the type of person, he did not force you to do anything, but he told me what I would have to go through if I married that young. I was only eighteen years old, and I had just finished my first year in college, and he wanted me to go back to school. But I was in love. My sister, she had a husband in Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, at the same time, so I followed her and I went up there. I stayed about two months and got married during that time. That was when a man would have to write and ask the father for his daughter's hand, and he did.

Brooks: How about that. Shades of the past.

Rogers: This was just customary?

Adams: Yes, it was.

Rogers: Yes, this is polite people.

Adams: Right. I married in the home of--you know this McCoy building in Jackson?

Brooks: Yes.

Adams: I married in his sister's home. She's a McCoy, the federal person--

Brooks: They named that building after.

Adams: Yes.
**Jewell:** McCoy.

**Adams:** His mother and my grandfather were sister and brother. My grandfather and his mother. So we married in his sister's home. See, they had only two children.

**Brooks:** In St. Louis?

**Adams:** In St. Louis, that's right.

**Brooks:** Your husband, he was already in the service?

**Adams:** He had been there about a month, yes.

**Brooks:** Oh, Lord.

**Rogers:** What did you do then? Was he shipped overseas?

**Brooks:** That sounds familiar, Jewell.

**Adams:** They sent him from Jefferson Barracks to Walla Walla, Washington.

**Brooks:** All the way to West Coast.

**Adams:** Yes, and he told me he didn't want me to follow him, because he was going from place to place. So I stayed at home here with my parents. I had one child then. I should have gone back to school, but I didn't.
Rogers: What do you remember the forties like here in Mississippi? Did things change much?

Adams: Yes.

Brooks: Was it hard living, couldn't get this and couldn't get that?

Adams: Things was rationed. We had to have a stamp for milk. You had a stamp for sugar.

Brooks: Sugar, flour.

Adams: Shoes. I don't think flour. I know shoes. Let's see. Sugar, I think, yes, and shoes, and looked like to me it was something else we had to have stamps for, because I had my stamps and my child's stamps, and, you know, we made things stretch like that.

Brooks: Eggs?

Rogers: Yes, sugar?

Adams: The sugar I know, but I don't think it was eggs.

Rogers: Coffee?

Adams: Yes, coffee, right. Coffee, right. Sugar, coffee, shoes, and what else did I say?
Jewell: Milk, was it milk?

Adams: I'm not sure. I'm not sure whether it was milk, but looked like to me it was about three or four things that we had--

Jewell: What about cigarettes?

Adams: Well, I wasn't smoking.

Brooks: Then again you just couldn't get them. You just had to smoke whatever you could.

Adams: Oh, stockings. You had to stand in stocking lines, you remember?

Rogers: For rayon stockings?

Adams: Yes, yes, right. Couldn't get them, and they had these queen lace stockings, and whatever kind of stockings you got, you had to stand on the stocking line and get them, yes.

Rogers: Some ladies would even take a pen or a pencil and put a line up the back of their leg to make-believe.

Adams: [Laughter] Right.

Jewell: What about that makeup stuff you used to could buy?

Adams: Yes, right, right. They used that, too, quite a bit.
Adams: We wore bobby socks a lot. I guess for thirty years I quit wearing bobby socks, but I wore bobby socks a lot then.

Brooks: Remember what they used to call them?

Adams: Bobby socks? No.

Brooks: Anklets.

Adams: Anklets. [Laughter] Right. They called them anklets, right. Right, sure did, that's the truth.

Rogers: Did your husband go overseas?

Adams: Oh, yes, he fought in the war in Germany. He was a staff sergeant.

Rogers: In infantry?

Adams: He was in the, yes, infantry. They built bridges and stuff. See, I got his papers. Let me see what's on there.

Rogers: Let's unplug you for just a second. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Adams: No, it wasn't Pearl Harbor.
Jewell: Was he at Hiroshima?

Adams: Yes, yes.

Jewell: The atomic bomb, the big bomb.

Brooks: Hiroshima.

Adams: Yes. They had to sit out on a ship until they stopped bombing it.

Rogers: I hope they didn't go right in after. There were a lot of troops that the government just sent in right after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and all those young men got radiation disease.

Adams: No, he didn't get that, but he told me about the time he would have to guard Tojo. He was eating, and they didn't allow them to eat with nothing but a spoon, see. They was afraid he would kill himself, yes.

Brooks: Isn't that interesting. So he must have gone to Japan.

Adams: He did.

Rogers: How long was he in Japan?

Adams: He was there when the war ended, because they left when the war ended in Germany. It took them two months to go--
Brooks: To get from Europe to the Far East.

Adams: Yes, because I didn't hear from him in two months, and was I ever afraid, yes.

Brooks: But he wouldn't have been able to tell you he was going anyway.

Adams: No, he wouldn't have been able to tell me, right. And, see, the war ended in--

Brooks: '45.

Adams: Yes, but he didn't get home until '46, February the sixth.

Brooks: Did [Franklin D.] Roosevelt die in July, July '45?

Rogers: I want to say it was April '45 that Roosevelt died, because then they were telling [Harry S.] Truman, "We've got this weapon."

Brooks: How were you all doing at home? How many kids did you have?

Adams: One. I didn't have but one. I only had one child, until he came home.

Brooks: Then he came back home.

Adams: Right.
Brooks: And you were living in Canton.

Adams: Yes.

Brooks: Did you have a garden?

Adams: My daddy had a garden.

Jewell: He always had a garden.

Adams: Yes, he always had a garden.

Brooks: You were living with him?

Adams: I was living with him. I lived with him until my husband came home, you know, from the Army.

Brooks: Did he raise garden vegetables and all that?

Adams: Yes, he did. I lived with my daddy until April, I think it was. Let me see. I believe I lived with my daddy until April of '47, because after he came home, then they stationed him. He was working for Illinois Central Railroad, and he went back to the railroad.

Rogers: Your husband went back to the railroad?

Adams: Yes, and we moved to New Orleans.
Brooks: This your father?

Adams: That's my husband, when he came home from the Army.

Brooks: Oh, when he came he went to work for the railroad.

Adams: He was working for the railroad before he went into the Army.

Brooks: Illinois. I.C.

Adams: Yes, I.C. He started in Jackson.

Rogers: How long were y'all in New Orleans?

Adams: Three weeks. [Laughter] See, he was running from there to New Orleans on the train they called the Rebel, and by the time we got situated in New Orleans, food, you know, and a place to live and all, then they moved him, and they transferred him to Chicago. Then I came back home. I was expecting my second child at that time, and I came back home and stayed with my parents until after my second child was born. She was born October 24, 1946, and we stayed until we went to Chicago in April of ’47, and we stayed there thirteen years.

Brooks: Your second child was born in '46 in Mississippi, right?

Adams: Yes.
Brooks: In Canton.

Adams: Yes.

Brooks: Then you went to Chicago in 1947?

Adams: Yes, and stayed there until, I think it was November of ’47. Then I came back here, back to Canton, because I was expecting a third child. Stayed there until, I think it was April of ’48, because when I went back to Chicago, I had three small children.

Brooks: You came back to Mississippi permanently?

Adams: No, I came back to stay with my mama because my third child was born, right. Then I went back to Chicago.

Rogers: What was Chicago like after having been in Mississippi for so much of your life?

Adams: I liked Chicago fine.

Brooks: South Side?

Adams: Yes, I lived on the South Side. First I lived at 35th and Prairie, and I moved from there to 47th and Vincennes. Then I moved from there to 95th and Perry. Then we moved back to 60th and Princeton. Then we moved here, back here, in 1960. Yes, it was ’60, 1960. We moved in this house in 1960.
Rogers: Your husband was still working for the railroad?

Adams: Oh, yes, he worked the railroad for forty-two years.

Rogers: 1960 was the year that all the sit-in demonstrations started and all of this. What was this period like in Canton for you?

Adams: Well, this young man by the name of George Raymond--

Brooks: Old George. I knew George.

Adams: Yes, George Raymond. I remember him. My youngest daughter, Antoinette, was affiliated with--what was the name of the young girl that started the movement up there at the--with Bobby Neil and--

Jewell: Wileen [phonetic].

Adams: Wileen and Pat. Them and Annie, they started this movement, because--but George Raymond came here to talk to me about joining the movement.

Brooks: He worked for CORE [Congress on Racial Equality]?

Adams: No, he worked for NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People].

Brooks: No, he worked for CORE.
Adams: He worked for CORE, but I was scared to death. I was. I was afraid.

Brooks: Did the kids march from Brandon to Jackson? Remember they had that march.

Adams: We marched from Tougaloo to Jackson with James Meredith.

Brooks: No, not that one. '65.

Adams: When my children were in Tuskegee [Institute], they marched in the--what was that--Montgomery, Selma, Alabama, march. That's where my children were. They marched Selma, Alabama, march. I had two daughters in Tuskegee at the time.

Rogers: What did you think of George Raymond? What was your first impression?

Adams: Oh, he was real nice. He was smart, too. He was real smart. He was smart, but he went through--they beat him so. He would speak up for himself. He had a hard time, he really did, but he really stood up for the black people. He was smart, too. Yes, he was.

Brooks: He worked for me later on in the sixties. I let him stay here in Canton while he was working for me.

Adams: became affiliated with NAACP, Frosdell [phonetic]--

Brooks: Fronsie Goodlove [phonetic].
Adams: Fronsie Goodlove saw me at church one day, and it was the lady—and she said it in her book. Mrs. Gorman [phonetic] was coming, and she needed me to keep somebody, and she asked me at church that day, she said, "Mrs. Adams, would you keep somebody for me that's coming in to work for the movement?" I told her I'd think about it, and before I got through thinking about it, they were knocking on the door. That's the truth. And I had no choice. But I'm glad I did, because Ms. Gorman, she was a tough lady.

Jewell: Is she dead?

Adams: I don't know.

Rogers: Is this lady NAACP?

Adams: NAACP. Fronsie was working with the NAACP, and Mrs. Gorman was some kind of organizer with the NAACP, you know. Remember Clarence Mitchell?

Brooks: Yes, he was in Washington D.C.

Adams: Right. He came down during the time that we were working with the NAACP, because that was the first time I'd ever seen a press conference. We were there in Jackson at the Masonic building. Mrs. Gorman, she came here. I was not with NAACP at the time, but I took her in, and she encouraged me to start working with them as a volunteer. Well, she was a person that she was not going to take no for an answer. I told her, I said, "Yes, I will work with you," and she started me off. We'd go from door to door every day to encourage the people to register to vote. We start off at eight o'clock in the morning, and we would work all day long. Sometimes we would come back home, but most time we didn't.
I enjoyed working with them, because, you know, I love to talk. I would talk to the people, and I would encourage them to get out and vote. Well, during that time, I had already registered in circuit clerk. At that time I had already registered, so I could talk them into registering. They were so nice. They were so nice. I remember one time after I got through walking, I had left my purse on the lady's porch, and, see, at that time, it wasn't a problem. I went right back and there was my purse sitting on the porch.

They brought in three people, and they stayed here with--my children was in Chicago at the time, and I let them stay here with me. It was Barbara--I can't think of Barbara. She was from New York. She first stayed here.

Rogers: She black or white?

Adams: She was white.

Brooks: NAACP?

Adams: NAACP brought them in.

Jewell: They opened that office up.

Adams: Sure, uptown.

Jewell: On P Street. They was with that voter registration campaign.

Adams: Yes.
Rogers: 1961?

Adams: Right, and they were next door to this office, so they were, you know--

Jewell: The federal registrar.

Adams: Federal registrars were there. That's right.

Jewell: That's where all of that was going on.

Adams: That's the truth.

Jewell: NAACP had that office there next door.

Adams: Yes, they did, right.

Brooks: When did they open that office, do you all remember?

Jewell: Wasn't that '61?

Brooks: I don't think so.

Rogers: Federal registrars was about '65, I think.

Adams: Yes, something like that. Yes, right.
Rogers: Did workers come here during the 1964, during Freedom Summer to help register voters?

Adams: Yes, see, like I said--Barbara Kaplan, that was her name. Barbara Kaplan stayed here with me for a while, and then when my children came back home, she moved to Mrs. Brown's house.

Jewell: Mrs. Brown, right there on the corner.

Adams: Back out on the corner. She moved to her house.

Jewell: You know, where we turned to come in here, and I told you she's in that block.

Adams: Yes. And she and I would go every day to talk to the people. It was really encouraging to them to know that somebody would risk their life to come down here and talk to them. Then after she moved there, then another young man came here. I can't remember his name, but he was from New York.

Brooks: Wasn't Rims Barber?

Jewell: No.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Adams: Rims, you know, he lived over there in the Freedom House, right. Then it was another guy, he came from Canada, he stayed here with us. You see, the reason why, they had already fired us from our job. We
working for Jones and Yander [phonetic], and they fired us from our jobs. Once they fired us from our jobs, Sarah and I, we got into the thick of the battle.

**Brooks:** That's how you got in.

**Jewell:** Right, Sarah got me in. See, I was working at Madison Furniture, unionized. When I got fired from Madison Furniture, that's when Sarah pulled me.

**Adams:** Right, right. Every day we would go, get up eight o'clock in the morning and go all day long. Then five o'clock in the evening, when we got back home, then we had to write out all our reports and turn them in.

**Brooks:** What's the lady's name that wrote the book?

**Jewell:** Flonsie? Ann Moody.

**Adams:** Yes. Is she the one that started this up here at the Freedom House? That was the very beginning, wasn't it?

**Jewell:** Yes, but was Ann at the Freedom House, or did Ann stay with Minnie Loomin [phonetic]?

**Adams:** I don't know. She might have. I didn't say she lived there.

**Brooks:** Ann wasn't from Canton.

**Adams:** No, she wasn't from Canton.
Jewell: She was from down around Woodville.

Adams: But I believe she was the one that helped us start it, wasn't she?

Jewell: The Freedom House. She was here.

Adams: Yes.

Rogers: She worked for CORE.

Jewell: Yes, she worked for CORE.

Adams: You're right. And then after--they went back. The guy from Canada and the guy from New York, and then Barbara, they went back home. Mrs. Gorman had to send Barbara back home, because she was afraid for Barbara, because Barbara was getting a little too friendly with the black boys. So she had to send Barbara. Barbara did not want to go back home. I'm going to tell you what Ms. Gorman did. I had a rough time. She gave me Barbara's money to go to the train station and buy her a ticket, and they didn't want a black woman to buy a ticket for this white girl, but they had to sell her the ticket, and I had the money. [Laughter] She got on the train, right, because, see, I was responsible for her. That's the truth.

Rogers: So this is another wrinkle of what we were talking about.

Adams: Yes. But she was a sweet girl.
Jewell: But she liked those black guys.

Adams: She did, but she was naive and they was crazy about her and she liked them. So we had to get her out of town before we got in trouble.

Adams: See, the reason why we could keep her here, see, my husband working for the railroad, they couldn't fire him. And he was tough. They wasn't going to come here. He always kept a gun.

Rogers: Did he have weapons, a gun?

Adams: Oh, yes, he always kept guns. Right. He wasn't going to go out there and shoot nobody, but they wasn't going to come in here and get her from here. But then once we were over there--what's the name of this street that come down in front of Porter service station?

Jewell: Wilton.

Adams: Is that the name of that little street?

Jewell: Wilton.

Adams: Is that the church, yes. Where the church used to be, the street's where the church used to be on.

Jewell: Nolan's Addition.

Adams: Nolan's Addition.
Jewell: Okay. Southwest Street.

Adams: Yes. That was one of the worst things that happened. I was afraid that day. I and these two white guys was going from house to house talking to the people about voting.

Brooks: About registering.

Adams: Yes, about registering. Then there was, you know, these yellow trucks that carry the men that work on the highways and things.

Brooks: The Roads Department.

Adams: They started coming at us with pickaxes and shovels. Oh, yes, it was four men, and we were sitting right there on that corner, you know, where Ms. Benlivy's [phonetic] daughter live.

Jewell: The house where I showed you when I told you the lady had moved, built a big house and people had moved. It's right in that area where you see where some been torn down, but we turned right past the house, my sister's house.

Brooks: Were these employees of the county?

Adams: They were the employees of the county. They was employees, they was highway people, you know, they dug ditches and stuff like that. I looked up and saw them.
**Brooks:** County or state?

**Adams:** Yes. And I was afraid. They had these yellow trucks, all I know.

**Jewell:** Yes, they drove yellow trucks, yellow trucks.

**Adams:** Yellow trucks, road trucks, and they was coming at us with some--there was about four men coming with picks and things. We turned around and went back and sat on these people's porch, and Fred Singleton and the guys over there at Porter's service station, they looked up and saw us, and they picked up them some weapons. Then Fred came over there in his truck and picked us up and brought us home. That's the way they stopped that. That was the first time I stayed.

But the next time, Ms. Gorman and I and Jimmy Lee Van Buren and these two white guys, we were on our way to an NAACP meeting in Meridian, Mississippi. That wasn't too long after the three civil rights workers had been killed.

**Brooks:** 1964.

**Adams:** And they stopped us, and Ms. Gorman, she a tough little titty, she was the driver, and she wouldn't show them her New York license. She showed them, I think it was a Philadelphia license. She said she was afraid to show them the--and they had her walking the line. See, it was three black women and three white men in this car, and we were on our way to an NAACP meeting in Meridian, Mississippi. And you know what I was doing, don't you? I was sitting there praying. I was sitting there praying. One couldn't get up no faster than the other.

She walked the line. She didn't drink, she drink nothing but Cokes. She walked the line, and the guys, they were very nice. They sat there, because they said, if he had done something to them, we were all going
to die because they were going to fight like crazy for us. Then they give her her license back and told her we could go ahead on. Thank you, Jesus. [Laughter] Then we went on to the meeting in Meridian.

**Rogers:** It was a scary moment.

**Adams:** It was a scary moment, but I know is God is good. Those are the two only times, you know, that I went through something.

**Brooks:** That incident happened in Canton, or outside of Canton?

**Adams:** That was on Highway 80. I'm not sure exactly where we were, that was on our way to Meridian, yes.

**Jewell:** Probably in Rankin County.

**Adams:** I'm sure it was, in Rankin County. Highway 80, right, on our way to Meridian, right, to this NAACP meeting then. I think it was after then then the federal registrars came in.

I was working in the NAACP office, and we got a call from Buffalo, New York. We have some cousins in Buffalo, New York, and they said they heard--we was talking to the people that called from Buffalo, and they heard my name called and they talked to some people, and do you know seven boxes of clothes came in.

**Brooks:** They shipped it from Buffalo?
Adams: What you talking about? And the people would come up there and we would distribute them clothes. That was from our job. See, Flonsie's job mostly was registering people for the NAACP and stuff like that.

Rogers: She was working for the NAACP?

Adams: Right, yes.

Jewell: She and Jimmy Lee Van Buren.

Adams: Yes, right.

Rogers: Where is Flonsie right now?

Jewell: In Germantown, Ohio. She just left last month. She'll be back in February.

Rogers: In all of this, when were y'all first able to vote in big numbers here in Canton?

Adams: You can remember that, because you all were working up there.

Jewell: Was that ’67? That was a big one.

Brooks: The Act was passed in ’65. We had all, around the state, had been working on voter registration in anticipation of the Voting Rights Act being passed. So we actually had a great push in ’65, ’66, and then ’67, leading up to the election in November of 1967.
Jewell: That big one when we so afraid when Mrs. Devine [phonetic] slept out there in that car. That must have been in '66. That was the night when they arrested George Raymond. Wasn't that '66?

Adams: Oh, yes.

Jewell: They arrested George.

Adams: They just beat him upside the head.

Jewell: And he wouldn't [unclear], so they [unclear]. That was in '66?

Adams: And you know John Nichols was the lawyer then.

Jewell: Yes, but that big fine was in '66, because I remember I was the poll-watcher at the National Guard Armory. And I was so scared, and Mrs. Devine stayed outside and laid down in the car, because she said if anything happened to me and Pearl, they needed somebody to tell the story. She covered herself with a blanket so they wouldn't know she was in the car.

Adams: She was a great woman.

Jewell: Because it was like two o'clock, we were still in there because we were paper bound, and they arrested George that night. Beat him up real bad.

Adams: Yes, right.
Rogers: Was it '66?

Jewell: '66.

Adams: But, Jewell, did we first start registering in the armory, or was it at that place where--where is that, the Fred's Dollar Store?

Jewell: No.

Adams: Where did we first start registering?

Jewell: The National Guard Armory was where Fred's Dollar Store, that was the voting precinct, but we started registering up at Foote Camera [phonetic].

Adams: No, I ain't talking about registering, I mean voting.

Jewell: Voting was at the National Guard Armory.

Adams: Armory, because we go up there until four o'clock in the morning and stay there. We'd stay there four or five hours.

Jewell: And the line would be all the way back down to P Street.

Adams: Yes.
Jewell: And we never could win an election.

Adams: That's right.

Jewell: And it was more people.

Adams: Black people.

Jewell: Black people voting than I ever seen.

Adams: That's right.

Jewell: But we never won an election.

Adams: Never.

Jewell: That's when we realized the important thing was getting an election commissioner.

Adams: Right. That's when we got Flonsie.

Jewell: That's when we got Flonsie. They was taking them from us.

Adams: Yes, they were. Because I know they was taking them from them, because we all went. We all were there, all the black people. You had no problem, and we would stand in line six and seven hours.
Rogers: They were just stealing votes from you?

Adams: Had to have been.

Jewell: Because they would go in and count them, they were counting the ballots.

Adams: That's right. And you know Sarah, and Flonsie, and who else was working up there at the armory? Cora Nichols?

Jewell: No, it was me and Pearl at the armory.

Adams: Sarah worked somewhere, didn't she?

Jewell: She was somewhere else, but me and Pearl was at the armory, because Mrs. Devine was out in front of it, out there, and all those people was up on that building across there, that liquor store with those guns with the scopes on them. I never will forget that.

Adams: We were so proud! Ohh, we were so proud to be able to vote, and that's why I can't understand now why you can't get people to vote and all they have to do is just walk in and walk out. We'd stand there for hours in the cold and in the rain, it didn't make no difference. We would be there, Mama, Daddy, my sister Red, and her husband.

Brooks: Who exactly was the constable that was elected in '67? Did you elect a member to the board of supervisors in '67? A justice of the peace. Was it Remmer [phonetic]?

Brooks: U.S. Remmer, sure. He was elected in '67.

Jewell: But that was up in five, District Five. Judge U.S. Remmer, Eddie Lou Smith. Then when Flonsie.

Brooks: She got elected in '68.

Jewell: Yes, but you see, that was when Flonsie got elected, W.P.--

Brooks: Garrett?

Jewell: Garrett got elected.

Adams: Well, didn't his wife, didn't she--

Jewell: Well, see Zenobia [phonetic] went in after that.

Adams: After he did.

Jewell: Yes.

Adams: And you know something else I wanted to mention, Mr.--the head of NAACP at that time, our--Lozmo [phonetic] Boyd.

Adams: Really.

Jewell: By the time I recognized him, I was too far down, I was going too fast, and I didn't stop, but he was coming out of there.

Adams: Yes, he was the president.

Jewell: He was the president of the NAACP.

Adams: That's right. Who is president now here in Canton?

Jewell: John Brown.

Rogers: When y'all got all registered, that meant that you had to elect a new election commissioner so that the votes would be counted fairly. When did you first win big in elections, '67?

Jewell: We lost it. See, that was what I'm saying. In '67 we had Arthur Tate ran for--

Adams: Senator, wasn't it?

Jewell: Circuit clerk.

Adams: The circuit, and Fred Singleton--
Jewell: My husband ran for constable. And Chin ran.

Adams: Yes, Johnny Chin. This was when we ran all of these people on this one ticket.

Jewell: And that was when we had more people.

Brooks: That was '67.

Jewell: Yes, that was in '67.

Jewell: More people voted than ever, and we still lost. And that was when we realized that we need to get somebody on the election grid.

Adams: What's the young man's name that's in Congress now was working with us for--

Brooks: Benny Thompson?

Adams: Benny Thompson. You know, we went around from place to place. We sold chicken dinners to raise money to help put them in and all. Benny Thompson.

Jewell: Benny was in college then.

Adams: I'm tell you, he fought with us all the way. I was so glad when he won.
Jewell: And at that time, Dr. Fronberry [phonetic] fired Arthur Tate, because he told Arthur Tate he needed to make up his mind whether he wanted to be a schoolteacher or a politician.

Adams: Right. And you know Mrs. Tate was fired, too, wasn't she? Oh, she quit, didn't she?

Jewell: Started that business developing. She stopped and ran the business. But he fired Arthur Tate. That's the first teacher was fired.

Adams: Yes. Because the teachers didn't come out.

Jewell: They didn't vote.

Adams: They did not come out to vote, and they was going to lose their job is it hadn't of been for Jewell, and Jewell was one of the main women. And Sarah, and who else was it? Cora Nichols? We'd come to the meetings, and you all would be over there fighting for their jobs.

Jewell: In my interview, when I told you about me, I had to call over to the justice to guard us from my house. Then me and Sarah went and picked up Lawrence Marshall, the guy from the [U.S.] Justice Department, and brought him here, and he started interviewing the teachers because they were firing, I think it was sixty-some teachers, black teachers they fired to make room for white teachers.

Rogers: If they didn't get you for voting, they got you for desegregation.

Jewell: It was always something.
Adams:  Oh, yes. If they could fire you, and you was working with it, they would fire you, you know. That's true, they would.

Jewell:  I remember, too, that first city election. That was when John Nichols ran, that first city election.

Brooks:  In some of the school districts in the Delta, the teachers had to sign a statement saying that they weren't members of the NAACP.

Adams:  Yes, and then some of these older people were afraid to register to vote because they was afraid their checks would get cut off, because we would go to them and talk to them. We'd tell them, "Your check's not going to be cut off."

Jewell:  Because that's what they would have told them. I registered up at the circuit clerk.

Adams:  I did, too.

Jewell:  We had to interpret the Constitution.

Adams:  Yes, oh, yes.

Jewell:  That man didn't have as much education--

Adams:  As we did.

Jewell:  And we had to interpret on his satisfaction.
Adams: That's right.

Jewell: [unclear] County.

Adams: Yes. Yes, that's where I registered, sure did. But registering with the federal registrars, because I had to pay poll tax.

Rogers: You had to pay poll tax?

Adams: Yes. I kept my receipt for a long time.

Rogers: When did you start paying poll tax?

Adams: I just paid it that one time, you know.

Jewell: But you see, my mother--I'm going to look through some of those papers I got, because I can remember it was two tax that black people paid, poll tax and street tax. You remember street tax?

Adams: Yes.

Jewell: Street tax to walk on the street.

Brooks: To walk on the streets?
**Jewell:** Yes.

**Rogers:** To walk on the street?

**Jewell:** We had street tax.

**Adams:** You know, my daddy, they would have to mail in their poll tax, because they wouldn't accept them in order for them to vote. You know, years ago, there was just a scattering few. Mr. Johnny Green, he was one of the first ones. That's right. Harry Rogers. Johnny Green and who else?

**Jewell:** Holman Bonneville guidance.

**Adams:** Mr. Johnson, L.S. Johnson.

**Jewell:** L.S. Johnson. He's very sick now, so you can't get an interview with him.

**Adams:** Right. Yes, they fought hard.

**Brooks:** What preachers were involved?

**Jewell:** Reverend McCree [phonetic].

**Adams:** Right, yes, Reverend McCree. Rev Parker did come in.

**Jewell:** Rev Parker, because you know in Ann Moody's book, you know, that's where she's saying that--
**Brooks:** What conference was he in?

**Jewell:** P-F-5.

**Adams:** You know, that's when they had that big meeting, and we got fired.

**Brooks:** Who else? What other preachers were involved?

**Brooks:** L.S. Johnson. He was a preacher?

**Adams:** Yes.

**Jewell:** He was one of the organizers of the NAACP and was the first president in Madison County.

**Adams:** And Reverend--what's this guy? Yes, and this guy that was on TV. What's his daddy's name? Sadler. Reverend Sadler.

**Jewell:** Reverend L.S.

**Adams:** Sadler. No, is that is his name? He's a Sadler. He was a minister.

**Brooks:** Walter Sadler's father?
Adams: Yes, it is his father. Sadler's father. What is his name? I don't know what's his name, but that's Walter Sadler's father, yes. He was involved.

Brooks: He was a newsman on the TV, one of the first black guys.

Jewell: Walter Sadler's daddy, it's Reverend Sadler down in [unclear].

Adams: Who was the pastor of that church where we used to have all the NAACP meetings at Mrs. M___ Robinson and them's church? Who was the pastor of that church?

Jewell: That was Pleasant Green Church.

Adams: That's where they threw the bomb.

Jewell: Pleasant Green. The first NAACP march was from Pleasant Green. That's what I'm looking for, and that was the reason I went to the Sean Burton [phonetic] Museum, because it's the picture somewhere of my brother and Wilbur Robinson leaving that first march with Reverend--what his name, Robey Harris [phonetic], Reverend Robey Harris.

Adams: What's this other minister that died a few years ago? He lived right down here.

Jewell: Mo Jones.

Adams: No, I ain't talking about him. Wait a minute. His daughter-in-law is a librarian, she's the librarian. Her husband died a few years ago.
Brooks: These were all Baptist preachers, except McCree?

Adams: No. McCree was a--

Jewell: United Methodist. Reverend Johnson and Reverend Parker was Baptist preachers.

Adams: Yes, but Reverend Johnson wasn't in it. Oh, you're talking about L.S.

Brooks: P.F. Parker.

Adams: Yes, P.F. Parker, yes. L.S. was in it, yes.

Jewell: Simon was.

Adams: Yes, Simon.

Jewell: Before Reverend McCree, Reverend Collier authorized the Madison County movement.

Rogers: Is he a Baptist?

Brooks: Collier, no, he isn't a Baptist.

Jewell: But Mrs. Devine said that he might have been Methodist. But Mrs. Devine said that they felt that P. Collier was too old, and that's the political power how McCree pushed Collier out.
Brooks: McCree was on the FDP [Freedom Democratic Party] board, you know. He was on the board of directors at FDP for a long time.

Adams: This preacher I'm trying to think about, he lived down this street.

Jewell: Which street, this street?

Adams: This street.

Brooks: Kermit was from Neshoba County, from Philadelphia.

Adams: His daughter-in-law is a librarian at Rogers now.

Jewell: McCloud.

Adams: McCloud, that's the one, that's the one! Reverend McCloud, that's him.

Jewell: It was McCloud that was the president of the Madison County movement.

Adams: Reverend McCloud. Was it J.L.?

Brooks: J.F. Did he go up to north Mississippi later on and got involved in the Head Start organization?

Adams: I'm not sure.
**Brooks:** J.F. McCloud.

**Jewell:** McCloud, that's right, J.F. McCloud. He was the president of the Madison County movement. And they felt he was too old, and they moved him.

**Adams:** Yes, moved him, so Reverend McCree.

**Jewell:** Joyce Washington was the secretary.

**Adams:** Yes, right.

**Brooks:** That was the United Methodist.

**Jewell:** Yes.

**Jewell:** That was who that was.

**Adams:** That's right.

**Jewell:** I can't remember W_____ minister. [unclear] holiness.

**Adams:** Yes, but they had all the meetings in their church.

**Jewell:** They had to move from Sanders Chapel, which is what?
Adams: Yes, AME, right.

Brooks: Anytime it's a chapel, it's AME.

Adams: Right. I know, I know.

Jewell: I knew them from over there, because they went meetings.

Adams: Bigger and bigger, right.

Jewell: So then they moved over to Walnut Street to Pleasant Green.

Brooks: Who was the preacher there?

Jewell: Well that's where Wilbur Robinson, that was his church. Wilbur was NAA, too.

Adams: His brother wasn't a pastor, his brother is a minister. He wasn't a pastor then, was he? Wilbur's brother is a minister, but he wasn't a minister at that time.

Jewell: No.

Brooks: That's not the same one that's up in Holmes County now?
Adams: No, I don't think so, no. Because, you know, daddy has a picture--in every magazine, daddy's in this picture, and they open the magazine, Sarah got the book of every magazine of where they had this picture made in Wilbur Robinson's church.

Jewell: Well, see, that had to be Sarah, that'd be something that she'd pull out. I'll tell her to pull that out.

Adams: She has this book. Mary gave me that book.

Jewell: I can't remember who was the minister at that time. Methodists move ministers from different places.

Adams: And Mary Robinson, you know, she was--I wish she was here. She died a few years ago.

Jewell: Because they bombed that hall.

Adams: Yes. The bomb didn't go off.

Jewell: They bombed the other people's house. Marian Robinson's house.

Adams: Right. And you know, they tried to bomb this Winnie Cheek's [phonetic] store. It wasn't Winnie Cheek's at that time, but the bomb bounced off, and I think they threw a bomb up here at George Washington, and it bounced off. It just was not meant to be.

Rogers: Y'all just weren't meant to be bombed.

Adams: That's right. [Laughter]
Jewell: George Washington is half blind now from being beaten on.

Adams: Yes, yes, that's true.

Jewell: But he's not a good interview. That's the reason I didn't put his name down.

Adams: He does not remember a lot, and before you finish it, he's helping you to talk.

Jewell: "I helped him, and I got them all out of jail and they owe me now. Then they said if it wasn't for that white man, I wouldn't have nothing. See them white folks my friend, but [unclear]." You know, that's the way it's going to go on and on into nothing.

Brooks: Okay.

Rogers: When did you all first start winning elections here?

Brooks: After '68.

Adams: Flonsie's was the first one, wasn't it?

Jewell: Flonsie's was the first. See we'd won those two in the county.

Adams: Yes, right.
Brooks: Couldn't win nothing in Canton.

Jewell: No. But the unique thing about Canton--okay, you had beat five up there, U.S. Remmer and Eddie Lou Smith, which was, I think, in beat three. It was up in Farm Haven. They only had to run out of their beat. But Flonsie was running out of beat one, but she had to can--it was five beats. Because it was beat one. She had to run in at-large, but she won. That was the first election we had in Canton.

Brooks: See, Canton, for the sake of history, at least, Canton historically has been a majority black county, one of the largest majority-black counties.

Rogers: Madison County.

Brooks: Yes, Madison County, and also the city of Canton has been majority.

Jewell: Sixty-nine or 70 percent always.

Adams: Right, that's true, that's true.

Brooks: And it always disturbed us why it was so difficult for blacks to get elected to public office.

Rogers: Vote stealing, too.

Brooks: Yes, and division, a political division.

Jewell: A political division, because you had the NAACP. You had CORE, you had all of these different--
**Brooks:** FDP.

**Jewell:** FDP, so you had all of these different factions.

**Brooks:** It was hard getting a united front.

**Adams:** And then you had the people that worked at the tent factory, and, you know, if you came out they would tell them they was going to fire you.

**Jewell:** Then you had the bosses that, during voter registration, they would walk and look in the line to see who was voting or registering that lived on their place.

**Brooks:** [unclear] was like that for a long time, too. I'm not surprised that people were worried.

**Jewell:** Because I remember when my mother-in-law and father-in-law registered. They bought all of this land. They had a real big place out [unclear]. Still got it. But the white man that they were friends with, old Leon Hawkins, came up through and was looking, and his brother— they bought that land from this white man named Pearl Hawkins, whose daughter married the mayor of Madison now. That was Pearl Hawkins. It was Pearl Hawkins saw them and wanted to know, say, "What in the hell y'all doing up here in this mess?" And he said, "We came up here to vote."

   And he said, "Well, you ain't voting."

   They were registering. "Whatever you supposed to do, we doing it."

   And then Frank's mama, who was real fiery, said, "And we don't owe you nothing." They had paid their place off.
Brooks: Did you all have the incidents where the white boss man would drive up to the poll with his black maid in the car, and you knew who she was going to vote for? Right?

Adams: Yes. But I tell you what, the rural people started to voting first. The Canton people backed up. The rural people is what started the Civil Rights Movement, yes, they did.

Jewell: Clancy McCullough [phonetic] went to jail.

Adams: Yes.

Jewell: But my mama was scared the night when the tear gas. Mama was scared to open the door for me. Somebody had told her what happened. That's right.

Adams: We were in it, weren't we?

Brooks: What beat is Flora in?

Jewell: Two, I think it's two, beat two.

Adams: We didn't have sense enough not to be in it, once we got in it. Remember we marched all around town. The last was the tear gassing, and the next is when we marched from Tougaloo to Jackson.

Brooks: I remember. I was there.
Rogers: Was that the Meredith March of '66?

Adams: Yes, that was the Meredith March. You know, Meredith got shot, and then Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] picked it up.

Brooks: Most of Tougaloo was in Madison County in those days, but it has since been annexed by Jackson.

Adams: And there was some movie stars marched with us that day.


Adams: Sammy Davis, Jr., came. He didn't march with us, but he had a meeting, you know, a rally that night before it happened.

Jewell: Annie Devine talked.

Adams: Oh, Lord.

Jewell: Annie did the talking. She'll talk about all of the things that she's done. She'll say, "But I never marched." She'll say, "I never marched." She'll say "I was always in the strategy and getting this to this point done."

Adams: She was great, though.
Jewell: But she was always with us.

Adams: She was an organizer. She was out late at night talking on doors. Oh, what you talking about? What you talking about? She didn't have no car, but she walked from place to place. She was always in it. Jewell, do you remember when she and Fannie Lou Hamer and who else was the other lady was in the Congressional--

Rogers: The Congressional Challenge?

Adams: Yes, yes. Right, right.

Brooks: What about the beginnings of Head Start in Madison County? Were you involved in that, Mrs. Adams?

Adams: Right, but you all started in it first.

Jewell: I think you need to hold that for Sarah.

Adams: Because she got into it before I did.

Brooks: What about school desegregation? Did you play a role?

Jewell: That was me.

Brooks: Because your kids were grown and gone.
Adams: Yes, they were.

Brooks: So you didn't have to put not children in the white school?

Adams: No, we didn't.

Jewell: The children of Susie Brown, they all end up—something happened and they had a lot of psychological problems.

Rogers: Were they among the kids to integrate the schools?

Jewell: Yes, yes. Monette [phonetic] had her children--

Adams: What about this Mary--

Jewell: Mary. Okay now, wait a minute. That's the name, I need to put her down. Mary Blackman.

Adams: Blackman, right. And what's Chin's daughter, you know, Chin's daughter?

Jewell: No, she dropped out. Mary Blackman.

Brooks: Was that Ed's first wife?
Jewell: No. That was Mary [unclear]. Mary Smith was the first black to graduate from Canton High. All the rest of them dropped out. Like [unclear], he was with Mary.

Adams: I didn't know that.

Jewell: Yes, but it was so hard, you know, because like Mary said what they would do. Okay, this is her desk. They would leave the desk on this side, you know, here and here.

Adams: She was sitting there by herself.

Jewell: By herself. She said, when they got ready to graduate, they issued invitations, which meant that would keep out so many blacks. So she only had invitations for two or three people; it didn't include her whole family. So somebody slipped--some white person, she don't know who it was, slipped her some more invitations so that her parents could come, because the rest of her family, because she had five or six sisters. But she graduated from Tougaloo, and she teach over there at Nichols down the street.

Brooks: Now?

Jewell: Yes, she's up at Nichols. Her daddy was James Smith, who was a--

Adams: A stone. [Laughter]

Jewell: One of the organizers of the Madison County movement.

Adams: Yes, right, James Smith.
Jewell: James Smith and Mose Greenwood.

Adams: Yes.

Jewell: Mose Greenwood died a couple of months ago.

Rogers: Is James Smith still alive?

Adams: Yes, he live right on the street.

Jewell: He was one of the organizers.

Rogers: Did you stay active in NAACP all through this period?

Adams: I'm not still active in it. I'd like to rejoin. I'm not active in it now.

Brooks: But during that period you were.

Adams: Yes, right, sure was. You remember Juanita Whitehead, you know, she became a real active member of NAACP, and we used to go to the meetings all the time.

Brooks: Were you in the FDP, the Freedom Democratic Party?

Adams: No.
Brooks: Were you, Jewell?

Jewell: Yes, I was. I was with Annie Devine.

Adams: Yes, she sure enough was. I'm telling you.

Jewell: Me and Annie Devine must have gone to a few of the meetings together. You remember when FDP merged with the regulars? You remember that? [Laughter]

Brooks: Don't say that.

Jewell: Okay.

Brooks: I hate people that say that. No, we had to beg some of the FDP outstanding individuals to join the Loyalists, the Loyal Democrats. It was them other folks that tried to make it appear that all of FDP merged into the Loyal Democrats.

Rogers: Who is it that was begging the FDP to join the Loyal Democrats?

Brooks: The liberals, the Ed King kind of folks, right? And the Hodding Carters and Pat Darians [phonetic].

Rogers: Leroy Percy?

Jewell: Owen Cooper and Pat Darian.
**Rogers:** Percy was part of the incorporation of MAP, and I think Owen Cooper was, too.

**Brooks:** Owen Cooper definitely was, and so was Percy. They organized that for Aaron [Henry] as an alternative to CDGM.

**Jewell:** I was in on this, because Mrs. Devine had reorganized and had that first meeting with Tom Redell [phonetic], because he was the chairman.

**Brooks:** We had to convince quite a few FDP people, Clarence Hall and those kind of people.

**Jewell:** What is Clarence Hall doing now?

**Brooks:** He's a gentleman farmer. He has been for the last umpteen years.

**Jewell:** And his wife?

**Brooks:** She's still in the land of the living. His two kids are grown, went to college and all of that.

**Jewell:** Because we worked. I remember working in the election of Clarence Hall.

**Brooks:** He ran for board of supervisors in Issaquena County.

**Jewell:** No, he ran for something else.
Brooks: That's what he was.

Jewell: But he ran for something. Didn't he run for--

Brooks: No, he ran at least twice for the board of supervisors in Issaquena County.

Jewell: Because I helped him with his campaign. I've worked for Clarence working account payment for him.

Brooks: For Clarence Hall?

Jewell: Yes.

Brooks: Well, you must have gone to Issaquena County to help him. [Laughter] I don't know. I may be wrong, but that's what I remember, because he was on the staff of the Delta Ministry, he and Jake [unclear].

Jewell: I used to work with Jake [unclear], because he was with [unclear]. Lilly was in a program for children.

Adams: He's dead, isn't he?

Jewell: Yes.

Adams: But she's still living.
Jewell: She's still living.

Brooks: Who is that?

Jewell: Lilly [unclear].

Brooks: She still works in Head Start.

Jewell: Yes. We all worked together in Head Start.

Rogers: What I'd like to do sometime is pick your brain about people like yourself who went to Head Start and wanted to gain more education and go on through that. That's just a story in and of itself.

Adams: She did.

Jewell: Sarah, too.

Adams: Yes, that's true, that's true.

Jewell: And then Heloise and Mamie. And Chin.

Adams: Chin, right. What's she, a judge now.

Jewell: Mamie got her master's in social work from the University of Southern Mississippi. But we started out, we started going to Jackson State, taking a few hours, and they would give us administrative time, and
we would take our vacation time and use two hours, just to take those hours. We was in Head Start. That's how we started going to Jackson.

**Adams:** And there's got to be some more, too.

**Jewell:** There's a lot of people, but we were the first I can remember that, because I went before Sarah did.

**Rogers:** When did you stop being active with the NAACP?

**Adams:** I don't really remember. I really don't. It's been about ten years ago, I just used to go to the meetings. This friend of mine, we used to go together, and she died, and I think I just kind of drifted on off, you know. Susie Brown was working there at that time.

**Jewell:** [unclear].

**Adams:** Right, because she would go down when they would get in trouble, and she would go down to talk to Aaron Henry about it. He said, "Well I tell you one thing, we're not going to defend chicken stealers." [Laughter] He said, "If they got in trouble and if somebody did them wrong, we're going to fight for that."

**Jewell:** But those kids had psychological problems, I think.

**Brooks:** Whose kids were those?

**Jewell:** Susie Brown's.
Rogers: Did they come from desegregated schools?

Jewell: Right, I think so. But it's one of those kids here. I'm going to see if I can find that boy and see if I can get an interview set up.

Adams: Is that that beautiful home out there?

Jewell: He's in jail. [unclear portion].

Adams: There's one still lives in the house there, in her house.

Jewell: They moved out.

Adams: He still lives in the house?

Jewell: But it's another one.

Adams: Well, who is the one that got the beautiful home they say?

Jewell: Drew. And his mama's not telling where [unclear]. He was smart enough to not put it in his name.

Adams: Beautiful home. He have a guest house looks better than this house. [Laughter]

Brooks: This is who?
Jewell: This is Susie Brown's son.

[End of interview]
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