

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

SOUTHERN ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Carolina Piedmont Project

Interview

with

STELLA FOUST GARDEN

April 25, 1979

Burlington, North Carolina

By Mary Murphy

Transcribed by Jean Houston

Original transcript on deposit at
The Southern Historical Collection
Louis Round Wilson Library

STELLA CARDEN: . . . work I ever did was at Number 3 Spool Room at Schoolfield.

MARY MURPHY: Lots of people around here seem to have come from there.

CARDEN: I was sixteen years old when I went to work over there. And then my family moved here in July of 1929. But I was still over there; I didn't come until February of 1930. And I went to work then at the Burlington Mill. It was about the middle of February, I reckon. They needed somebody to creel, and I already was experienced in creeling. My brother come down to the house and wanted to know if I wanted a job. I said, "Sure," and I went to work on a Thursday. I worked there from then up until, I think, 1932 in December. Well, I was pregnant then, and I quit. And I didn't go back to work until '41. Had two children, and the baby was five years old when I went back to work. I worked from '41 until '57. In March of '57 they laid off just about everybody in the whole winding room and the twister room, and my husband run twisters. I stayed out till I drew all of my unemployment, but of course we had to look for a job all the time we were signing up. I went to work up at Glen Raven the twenty-second of October, 1957, and I worked there a little over fourteen years. I was sixty-five when I retired.

CARDEN:

MM: [Laughter] Having a good time, huh?

CARDEN: Well, I wouldn't call it a good time, because I've had to have that cataract operation, and my eyes bother me some. Some people say that it don't bother them any, but I had glaucoma, too. But I think it's kind of cleared up. And I would love to work now if I could.

MM: Let's go back. Did your family work in the mill in Virginia?

CARDEN: My father ran slashers, and he worked here at Burlington Mills for a while. Then they laid him off there, and he went to Greensboro, and he

worked up there for a good bit until, I don't know, the work got slack or something and they laid him off, and then he started farming from then.

MM: Had he been a farmer before he worked in the mill?

CARDEN: He was a farmer when we moved from the country. We lived out from Chatham, Virginia. He farmed up until. . . . I was eight years old when we moved to Schoolfield. And then we lived around Schoolfield and Danville and out in the suburbs and all till I grew up, and I went to work there.

MM: How come they moved from the farm?

CARDEN: He thought he could make a better living at public works than he was, because he was a farmer but yet he was more of a hired hand on the farm. He worked for wages. And he thought that he could make better at public works than he could there, and so that's one reason why he left the farm. But then he went back to farming after he got older. Daddy died in December of '37.

MM: Did your mother also work in the mill?

CARDEN: She worked in the mill a little, but Daddy wouldn't let her work. He made her stay home and take care of the family. He told her one time she got her a job and went to work, "Now I want to tell you something. You're going to quit and stay home and look after the children, or I'll quit. There's one of us going to be here with them." So she quit.

MM: [Laughter] How do you think you would have liked having your father at home taking care of you?

CARDEN: Oh, he'd have been all right. He wasn't as strict as she was.

MM: [Laughter] How was she strict? What kind of things would you have to do?

CARDEN: We had to do what she said to. And if we had something to do, we did it before we went to play. I remember it was my job to wash the dishes

after supper. And I got through [eating] before any of the rest did, and I was out the door. I played on out till about nine o'clock. The streetlights was on. I was along about eleven years old. And when I come in them dishes was still sitting on the table, but I was sleepy(?), and I went to bed. And they always got up at five-thirty. I had to get up and wash the dishes before breakfast. That was my last time of leaving the dishes. [Laughter]

MM: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

GARDEN: I have four brothers and one sister. I'm the oldest of the group. I'm five years older than my oldest brother.

MM: Did you end up taking care of the younger kids?

GARDEN: I said I'd been working since I could rock the cradle. I have a brother that was next to me that was dead. I was four years old when he died. But I had to rock the cradle. I remember--now this is mean--Mama said, "Run around and shake the baby; he's waking up." Well, what she meant was to gently rock the cradle.

MM: [Laughter] I bet that woke him up.

GARDEN: I paid for it. I can think of a lot of things that I done when I was little. About killing the little chickens.

MM: What was that?

GARDEN: My mother and her sister had gone over to a neighbor. I was around four years old, I reckon, but I remember this very well. My mother's sister's little stepson was old enough to have known better; he was about seven years old. But we found a little biddy that was dead. And we took it out there, and he got a hoe and dug a hole, and we buried it. Well, that said(?) we wanted to bury us some more.

MM: [Laughter]

GARDEN: And I think we killed four of five of Mama's little biddies and buried them. [Laughter]

MM: Boy, you were gory little things. [Laughter] What other kind of games

did you play when you were little?

CARDEN: They don't play games now like we used to back then. We played gutter bug--some call it snake in the gully; some call it gutter bug--and hide-and-go-seek. Played baseball. Hadn't never heard of basketball.

MM: What was snake in the gully?

CARDEN: There was kind of like a ditch you dug or whatever you'd want to divide, and one would get in and the others would run across. The same thing as tag. And then the one that got tagged would have to be down there, and the other one would get out. And then we'd play Stealing Sticks. That was silly, but it was fun then. Each one would have a pile of sticks, and somebody'd slip around ^{and} get some, and the one that'd get the most would win the game.

MM: Was your father a tenant farmer?

CARDEN: When we moved, he was a tenant farmer and he raised a crop that year, but most of the time he just worked for the other people. He done plowing and harvesting and things like that. But he wasn't no real big farmer; we didn't own anything. He would always rent.

MM: I guess you moved to Schoolfield before you would be old enough to work on the farm.

CARDEN: Oh, yes, I was eight years old when we moved to Schoolfield.

MM: What was that like there?

CARDEN: It was nice. I liked it there. From Schoolfield we moved to Chatham, Virginia, and we lived out there a while, and my daddy worked in a lumber plant out there. Then we moved back north to Danville, and he went back to work at Schoolfield, and that was commuting back and forth by streetcar. Oh, we moved around a lot.

MM: Was that just because he was trying to find another job?

CARDEN: No, he would have maybe the same job but just a different location. He always liked to be kind of out in the suburbs like, where he could have his

garden and raise pigs and raise chickens and things like that.

MM: How did your mother like moving around so much?

CARDEN: She didn't complain. She went along. He was the one making a living, and she went along with him. Then there were some places she didn't like too well, but she didn't say nothing about it.

MM: What about going to school?

CARDEN: I hadn't gone farther than the fourth grade.

MM: So that wasn't a big problem in moving around a lot?

CARDEN: Oh, no. Always when we lived in the country, it was so far to go when it was real bad weather. You had to walk; we didn't have no school busses back then, when I was growing up. And then I was the oldest, and every time anything come up I'd have to stay home to help to take care of whatever. So it didn't make too much difference. Nowadays education is the main thing. If you get a job like just, say, digging ditches, you got to have an education, and they'll want a college degree to do it. But my husband couldn't even write his name, but he made a living.

MM: I just was over talking to Mrs. Sweeney this morning, Preacher Sweeney's wife, and she was telling me how neither she nor her husband had gone to more than the third grade and how they had gotten along well.

CARDEN: My husband was fifteen years older than myself. His daddy died when he was three months old, so his mother raised him the best she could back in them days when a woman was paid to work out in the field. He said they lived in the country, and she worked in the field. A man would get a dollar a day, and a woman would get fifty cents, and she could do the same amount of work as he could. Now I'm not for all this here women's lib, as you call it, but now if a woman is doing the same work as a man I think she should have the same pay. But now just to have that Equal Rights, they don't know what they're letting

themselves in for. They'd best forget it. Say if a draft come up. They draft an eighteen-year-old boy, and they could draft an eighteen-year-old girl, too.

MM: Did women do the same work as men and get less pay in the mills?

CARDEN: I don't think so, because most of the work that I did was production work. There wasn't much of the hourly pay, so I don't know about how it was. But I know when I worked here at the Burlington Mill, I was creeling up there and was making \$12.10 for creeling. Well, they put me to winding, and I made \$13.30. And when me and my husband got married, he creeled and I was winding. He was making \$12.10, and I was making \$13.30.

MM: [Laughter] Did that cause any problems?

CARDEN: [Laughter] No. I was making \$1.20 more a week than he was.

MM: Why did your family move from Schoolfield down to North Carolina?

CARDEN: I don't know. They thought it was better, I think. The first time I ever came over here was in 1928. My daddy's brother moved over here, and his family. They had four children, but one of them stayed at his wife's mother's; she had measles. And the other three was exposed to him, and they knew that Sue would have a time looking after them three young'uns with the measles, and they got me to come with them. Well, I come on over here and stayed with them, and I found a job up there at the mill and went to work spooling. I worked three days, I think. The fourth day I went in, and they didn't have no spools for me, and I went home and stayed till dinnertime and went back, and they still didn't have no spools. Well, my machine wasn't running, and I went back. Well, Mama's brother come over here on Friday night. I went back home. [Laughter]

MM: When people would get sick in those days, did they go to the doctor a lot, or did mostly someone in the family take care of them?

CARDEN: They didn't run to the doctor for every little thing, like they

do now. You know, you can't doctor a bad cold now like you used to. I've taken many a dose of Three 6's (?).

MM: What are they?

CARDEN: Castor oil.

MM: [Laughter]

CARDEN: They done a lot of doctoring, just doctor themselves, you know, with old-fashioned mustard plasters and such things as that back when I was growing up.

MM: Were there any herb doctors around or midwives?

CARDEN: They still had some midwives, I think. Mama had nine children, and there weren't but one delivered by a midwife. The baby got in a bigger hurry than they got him to go get the doctor. [Laughter] And that's the reason that they did have her, but she was licensed. That was my youngest brother. She used the drops in the eyes and everything new, just like they did back when they first started . And filled out the birth certificate and all to send it in. You see, she was a licensed one, but that was the only one of us that was ever delivered by a midwife. They used to use whiskey a lot to make medicine. Then Mama had some asafetida; that was the stinkiest stuff. I reckon you've heard of them putting a little bag and wear it around their neck to ward off things. I think mostly colored people done that. My grandmother would take it sometimes, kind of like for indigestion or something; I don't know. That worked (?) real good for it. But Mama put whiskey in a little bottle and put that stuff in there when the baby had a colic, give it a few drops.

MM: Do you remember during 1918 there was a big flu epidemic?

CARDEN: I had it.

MM: What was that like?

CARDEN: Oh, boy. Let's see, Mama and myself and my little brother and Mama's

brother was all "dead" one day.(?) And my mama dug a. . . . The baby was twelve days old. And my daddy had to. . . . You couldn't hire nobody, hardly, for love or money at that time, and they were dying like flies. They had to let people off from the mill to help dig graves. It was awful. And there at Schoolfield, they had what they called a welfare building up there. It was something like the kindergarten; it was a rooming place. In the upstairs, I think they had rooms up there. But anyway, they moved things out and put. . . . It was almost like a hospital. Like if you was living somewhere and you was just boarding and you got sick, well, they taken them up there. It didn't cost them anything. The company had that and had the nurses and doctors to look after them while they were sick. That's one thing about that company over there at that time. That was before they had all that strike over there in 1930, is when they had that big strike, and there was a lot of the people from over there come over here then. I was eleven years old when we had that flu epidemic.

MM: Did they move you up?

CARDEN: No, we were just at home.

MM: Did a doctor come?

CARDEN: Every day. And I know he wouldn't let us have nothing to eat, and I thought they were going to starve me to death.

MM: Did they give you any kind of medicine?

CARDEN: Yes, he give us some medicine. I don't remember too much about that, but anyway he'd give us all a dose of the medicine for one night, and then give us something else for the next day. Just a little broth or something is all we could have. We stayed in bed for nine days. He wouldn't let us out of bed. And keep covered up. We had a little Waterman(?) heater, and Daddy kept that thing red-hot. And Dr. Van--that was the old family doctor; my daddy had seen him as a young feller--opened the door, and he said, "Henry, you sure

have got it hot in here." But Daddy had the windows down about so much from the top. He said, "But I'll tell you, I'd rather it be a little too warm than it to be cold." I don't think he lost but two cases. And one was kind of an old feller, and he lived kind of out on the edge of town, and he had a barn and horses and things. He was real sick, kind of out of his head. He slipped out and just didn't put on no clothes, and it was raining, and he took pneumonia. But he went out barefooted and everything. He was going to see about his. . . . In other words, he was running such a high temperature, he was out of his head. And I don't know what happened to the other, but back in that time most every woman that was pregnant died. I don't know what it was, unless it was the medicines that they give. They didn't know what it was; they didn't know how. . . . It was something new. But Dr. Van treated it just like he did what he called the grippe. A real severe case of the grippe is what he. . . . But I thought I never would get something [to eat]. We had milk cows, and my daddy went milking. I don't know why, but I liked milk when it was first milked and strained up and would still be warm. And light bread. You had to cut it yourself; they didn't have this sliced bread then. I remember cutting my finger cutting me a slice of bread. And I'd dip it in that milk. Dr. Van came by one day, and I said, "Doctor, when can we have something to eat? I'm getting tired of a little wet bread and milk."

MM: [Laughter]

CARDEN: He said, "Since when did somebody tell you you could have wet bread and milk?"

MM: [Laughter]

CARDEN: He said, "I think you can have something to eat tomorrow." I was so tired of that little old thin soup, a little chicken soup. Put a little old piece of chicken in a pot with a lot of water and maybe put a drop or two of

butter in it. It was nourishing, I reckon, but. . . . Like I told a woman when I was in the hospital, they brought us some. . . . Said it was chicken soup. I said, "A rooster might have flown across the pot while it was boiling, but it don't taste like no soup to me."

MM: [Laughter] That must have really been something, because at that time people had gone off to World War I as well, and all these people dying from the flu.

CARDEN: Oh, it was awful.

MM: What happened to the mills up there? Were there enough people to. . . .

CARDEN: Yes, they kept going. My granddaddy still worked on. He was staying there. Daddy would do the cooking and waiting on us. Two of my brothers was still up, and they stayed outdoors the biggest part of the time, a-running. I don't know when they ever got in a bath or anything. Daddy was so busy, and we was so sick, and everything. But anyway, you take he had to tend to a little baby. Couldn't get nobody to come in to do nothing. He tried everywhere to get somebody. Everybody was afraid of it. The ones that didn't have it was afraid of it. My granddaddy come home one evening, and my daddy was fixing to go milk. My granddaddy said, "Henry, what have you been doing all day that you ain't milked yet?" He said, "Nothing. I haven't been doing nothing." Dr. Van told Daddy that he'd found another fellow that hadn't been having nothing to do. I think there were six of them in the family, and they was all "dead" but him, and he was waiting on all the rest. Said, "He don't have nothing to do either." He'd just go from one bed to another and hand them a drink of water, let alone having to watch the time to give the medicine and things like that. I think he done real well.

MM: Did you have all kinds of childhood diseases like measles and chickenpox?

CARDEN: I had the measles. I think Mama said I had the mumps when I was

about two years old, and the whooping cough. And then I had the chickenpox and the measles. I never had the German measles, but I had the regular red measles. But that's all I ever had. Well, that's all there is to it, measles, mumps, chickenpox, and whooping cough. And my sister and myself were the only ones of us six children to have whooping cough. She's the youngest, and I'm the oldest.

MM: So you didn't have it together.

CARDEN: I don't know whether all of them has had the mumps or not. I don't know whether Odie ever had them, or Willie, but Kerston--that's my oldest brother--didn't have the mumps until his children was having the mumps.

MM: That's interesting how some people don't catch it.

CARDEN: The funny thing was, he had them in one side, and he went back to work and worked a week, and then he took them in the other side. The only children he had then was Louise and Carrie and Henry and Sam. He had four children by the time he had the mumps. No, he had five, because Glenda Fay was a baby, and I don't think she ever had them, because she was just a little. . . . You know, little bitty ones don't take things as much, or as easy, I don't think, as the older ones do.

MM: What was the first job that you learned when you went into the mill?

CARDEN: Spooling.

MM: What did you think about going to work in the mill?

CARDEN: I really don't know. I just thought, "Well, golly." I know my first pay envelope I got had \$4.02, I believe.

MM: For how many hours of work?

CARDEN: I went to work on a Thursday, and I worked Thursday and Friday and a half a day Saturday. See, that was for hourly pay. At some of the plants at that time, you went to work and you didn't get any pay at all until you learned the job and was working. But they did pay me. I remember Icy Norman

telling about when she went to work up here, she didn't draw a cent until she learned the job and they put her on production.

MM: Yes, she told me about that.

CARDEN: But there at Schoolfield, they paid you to learn.

MM: You came here before that big strike in Schoolfield.

CARDEN: Oh, yes, it taken place sometime in '30. I don't know just when. But gee whiz, they rolled out from over there [to] over here. I don't know if the people that I knew when I was working over there.

MM: Did they talk about the strike up there?

CARDEN: No.

MM: They just left.

CARDEN: I think that the way that it worked out, the plant just shut down. And the ones that was on the strike belonged to this union. The heads of that union took the money and was gone. I heard--I don't know whether it was so or not--that they went to Russia. It was some kind of Reds, you know, the name of it was. I don't know whether that was so or not--I know I wasn't there to know nothing about it--but anyway, they said the big heads of that union, that all these dues and everything that had been paid in was all gone.

MM: When you were working up there, did anybody try to get you to join the union?

CARDEN: Where?

MM: Up in Schoolfield?

CARDEN: No, there wasn't even no talk about no union while I was working there. They have tried to get a union up here several times, but I don't think anything has ever come of it. I don't like that union business.

MM: How come?

CARDEN: Well, if it was carried out right, maybe it'd be all right, but

you look at what kind of shape other things get into before you think about striking. Well, now, he goes on strike for a few cents more, and it drags on and on; how long does it take them when they go back to work to make up all that time they've lost? I just don't think it's right.

MM: How was Burlington Industries to work for?

GARDEN: They was pretty good. I got along with everybody.

MM: You came back in 1930. Was it hard to get a job? That was in the beginning of the Depression.

GARDEN: No, it wasn't too hard. But I think that a lot of times people would come by, and they'd get a job, and they'd work long enough and get a little money to go on, and think they'd get something better. No, I didn't have any trouble at all getting a job. But gee whiz, you'd see the freight trains. You know, the railroad then . . .

BEGIN TAPE I SIDE II

GARDEN: . . . oh much out-of-work people, so many things And they were going from one place to another trying to find work. We were lucky that we was here and was working, and then worked on. Then later on there were some of the plants that shut down, but they kept this one going, said this one was their very beginning, [it] was the starting of the whole thing, and Burlington Mills has really grown since I've been here.

MM: On those freight trains that people were riding, would people get off in Burlington and try to get a job here?

GARDEN: Yes. When I come here, that was the Piedmont Site^(?), they called it, the Burlington Mill and the Piedmont Site, and the Carolina Silk Mill and the Alamance Novelty. One of my brothers worked at the Alamance Novelty, but me

and one of my brothers worked at the Burlington Mill, and my mother worked up there a little while.

MM: When you saw those people riding on the freight trains, did you ever notice any women, or were they mostly the men?

CARDEN: They were mostly men. I don't think I ever saw any women, unless maybe they was dressed up like men. They was always just passing, and we'd see them. I can't think whether they did or not.

MM: What did people think of them? Did they call them hoboes, or did they feel that they were just people that were looking for work?

CARDEN: I think they really called them just people that was looking for work. They kind of felt sorry for them, because there was a lot of people right here in this town that didn't have any work.

MM: Was there any kind of public relief here in Burlington to help people out?

CARDEN: I don't remember whether there was or not. I hadn't been here but just a short while myself, and I don't know whether they. . . . Yes, they had the welfare, but they could just do so much. There was so many of them, and so desperate. Sometimes I wonder how we all got through such times.

MM: Where did you meet your husband, here in Burlington?

CARDEN: Yes, I met him up there in the preparatory department, I think you'd call it. He was creeling. He creeled and run a twister. They had one old twister over there, and he was an experienced twister hand, and when they'd have to run some filling or something, he'd run that twister a while, and he creeled. I met him when we went to work--that was in 1930, in February--and in 1931, on December the twenty-sixth, we were married.

MM: What did people do when they were courting in those days?

CARDEN: There wasn't nothing much to do. We worked at night. There

wasn't anything around here to do. He boarded with his cousin, and I stayed at home. But usually we'd go somewheres about every weekend. His cousins had people lived in Hillsborough, and his cousin's wife had people in Durham, and we'd go with them to visit their people. We went all the way to Pink Hill one weekend to a dance down there. [Laughter] Neither one of us would dance, but we all went. It was just for a good time. But that was some of their people that lived down there in Pink Hill. That's down around Kinston.

MM: Didn't you like to dance?

CARDEN: I didn't dance then, no. I used to dance when I was young, though, Boy, every fall we'd get. . . around in the neighborhood on the street when we lived in north Danville. And through the winter, this set of people would have a dance at their house one Saturday night go around. We danced on Saturday night.

MM: Did people do that down here?

CARDEN: No, I don't think so.

MM: I was talking to Lottie Adams, who lives over on Piedmont.

CARDEN: Oh, Lottie, I know her. She was a real good friend.

MM: She was telling me the same thing.

CARDEN: Oh, she's a bird.

MM: [Laughter]

CARDEN: We used to have more fun. Have you seen the Shoemakers?

MM: Yes.

CARDEN: Mattie and Belle(?). I've been knowing them for a good while. Well, they haven't been here so much longer than I have, I don't think, and I don't know where they came from. I think they came from up in the mountains.

MM: Yes, they did.

CARDEN: But Lottie used to have some of her tricks that she'd play on the people when she was here working.

MM: Really? What did she do?

CARDEN: [Laughter] A lady was sitting down at the job, and they used to wear aprons to work , and she slipped and tied her apron strings to the back of the chair. [Laughter]

MM: Would people play jokes on other people in the mill a lot?

CARDEN: No, not too much, because they were too strict about horseplay, they called it, because around machinery you can't do very much like that. But this lady was inspecting cloth; there wasn't no machinery or anything. Lottie told about tying that woman's apron strings. She knew who done it just as soon as she got up.

MM: [Laughter] What did the woman do?

CARDEN: Oh, I don't know. That's a long time ago. Let's see if there's anybody else I know you could talk to. You know, there's so many of the people that I did know that work here, you see.(?) After I left Burlington Mill, I went to Glen Raven and I worked up there for over fourteen years. I've been retired seven years.

MM: Did you notice a lot of difference in the management between Glen Raven and Burlington Mills?

CARDEN: It was about the same thing. I did about the same work. I first was cone winding, and I wound off (?) the bobbins. They had bobbins here. I wound. At the Burlington Mill I creeled a while. They put in them automatics after I quit work, when I was raising my family. And then when I went back to work, I was winding. See, I already knew how to wind. I know a little bit of everything and kind of piddled around on some of the work. The last work I done was what they called then mixed counts(?). It was just everything all poured out together. I separated the good from the bad and sorted it out and run that. That was regular hourly pay on that. I was always bad on production.

Everybody would get better production than I did, because I was always too precise on what I was doing. That was when I was working up there at Glen Raven. I hated to be supplemented, because I was doing all I could do and the best I could. There was a timekeeper up there--I forgot what her name was--told me I didn't have nothing to worry about if I didn't get production. Said they was pleased with my work. And I was there every day; I was very seldom ever out. And I done good work. And said that even if I didn't get up to that production that some of them was getting, I was equal about to what they did, because they'd be maybe out a day or two days every week, but I was there every day. I always tried to do my best on whatever I was doing; I wanted to do it right. And if I can't do it right, I ain't going to do it at all.

MM: Did you notice a big change in the machinery between the time when you had quit work and when you went back about ten years later? Did you have to relearn jobs?

CARDEN: No. They had put in some new machines, different from the others, but they were so near alike that it was no trouble to catch onto them. And then they had some other little old machines up there. I forgot what you call them. They were skein winding, and you wound it on cones. A universal machine, I believe, is what they were. I had to learn to run that, but it was so simple it didn't take me but a little bit to catch onto that. I worked on that a while. Then they had another little old machine over there. I worked on that, and they sent it to . They wanted to know if I wanted to go on over there to run it over there. I said, "It's too far to walk." I was living back over here in the country, over there at Alamance Hills. You know where Carroll Furniture Store. . . . There was woods out there, and it had been a tack barn. And they built a lean-to on each end of it and made two rooms and about a twenty-by-twenty living room. Made a house out of it.

And I lived in that thing for nearly eleven years. I bought some of that Wall-Rite paper, and I papered the walls, put linoleums on the floors, painted the kitchen. It looked pretty nice inside. It didn't look so good on the outside, but we had it looking pretty good on the inside. I had some nice furniture in there, nicer than what I got now.

MM: When did you move to this house?

CARDEN: It'll be twenty-six years the thirteenth of June we bought this.

MM: When you quit work and had your children, was that common? Did a lot of women quit for quite a while when they had their children?

CARDEN: Oh, yes.

MM: And then go back later?

CARDEN: Yes. I would have went back sooner, but my husband wouldn't let me. He said that my place was at home taking care of the children.

MM: How did you feel about that?

CARDEN: It didn't make no difference to me. I just didn't have that extra money to spend. And I told him whenever I went back to work. . . . I begged and I pleaded. I remember I went down to Swepson[ville] and got a job down there. I worked two weeks. [Laughter] They sent me home on Friday, to go back to work on Sunday night, I believe it was. So Sunday evening I got busy around, getting ready, and he said, "Now where do you think you're going?" I said, "I'm going to work." He said, "Are you going to walk?" I said, "No, I'm not going to walk." He said, "Well, if you go down there, you'll walk." He had been up there at Mrs. Parsons' and called the taxi not to come after me. And I had asked him several times about seeing about me going to work over here. "They don't need nobody." I believe Hubert Stout was the supervisor in the plant at that time. I said, "Did you ask about it?" "They don't need nobody." "They don't need nobody." So I got off down to Swepson[ville]; my brother

carried me down there. I got me a ride and everything. But I didn't work but about seven days in the two weeks. You know, we'd work a day and be out, work a day and be out. I didn't like that, but still I thought, "Well, maybe they'll get started off after a while." And he went and called them and told them not to come back after me, that I wasn't going to work anymore. Both times that I went to work at the Burlington Mill, I went to work on a Thursday. I was thinking about it. This was in '41.

MM: Were you angry when your husband called the taxi and told them not to come?

CARDEN: No. It made the children kind of upset about it, though. Shirley was five years old, and James was eight. And they didn't like it, because they thought if I worked. . . . See, my sister was staying there with them. She'd look after them. And if I worked, we could go to the show and we could go to town. But with just him working, no more than he was making, he done well to pay the house rent and keep us in food. He told me then that Stout said for me to go over there to see about the job. I didn't even have a Social Security number. So I had to go all the way uptown to the employment office up there then and fill out some papers up there. Well, they filled out the papers, and I told the woman I had to go to work that night and said something about the Social Security number. Said well, I'd probably get it in time to go on the payroll. Then I had to come back from there all the way down here to the office down here and then walk home. But, of course, I caught the bus to ride up there when I went to town. I'd catch the bus over here at the crossroads, and it would go to town. Then I could catch the bus from there going back, coming around by the mill, and get off there, but I walked from there home. I walked back and forth to work from over there and over here. Daytime I'd walk, but at night, working third shift, I had to have a ride. Walking home every

morning would have been all right; it was going to work at night. I couldn't walk it by myself. So I went down and got my papers and everything. I went to work at eleven o'clock every night. I was working six days, too, a week whenever I was working. They wouldn't let us go to work on Sunday night till twelve o'clock. Now they go to work at eleven, but back then nobody worked on Sunday. Very seldom anybody worked on Sunday. I worked a while, and they wanted some work done, a lot of back winding and one thing and another, on the first shift, and nobody didn't want to. And they took me off the third shift and put me on the first shift till we got that caught up and then said I'd have to go back on the third. Well, back then, they was thinking of(?) rationing gas. I didn't have a ride. And I told them to just forget about it; they could just give me my time and I'd stay home. Otis Hollis was the plant supervisor then. He went on there, and after a while he come back. He said, "You got a reprieve. You stay on the first shift."

MM: Did your husband always work at the Burlington Mill?

CARDEN: He worked most of the time at the Burlington Mill. He worked down at Swepsonville. They had a layoff over here at the Burlington Mill one time. That was back in about '35, I believe. I know it was right before Shirley was born; she was born in '35. And he worked down at Sweps, and he'd go back over to the mill. He was on the first shift down at Sweps, and he wasn't going to work the next week. They were going to start up that work a week and off a week. One evening he come home, and he said, "I believe I'll walk over to the mill and see what they're going to do." And he went over there, and he went to work that night on the second shift.

MM: There was another strike in 1934. Do you remember anything about that one?

CARDEN: Oh, yes. The people up here didn't exactly strike. They just closed down. You know, all this crew come in from someplace else, and they just shut down. I don't think there was very many of the employees of the Burlington Mill that had anything to do with it. I went back to work, though, and worked five weeks after that strike. James was a baby. That's my son. That's been a long time ago. He's forty-six years old. [Laughter] He was forty-six the nineteenth of this month. That was last Friday. Then I have two brothers whose birthday was Saturday. One of them was sixty-five, and the other one sixty-three. There's exactly two years' difference in their ages.

MM: What was this neighborhood like when you first moved here? People have said that a few years before you got here, it had been a real rough neighborhood.

CARDEN: Oh, it was kind of a wild bunch, I think, but we never did have any trouble or anything. It ain't nothing like what they say Haw River was.

MM: What was Haw River like?

CARDEN: [Laughter] I don't know.

MM: I never heard that one before.

CARDEN: I've heard that Haw River was pretty rough, and if any out-of-towners went to see any of the girls down there, they'd get rocked when they left. [Laughter]

MM: My goodness.

CARDEN: My kids went to school at Haw River. See, we lived over there in the country, and they rode the bus to Haw River. They called them "river rats." Let's see, the "highlanders" and the "river rats." If their parents lived back out from Haw River, they was the "highlanders," I think, and the ones that lived around the Haw River was called "river rats."

MM: So they protected their women, huh?

CARDEN: Oh, that's been years and years ago. I've heard them talking about that. And they'd slip around and let the air out of their tires on cars. They'd be parked out in front of the girl's house, and they'd sneak around and let the air out of the tires.

MM: [Laughter] Did anything like that happen around here?

CARDEN: Not that I know of. Of course, this part of the neighborhood I'm living in now is just an awfully quiet neighborhood over here. Nobody bothers anybody. There's not much visiting goes on, but you have some sickness or a death or need a favor, all you've got to do is just. . . . They're there. That's just the way that we are around through this neighborhood.

MM: Have most of the people that live here been here for a long time, like you?

CARDEN: There's one family on this side of the street that was here when I moved here, and that's the Rudds, out at the very end in the brick house. That's the only family that's still on this side of the street. My first cousin was living next door, and they sold out and moved. [Talks about people who've lived in neighborhood, including Nellie Hall, who was skein-winding at the mill about the time Icy Norman was working there.] There's colored people lives at the first apartment up on the end. I think they've bought it. I know there was a "For Sale" sign out there for a good while, and after they moved there that "For Sale" sign left, so I figure they bought it. But it's awfully quiet; you hardly ever see anybody. You see cars parked out there and all,

or they'll go in and go out. They keep everything so neat and clean all around.

MM: People have told me that a lot of families hired colored ladies to take care of their kids when they were working in the mills here.

CARDEN: Oh, yes.

MM: Would those ladies stay all week? They didn't live in this neighborhood,

did they?

CARDEN: I don't know about here. But I know when Mama was working, she had a colored lady to stay with us, and she stayed nights. And then when I went to work, I had a colored girl to stay with my children, and she stayed nights, too. She had a baby, and she wanted to know what she could do with the baby. I said, "Bring it on with you." I needed somebody to stay, and she stayed nights. She'd go home on weekends. Her parents didn't live far from where we lived. She'd be there in the mornings to start fixing the breakfast and all. That was before I went on the first shift.

MM: This was when you were working the night shift.

CARDEN: Yes. Fletcher was always good to get up and get things started every morning. She said to him one day, "Mr. Fletcher, you just wait and let me call you for breakfast." He said, "I ain't used to it." He'd get up and go to the spring. We used water out of the spring. That was when we lived over there in the country. He'd get up and go to the spring and get some fresh water every morning. But there was a lot of them. My sister had a colored girl staying with her, tending her children. She went home in the evening and then come back in the morning. Her husband Alan worked the first shift at Bell Telephone Company, and Doris worked the third shift. Well, she had to have somebody so she could get some sleep herself. And this girl would go home at night and come back in the morning. There's a lot of them do that now. I think about some people talking about colored people doing this and doing that and the other. Well, why did they used to. . . . They trusted them with the most precious thing that they had in the world, with their children.

MM: Yes. It does make you wonder, doesn't it?

CARDEN: Yes. "I wouldn't want to live close to this. I wouldn't want to live. . . ." When I lived over there in the country, some of the best neighbors

I had were colored people. They'd do a favor for you; all you had to do was just name it. Help you out in everything you had to do. I know they had a garden, and I had a garden, and sometimes they'd have one kind of vegetable, and I'd have something else, and we traded. I don't mean now just to live with them or sleep with them or. . . . You know what I mean?

MM: Yes.

CARDEN: Get married to them and things like that. But they're human like we are. God made them the same as He made us. After we get to Heaven, we'll all be the same color.

MM: Right. [Laughter] I had wanted to talk to some of the colored ladies that had taken care of people. Do you know if any of them are still around?

CARDEN: No, I don't. The one that took care of my children, I don't even know where she's at now. And her parents are dead.

MM: When you were working up at the mill, did you ever know Spencer Love?

CARDEN: No, I think I had seen him a time. . . . You know him?

MM: No.

CARDEN: I think I saw him a time or two, but I didn't never meet him.

BEGIN TAPE II SIDE I

CARDEN: He was the one who baptized me. We've got a good pastor now, too.

MM: That's Preacher Swinney's son-in-law, isn't it?

CARDEN: Yes, his son-in-law.

MM: Where yere you baptized, up at this church [Glenhope]?

CARDEN: Up here at this church, yes. I think I was about the second baptism that they had up there after they built the new church.

MM: Mrs. Swinney seems to think that once a lot of the people started going

to church, that they became better workers.

CARDEN: Maybe so. They'd feel more responsible, I think, or know what they need [mean?] better after. There's so many that goes to church that I know their faces but I don't know their names. A lot of the ones that I did know have done passed on. My mother was one of the oldest members up there.

MM: When you came here, she did work in the mill for a while?

CARDEN: Yes, she was skein-winding for a while. The way that that started out, she was up there to help my brother. There weren't no fence or nothing around the mill then. Anybody just walked in anytime they got ready. And as long as they didn't bother nobody, there wasn't anything said. Well, Mama would go up there and help Odie. He was about seventeen at the time, was working, and she would help him. One night they didn't have any sweeper, and they wanted Odie to sweep. Well, they couldn't pay him for sweeping and winding, too, so they put Mama's name on the payroll [laughter]. So that's the way she got on the payroll up there. I'd say that was kind of a sneaky way to . . .

MM: Really. [Laughter]

CARDEN: Boy, she was a humdinger, though, Mother was. That's her picture. That was made about three weeks before she died.

MM: How old was she then?

CARDEN: Ninety-three.

MM: Wow, that's amazing. And who's this?

CARDEN: That's my grand-niece. It's one of her great-grandchildren. They give me that picture the other night when they was over here, and I've still got to frame that. She's six years old. When Mama died, all these splotches done dropped off of her legs.(?)

MM: How did your father feel about her going to work in the mill down here?

CARDEN: He was working in Greensboro at this time. He had quit working down

here, and he was working up in Greensboro. See, he stayed up there. Then he'd come home on the weekends. And Mama went to work up there. It was on nighttime, too. Her daddy was living with us. After he got sick, she had to quit and stay home with him, look after him.

MM: Had he always lived with you?

CARDEN: He lived with us almost from the time Grandma died, and I was three years old when Grandma died. He remarried, though, but he and his second wife didn't live together a year, and he come back to our house. Then when we moved to Schoolfield, there was an old widow lady up there and they got to courting, and they got married. And they lived together about six months, and he left her.

MM: [Laughter]

CARDEN: They didn't get along. She had a big family, though. I don't know just how the situation was, but he didn't ever leave us anymore; he stayed with us until he died. He was seventy or seventy-one, I think, when he died. He died in 1931 in November.

MM: Was it common for family members to go up and help one another out up at the mill?

CARDEN: Not necessarily. Some of them, their family worked there, but they wasn't there just helping somebody. Mama didn't do it every day, but she'd just come up and help him out sometimes, and she'd go home before stopping time. She'd be doing the housework and one thing and another. But that night she was up there helping, they needed somebody to sweep, so she got on the payroll, and then she worked regular for them from then until she had to quit to stay home with my granddaddy.

MM: Had your father tried to get a job up here, or had he just decided to stay in Greensboro?

CARDEN: When we first moved here, he worked up there. I don't know what it was all about, why he quit, but it was some misunderstanding or something in the line of work, and there was another man took the job for less than what Daddy was getting paid for it. He said he couldn't work for that, and he just quit, and he went to Greensboro and got a job up there. I believe he worked up there at White Oak. There was three different mills up there. There was White Oak and , and I forgot what the other one was.

MM: Would they try to hire people at a lower wage?

CARDEN: I don't know. I just know about that incident, that this person would take the job for less than what he was doing.

MM: What kind of work was that?

CARDEN: He run slashers. He was a slasher man. Worked on them for years.

MM: Did you generally like working in the mills?

CARDEN: Oh, yes. I'd rather work than to stay home. That's really not such a lousy attitude.(?) [Laughter]

MM: [Laughter] Looks okay to me. Did any of your children go to work in the mills?

CARDEN: Yes, they did, too.

MM: Did you want them to?

CARDEN: Shirley worked when she wanted to. She's been married about seventeen years now. I've got four grandchildren, one fifteen, one thirteen, one'll be twelve in July, and the baby's three. She'll be four the eighth of January, and I'll be ~~sixty-three~~ the seventh. [Remainder of tape omitted.]
[seventy-three]

[End of interview]

Stella Carden (after tape off)

she and husband never had fight in ~~15~~ all years of marriage
he was 15 years older than she, ~~xxx~~ didn't have much in common;
things she ~~xxxxx~~ liked to do, he had already done, didn't care ~~xxx~~ about
anymore; set in his ways

but tongue is ~~xxxx~~ most evil tool we have, and ~~xxx~~ once a thing is said, no
amount of apologies is going to take it or the hurt away

so would ignore each other when in a huff, ~~xxx~~ not get into fights

uses ~~x~~ same ~~xxxxxx~~ philosophy with children

showed ~~xxxxxx~~ pictures of cat ~~xxx~~ mother (92 when died)- a strong willed deter-
mined woman, children and grandchildren/ ~~xxxxxxx~~ didn't show me picture of husband
though think it was on mantle.

Mary Murphy