

Tape Log

Interviewer: William Jones

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Interviewee: Marie Cobb

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Location: Cobb Home, Georgiana, AL

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<u>Counter No.</u>	<u>Topic</u>
000	Introduction, Marie Lewis Cobb and Freddy Mae Cobb Thorton, her daughter.
005	Grandmother was from Georgiana. Granddaddy was raised here also, between Georgiana and Chapman. She doesn't remember much about him. Her grandmother's house burned down and they moved to Chapman.
016	She moved into Chapman and lived there with her mother. They stayed in Chapman for 50 years in the same house. Her father worked in the mill. Her daughter was young when her grandmother's house burned down. Her brother and her cousin all worked in the mill, and her father. The house that they lived in had been her grandmothers, it was between Chapman and Georgiana. Her grandmother owned land and her uncle sold it. It was a "good bit of land." Her uncle was living in Georgiana. He sold it and moved to New Orleans. They sold the land in the 1930s. Freddy Mae was born in Chapman in 1932. Marie was born in her grandmother's house. That house burned and her uncle didn't want to fix it. He sold it to a man in Georgiana.
053	She lived with her mother, father, brothers and sisters. Mother's name was Ethel Lewis. Her father was John Lewis. He worked at W.T. Smith. She can't remember what his job was. He worked at the mill.
065	Her mother worked at "white folks house, cookin'". She was a very good cook. Ain't never been to school, ain't no nothin'. But she was a very good cook." Black women worked in white people's houses. All white people had black women working in their houses. She doesn't know what the white women did. They worked in their own houses. She worked for Mrs. Bill Stallworth. She was school teacher. Later, Marie worked at the commissary.
077	Her father passed before she came out of school. He died just before Freddy Mae was born. She came out of school one March. She remembers that he died just before school was out.
093	It was "good" growing up in Chapman. She doesn't know why, but it was better than it is now. Freddy Mae agrees. It was small. They played basketball in the indoor school. She was just talking to someone at work about how nice it was. It was not hard for black people. Freddy Mae only remembers one incident when a white boy teased her about having to shave her head to get rid of ringworm. She beat him up and put an end to it.
108	They had a school for blacks and one for whites. When she worked for Mrs. Stallworth, she would send dinner to her at school. The Chapman went to 12 grades until they started busing kids to Georgiana. Freddy Mae was married when she was 16. In 1951 she moved to New York. They started busing to Georgiana around then. Most people moved to Georgiana or Greenville during the strike (1955). Freddy Mae's husband work at the mill during the night. He went to school during the day and played basketball.

- 132 People came from all over the surrounding countryside to work in the mill. People didn't come far, mostly from Greenville and Georgiana. Others came from out in the country. Those people who came from the county stopped during the strike. But they worked year around before then. They didn't go back to the fields. Marie went to 10 grades in Chapman. Her father got thresh and died. She left school then and worked in people's houses. Later, she went to school in Georgiana.
- 155 She went to bording school in Calhoun. They only had 6 grades in Chapman (?). The school in Calhoun was a Rosenwald School. It was interracial. "It was a white and colored school." She had to leave when her father got sick. He couldn't pay for the school. The she went back to school in Georgiana.
- 182 Chapman was a small town. On saturday night there were dances and parties. They had dances at the school house. When they were young they would lay out on the porch and listen to music. It was big band music. They school payed for it and they would each pay a fare. It was a lot of fun. Marie was a good dancer. They would do the Charleston, the Jitterbug. She used to wear "crazy" hats. The company didn't pay for them. Claude Shannon used to play there in the 1930s and 40s. They were from Montgomery. Marie and Freddie couldn't go out together.
- 209 Freddie has never been to the Hank Williams Museum in Georgiana. Marie never went to Thigpen's Log Cabin. It was an interracial club, but she didn't was to go with her daughter. There was enough going on in town. They showed movies at the school.
- 224 The county was dry then. Freddy used to bring scotch in her suitcase when she came to visit. She didn't like moonshine. They would sneak outside and have moonshine at the dances. She thinks it tastes horrible. They sell it in the liquor store now. Her husband likes it. She has to bring him some when she visits. One time her bag got lost with a bottle of moonshine. She got it back.
- 259 Claude Shannon was from Montgomery. They can't remember other names. Marie used to go to parties at the CCC camp. It was on route 31 just outside of Chapman. They had a big place for dancing there. The men would invite her and she wouldn't miss it. She quit a job once to go to the CCC camp. She worked for a "mean woman." Marie went to the commissary and Mrs. McGowin said she sassed her. McGowin came to Georgiana to pick up her daughter before dinner. She told Marie that she could go home and change clothes. Marie went to the store and picked up packages that her mother had left there. Her mother and Freddy Mae were getting ready to go to Pittsburg. When McGowin got back she knew that Marie was not coming back. Marie had told the butler that. She was angry because one of the little boys had stolen 20 cents in change and Mrs. McGowin blamed her. She left over that. It was the same night as a dance at the CCC camp. She quit and went to the dance. She didn't quit to go to the dance. She didn't have a hard time getting another job because she was a good cook. "I could cook, and they knew I could. And I could walk from one job to another."
- 322 She walked to the CCC camp from town. Few people had cars. Nick Armdale lived a few doors down. He was the only black person who had a car. He drove Freddie and her grandmother to the train when they went to Pennsylvania. There was a train station in Chapman, but they went to Greenville becuae there were more trains. He drove a T-Model Ford.
- 344 In Chapman the company owned everything. They ran the police force. The mayor was their friend. They controlled everything. People had no

- control. They owned the Hotel and the Commissary. Marie still remembers it as a nice place. "We mind our own business." They had some control. If she wanted anything from the commissary, he could get it. Mr. Cook owned the store. If he wouldn't give her something, she would tell Mrs. Stallworth. She would tell Cook to give it to her and he give it to her. The Stallworth's would take the money out of her pay check.
- 381 Freddie Mae's father was Jackson Rudolph. Marie married him in 1932. He left soon after Marie was born. He worked at the mill, had four fingers cut off there. Marie saw him every day. He played a piano with his finger nubs.
- 400 There was a piano at the church and at the school. When Freddie Mae was growing up they would borrow her grandmother's record player for dances at the school. They would carry it over there. They didn't have bands for the kids. Freddie had a piano in her home later. Before the record player, they would have a band. But not for the kids.
- 418 She married Mr. Cobb much later. Freddie grew up with Marie, her grandmother and two cousins, and six brothers. All the brothers and cousins worked in the mill. They had to be 16 to start. Their names were Milton, Freeman, Augustine, Samuel, Ed, Fred. Marie worked in people's houses until the war. After Calhoun school she went to work for Ethel McGowin. "She was really mean." Her husband was "a good man." He didn't want her to leave, but she did. He said he would get her what she wanted. But she left anyway. She worked for Julian McGowin for ten years. "That was a good man. His wife got sort of sulky." That was not Ethel. She also worked for Dr. Johnson. He was the only doctor in Chapman. He lived down the street from them. She didn't pay for his help because she worked for him. Everyone else had fees taken from their check. Marie's sister Carrie was the nurse.
- 498 She had three sisters, one died. Carrie, Della, Rosie. They all lived in Chapman. Della was a baby when she died. Carrie never married. She was a nurse. She did not go to school for that. She learned working for Dr. Johnson. When Freddie was 14, Dr. Johnson taught her to give penicillin while Carrie was on vacation. People "had a fit." She had to "give the people shots, in the butt, you know. And those white people didn't like that. He said 'you might as well turn around cause she gonna shoot you in the butt.'" She was tall then and people couldn't tell how old she was. They had one doctor for both blacks and whites. Some people went to Greenville. There weren't any black doctors. [Marie] "They didn't believe in that." They go to a black doctor now in Evergreen. His parents are from Atlanta.
- 549 Rosie married Bural "Buddy" Yelton. He worked in the mill. He was from Chapman. His family lived here. People came and stayed. Except for Rosie. She moved all over.
- [Side B]
000 She didn't know people who worked in the woods. People who lived in Chapman did, but they can't remember who. Freddie's husband was from near Greenville. She went away with her grandmother and he was working at Chapman when she came back. He was from Mt. Zion by Pigeon Creek, near Greenville. He stayed in Chapman and went home on the weekend to his parents. He lived with friends. He boarded with her because her sister had married one of his uncles.
- 030 George Cobb joins us. He was born in Coventry County, Rural Falls. He came to Chapman with his first wife. He came to work in the mill. He was a farmer before that. He was working for 75 cents a day, "sun up to sun

down." He lived in a tent and got soup once a day. His parents lived down there. They had a house that leaked in the rain. He got a job through Sam Bonnard, his ex-daddy in law. He worked there for years on the resaw. Marie's brother, Ed Lewis, worked beside Bonnard on the resaw.

060 They each got a half of each log. He came to Chapman to earn more money. They paid \$1.25 hour. He had been earning \$3.50/week. "I come here to make more money." He came in 1943. Marie started working in the mill in the 1950s. She worked 2-3 years before they moved to Georgiana. She worked there during the Korean War.

076 They had German prisoners working at the mill during the War. George went to the war for 3 years. He helped build the jumping towers at Fort Benning. He didn't get boot training. Two of Marie's brothers went. The prisoners came in after the war was over. The US had so many "Germans, and Chinese, and monkeys." They put them to work.

090 She went to work in the mill after her daddy died. George thinks it was just before they moved to Georgiana. He jokes about how old he is.

103 He worked at W.T. Smith when the union came in. There were strikes in 1949, 55, and in the 70s. He remembers the 1949 one. He "broadcast" the strike through a loudspeaker on his car. He told people to go to the union hall and not to the mill. The union hall was on the edge of town about East Chapman. "I told all the men that worked for W.T. Smith, 'go to the union hall.'" They went. "Then some tried to scab in there and we got to beatin' them, knockin' them in the head and everything else. Yeah, I'm tellin' the truth about it. I was the ring leader." That strike lasted about a year. "We had the strike won. Our representative he told us, you got it won. That depends on different views of the strike. And that sold it out. The people sold out to the union. If we would have stuck together never would have cracked that mill open no more. I seen a lot of bloodshed." They asked people to stay away from work. The white and black stayed. Those who didn't "wish today they had never went in there."

131 He quit before the 1955 strike. He went to Texas to get a "good job." He worked at a service station for \$3.75/hour to pump gas a service cars. He was making \$1.25/hour here.

139 They kept scabs out by blocking the road. "Ain't supposed to go in there and scab on nobody. Supposed to stick. We is trying to get better facilities, better ? for our work."

146 They had talked about a union before, but they were not together. "People were satisfied" with \$1.25/hour and a house. The company didn't want to give people their rights. "God changed them." He goes off on how things have changed. Hard to understand. "The bottom rail is going to the top and the top is going to the bottom." It's like Dr. King said it would be.

198 They had a union when Marie went work there, but she didn't join. She was working for the McGowins and didn't need to join the union. She was working in the house. She liked working in the mill. "It was the best job I ever had." She made more money. Lots of women worked there during the war. Now there are as many women, white and black, as men. They make 7-10/hour.

211 They worked in the mill before Marie. Her sister in law Mira Lewis worked in the mill before the war. She was making boxes. Marie's brother was married to her when she worked in the mill. Marie's is 8 years older than her. she worked in the stave plant. They made kegs there. Women worked there and the box plant.

239 Women worked in the mill before Freddie was born. They shallacked lumber.

254 I ask how he lost his fingers. He says Marie got mad one night and bit
them off. He worked construction and a beam was dropped on his hand.
He broke his hip and his back. That was after he left the mill, 28 years ago.
269 He stayed out for the whole strike and then didn't go back to work. He
didn't want to go back. They didn't use dynamite on the first strike. Only
whips and walking sticks. They used dynamite in the second strike "to
blow them away from there cuase they didn't have no business in the mill."
I ask if anyone got killed. "Let me ask you this question. If I was
at your house, and I tell you I'm comin' in, and you say no
don't you come in, I'm gonna tell you I'm gonna come in there
anyhow, what would you, run out the back door? No you'd
blow me in two. . . Ain't gonna put me out my house." That
wasn't his house, I say. "No that was my living, and they
wasn't gonna take it."