

Mable House Storytelling Project
Interview with Mattie Lou Clowers
Conducted by unidentified interviewers
August 28, 1999

MLC: Mattie Lou Clowers

Interviewer: Interview with Mattie Lou Clowers, August 28th, 1999.

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, I know you've been up twice to interview, and I'll use them [inaudible] and I thoroughly enjoyed hearing your tapes. We're going to try not to go over too many things that you've already said, but you said, [inaudible] more to tell your story. What we're primarily interested in, and you're welcome to get off on anything that you remember [inaudible], but right now we're primarily interested in your memories of your days as a schoolteacher, your memories of any stories that might have happened in educating families here in the community even before your day that you had heard from your family, your grandmother. So, if you do have some things that you would like to share with us along that line if you can just search your memory back as far as you can and tell us what you know about the education of children here in the Mableton or the South Cobb community and tell us tales that you remember about your part in it.

Mattie Lou Clowers: Well, [inaudible] it's been so long til I forgot part of it, but when I first started out it was, Miss Mattie Durham was the supervisor over the schools, and I was one of her students too for a long time.

Interviewer: About when was that?

MLC: You know what, I don't even remember the year. Now, but it's been so long, so many things that's happened since then. But she came and Macedonia school, and they didn't have a teacher, and it was out in the rural, you know. And she came there and she said, I know she told my grandmother, she says, "I know Mattie Lou can do it." Because I had told her and I know, and said, "She can go to school some more later." So, I went out to Macedonia. That was the first school that was out close to Powder Springs. And I don't how many children there was, they had, but...

Interviewer: How old were you about then?

MLC: I was about twenty-two or three.

Interviewer: Twenty-two or three. And you are, how old are you now? About eighty-nine?

MLC: I'm ninety-three, almost ninety-four. If I live to November I'll be ninety-four. And so, then I stayed out there. I had some cousins that lived out there, and I boarded a room with them. And the schoolhouse was near where I stayed at, and so they had some children, they had two, so we would go down there to the school, I would go by, had to get used to them. And you know, after I got used to them, everything was all right. See they didn't have heat, or nothing like they have now, and we had I guess you'd call it potbellied stoves, and it never hardly ever did get warm [laughs], the stove. So, the children at that time, I guess it was the county or something, they would bring beans and peas, and things like that, and we would, at lunch time we would always heat them on that stove and eat them, and they'd bring a plate or spoons or something to eat them with.

Interviewer: The children would bring that?

MLC: Yes. And before, we always started off, we would sing a song, and then we'd have prayer, you see, and then we had, let's see, it think there was about six grades, reading, writing and arithmetic and all like that. We would have all that. Have the arithmetic, and then we'd have spelling, reading, geography, English, and all that in the first grade.

Interviewer: [inaudible]

MLC: We'd do all that in the first grade. Get through with that arithmetic. Then I'd have the second grade, third grade on, like that until we'd get finished. And when it'd come lunch time, well, the children was always anxious to eat. So, I'd say, well, let's say the blessing now before we eat. So, we'd always say the blessing, and when we get through with the blessing, I'd ask one of the boys, I'd say, "What were you thinking about when you was saying the blessing?" He'd say, "I was thinking about eating." [laughs] So we'd do that all, and then we'd have recess at ten o'clock, just a little while. And then we'd go back in and after the lunch, we would have recess again at lunch time. And so, we'd stay out and they'd play, and I'd ring the bell when it was time for them to come back in. They'd have a good time playing, they really had a good time. And the children, I know it was so different, what it is now. If they'd misbehave I'd spank them. [laughs] I had a switch and I'd

hit them. And their mother would tell you to make them mind. And so, it was easy. It wasn't bad. I enjoyed it.

Interviewer: About how many children did you have there?

MLC: Well at that school I don't think but I had about maybe fifteen or twenty there. There weren't too many children there. And then I left. That was Macedonia. And then next time I came to Mableton. Well, it was the Green Grove down below here, about three miles down the road. I went down there and I stayed down there I think about two years. And then I left there and I went to, it was Saint John, down right this side of the river, it was still in Cobb County. I was assistant teacher down there for one or two years. And then I left there and went to Macedonia, wait, not Macedonia, I mean New Friendship where his daddy went to school. And then it was a lot of children. I had about fifty-five children over there. Well then, got an assistant teacher because there were so many I couldn't handle all of them. But it was wonderful. I enjoyed it.

Interviewer: What kind of desks did the children have? Did they have benches or desks?

MLC: Well, they just had benches. Well, finally, toward the last, I think we got some desks. But not at first, we just had old-fashioned benches and old-fashioned heater and boy, I stayed with my grandmother when I was teaching at New Friendship over there where his daddy was born, the school, and I had to walk through the swamp to go back. And sometimes it would rain and I couldn't get through there, and so I had to go and go all the way around the road. And then I would get over there, I had a cousin lived over there and another family, well I could spend the night over there you see, when it was so bad.

Interviewer: About how far were you walking?

MLC: Well, I guess about two miles, I guess.

Interviewer: Were the children walking too?

MLC: Yes. Some of them that lived on this side of the creek. But there was just one family, one or two families lived on the side of the creek where I was, but most of them lived on the other side. Other side of the schoolhouse up there.

Interviewer: Everybody walked.

MLC: Yeah. No, nobody was riding. And I would get out of school on Friday, well I would turn out earlier on Friday, and it was about six

miles to Marietta. And I walked to Marietta. I'd get off the streetcar and stop and work. I was seeing after my grandmother and I would work, get off and go and work two hours, and I lived about a mile below Smyrna, or two, and I'd catch a streetcar and go down there. Had somebody stay and take care of my grandmother, and then I'd wash, and the next morning, Saturday morning, I would get up and go clean up somebody's house. A Mr. Hughes. And I'd get through with them and I'd clean up his sister's house, and then I'd go buy groceries and go back, go home and wash, and clean up, and do a lot of things like that and get everything straightened out so I could go back to school on Monday.

Interviewer: You were working around the clock.

MLC: Yeah, I worked all the time. I was busy all the time.

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, I know money was real different...

MLC: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: ...than it was.

MLC: Oh Lord, yeah. I could take...

Interviewer: How much did you make, do you think?

MLC: Well, let me see. I don't think I got but about two dollars for every if I got that then for working there.

Interviewer: For how long? Two dollars for what?

MLC: Oh yeah, I meant for that Saturday.

Interviewer: About two dollars a week?

MLC: Yes, see that was just on Saturday, but let's see. Gosh, I don't know about how much I got when was teaching school. Wasn't much. But anyhow, it went a long ways, because I could take that money that I'd worked on Saturday and get enough groceries for my grandmother and the lady that stayed with her. I had a great-aunt. She was real old. She didn't have a home. So, she stayed with her, you see, while I teach school. So, I could take that and buy enough groceries for them and all the week, and then I'd leave out Monday morning and come back Friday evening.

Interviewer: So, you were looking after children and you were looking after your family.

MLC: Yeah, uh-huh. I mean, I have really worked all these ninety-something years. [laughs] I say, it's a wonder I can work at all. But you know, if it wasn't for this ruptured back and all, I still would. I told them I feel like I'm sixteen. [laughs] But that's got me know. Can't help it. But I'm the kind never going to give up. I get my stick and I go on. I made a whole lot of preserves yesterday, and I'm going to make some more, and I still, over at the Center, when they have things over there, they have bake sales. Well, I make ten potato pies at a time for them to sell. And I do something. I still stay busy. I can't stand up long but I get everything and put on the table, and I have a high chair and I work up a storm and I bake cakes, and...

Interviewer: [inaudible] what she's talking about when she said you could teach children. Your energy, you must have meant a lot to a lot of people over the years.

MLC: Well, they say I do. They're real nice and the people that I used to help, work, too, they're so nice to me. Yeah. One of the ladies, I was there when she was born. They lived on the same street. Well, her husband wanted another television, so she brought it, cable television, and gave me. Yeah. People is real nice to me. Course I try to be nice to everybody.

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, when you were teaching those years, what kind of books did you have?

MLC: Well, I don't really know the name of them now, but just, books they had. First grade books.

Interviewer: Did the county supply books, or did the parents supply books?

MLC: The county. They supplied books. Yeah, they had arithmetics and readers, geography, English, all those books like that.

Interviewer: Did they supply the paper and pencils for the children?

MLC: No, the parents, they had to buy that.

Interviewer: Well because we were talking about recess and all, what kind of games did the kids play?

MLC: Well, long time ago, I've forgot a lot of those games, but some of the games I remember they played, little Sally Walker sitting in the saucer. Let's see. Cry, cry, something or another, wipe your weeping eyes, and then they'd play drop the handkerchief, and they'd play ball, and I don't know, a lot of the little games that they would play.

Interviewer: I remember drop the handkerchief, they used to play that, but little Sally something, how did that go? Tell me how that went.

MLC: Let's see, I think that was when they was going, they'd join hands and go around and round. 'Little Sally Walker, sitting in the saucer, cry,' let's see, 'cry, baby, cry, wipe your weeping eyes,' and I think, seems like it's 'fly to the east and fly to the west, and fly to the one you know the best.' And then they...

Interviewer: Somebody in the middle then picks somebody else out?

MLC: Uh-huh, yeah, that's right. And, I don't know, there'd be a lot of little games. And at the end of school when we would always have a program, and I had one boy, he would sound like a preacher, and then he could just do like a preacher, you know, and then they, like he was preaching, and some of the children would be shouting and all like that, and so, back then I could think of a lot of things to tell them, to say, but that's gone know. And then I had them to sing a song, like a hymn. 'Am I soldier to horse, or follow the plow, and shall I fear to hold the cane while Nancy milks the cow.'

Interviewer: Do you remember the tune [inaudible]?

MLC: Yes. Lot of songs is not coming to me now. And then I'd give them all speeches to say, and we would have a good time, and people would really come and they really did enjoy it.

Interviewer: Oh, that's wonderful.

MLC: Yeah. We'd do a lot of funny things.

Interviewer: You taught them all their music, you taught them all their speeches?

MLC: Yeah. Give everyone a speech. Yeah. Buddy said last night that he remembered that I had told him a speech one time and he said he never would forget it. I said, I don't even remember it. [laughs]

Interviewer: Would you write the speeches or would you find them somewhere?

MLC: Well, I'd find them somewhere and sometimes I'd just write some. I guess I was kind of smart then but, I say the day is past and gone, the evening shade appear. But it was wonderful, I really enjoyed it.

Interviewer: Can you remember any children in particular, or any tales about any of the children? Anything that happened to them?

MLC: Well [laughs] I know one boy was named Clyde Robinson, and you see they walked to school, lot of them had a long ways to

walk. And several of them was coming in, and when they came in the schoolhouse, Clyde was always behind. And he was so long letting in, when he came in one day I said, "Clyde!" I said, "Why are you so far behind the rest of them?" He talked right funny, he said, "I had to be excused!" You see he would stop in the woods, you know, woods was all along there. And there was one girl there named Jessie Lee Hill, she said, "He must have been constipated!" [laughs] And all the children laughed. And then another day there was a boy, it was at school, and I was assistant teacher down there. Teacher gave out the worksheets, making sentences, we'd give, call different words for the children to make sentences out of. And so, she told this boy, gave the boy 'but.' And he thought it was, he said, "I have a butt!" And all the children just fell out laughing. And he looked so funny, he wondered what in the world is the matter, [laughs] because he thought he'd done something nice. [laughs] I don't know. They could say some of the funniest things sometimes, but I couldn't laugh, but I'd just be about the bust open. [laughs] They'd say so many things.

Interviewer: Did you have any children that were like you must have been, that were really bright and that you felt really good about, that you felt might go on and become teachers and do something like that?

MLC: Yes, but I don't think any of them did, I don't think. I don't know, maybe one or two. And I knew, you know, several schools around there, and I knew all the teachers and all, but I think every one of them dead, except me. I say well, Lord left me here for something, I don't know what. [laugh]

Interviewer: [inaudible] to tell us all about this.

MLC: Yes. So, I've seen after my grandmother, too, she died. My mama's mama, and she would have been a hundred years old in a few days before she died. And then, my grandmother that raised me, my mother died when I was four years old, and she raised my brother and me. And then, she got where she couldn't, her mind was bad, and she couldn't do anything, and I seen after her until she died. And then my uncle got sick, and I seen after him. I said, well, I guess Lord left me here to see after them, but all them now been dead and all them been gone a long time and I'm still here. [laughs]

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, when you went to school yourself, where did you go to school?

MLC: To Marietta. Lemon Street and then I went to, you know, other schools, to Spelman and Morehouse and I went to Fort Valley, and like that.

Interviewer: Quite an education. [inaudible]

MLC: Well, I tried to do the best I can so I...

Interviewer: What kind of school did they have at Lemon Street? What was your school like?

MLC: Lemon Street High School.

Interviewer: The building that...

MLC: Yeah, but I don't think the building's there now. I think they done tore that down now. See, that's been a long time.

Interviewer: Did you have to walk there from...

MLC: No, well, when I was going there I was living in Smyrna, I rode the streetcar.

Interviewer: Oh, you rode the streetcar.

MLC: Uh-huh, rode the streetcar.

Interviewer: The one that went from Marietta to Atlanta?

MLC: Marietta to Atlanta. Then I got on that one day and I was going to, well, that was on a Monday and I was going to Macedonia, the first school that I taught, and I had to take a report in, and it was about 11 o'clock in the day and then I was going out and be out there Monday morning, and I got on the streetcar and when we got to Jonesville the streetcar stopped and a lady got on the streetcar, and when she got on and sat down, well, the motorman that was on the car I was on, he started running toward the back. And I looked up and by that time the other streetcar was coming down, and I just plowed into the one that I was on. Opened it up. And the lady that got on the car, she wasn't on there but about two minutes before she was dead.

Interviewer: Oh my...

MLC: And there was a great big fat man, I can still see that man, that's been years and years ago, and he was sitting there, and that streetcar came on and just covered him. His head was out.

Interviewer: Oh, my.

MLC: The one that came down. And he was holding on [inaudible] turned me loose. And then something hit me right across here, in the head. And it was cold that day and I had on a coat my daddy had sent me from Chattanooga, and I had on a new pair of shoes, and so much glass fell it cut these shoes but it didn't cut my foot, and it didn't cut me because I had on all that. But I was crazy for a while, and I was down like that, and I heard people saying I'm dying, and I thought I was dreaming, but then way after while I realized that I was in a wreck. I said, oh, I'm in a wreck or something. And it sat there, and I was sitting on the very back, you see. And then, some of them was getting off that could, and I said, Lord let me get out of here. And I got up and I was just still crazy, and I sat on the track, sat down on the track. It's the coldest day I'd ever seen in my life, and then I happened to think, they was trying to prize the cars loose and if it had it'd come right back on me but I finally thought and got up. And they carried a lot of them to the, carried us to the hospital. Well, when all the nurses and doctors, they were so excited all those people coming in that was hurt, and one just told me, he says, well, you don't need no medical attention. Well, I went on where I was going. And the next morning, I couldn't get up, I was so stiff and all. I couldn't even get up.

Interviewer: What hospital did you go to?

MLC: It was, the hospital then was on, let me see. What's that street goes, it's not Church Street.

Interviewer: Cherokee?

MLC: No, it's going out, [inaudible], what's that street name when you go out from Marietta, when you're not going Powder Spring Road? What's that other?

Interviewer: Roswell Road?

MLC: No, it's not Roswell. You know, going toward Friendship?

Interviewer: [inaudible] the highway?

MLC: No, not the highway. You know when you leave the Square and come right down by that Methodist church going that way, what's the name of that street? I know it and can't recall it.

Interviewer: Whitlock Avenue?

MLC: Whitlock! That's what I'm talking about. The hospital was on Whitlock then, and they carried us there. And a lot of them was

there. Well, they were just so nervous and all, told me I didn't need no medical attention, and then I...

Interviewer: How many people got killed, Ms. Mattie Lou?

MLC: Oh, I forgot [inaudible] got killed.

Interviewer: Well, what happened? Didn't they have a...

MLC: I don't know, the man that was coming down, I don't know whether the switch it wasn't working it was so cold, or what, but he was coming and wasn't nobody on his car I don't think, but he was coming down, and he just plowed into the one that I was on. And the one that, the motorman, he saw him, I saw him running toward the back. And so, if he hadn't run toward the back, he would have been killed.

Interviewer: Is that the only wreck you know of that ever happened on the streetcars?

MLC: Yes, I don't remember another one. I wasn't in another one. I've been lucky I know. You know, I've been driving a car seventy-five years. I've never got a ticket, and I've never had a wreck. People have bumped me, but, so Lord's been good to me. He's really taken care of me, and I thank him too. I can't thank him enough.

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, when you were at Lemon Street, was that the only Black high school in Cobb County or was there another one?

MLC: Yes, uh-huh.

Interviewer: Going back to [inaudible] taking care of your grandmother [inaudible], did people in generations back in your family have an opportunity to go to school?

MLC: Well, now see my grandmother and them they never did get to go to school, no.

Interviewer: I know in the history of the Mable House here they said the Mable family built a little log cabin, little schoolhouse that started off I guess in the mid-1800s or somewhere here, and I was wondering where the first school was. Was Lemon Street the first school that you know of for the Black children?

MLC: For the [inaudible] children? Yeah, that's, course they had schools there in Marietta, though, in town. Other schools, I think.

Interviewer: What's the first school you knew about in this area? Was that the Macedonia school?

MLC: Macedonia and Mableton.

Interviewer: And where was the Mableton school?

MLC: Well, you know where the Little Bethel Church is? Well, they had a schoolhouse right across, in front of that church.

Interviewer: Did you teach in that school too?

MLC: Uh-huh, yes.

Interviewer: Well, tell us something about it. What was it like?

MLC: Well, there wasn't very many children there, but it was just about like the rest of them.

Interviewer: Was it a one-room schoolhouse?

MLC: It was one room. All of them, that I was. Every one was one room schools.

Interviewer: [inaudible] and the potbelly...

MLC: Uh-huh, yeah, and that potbelly stove, and you'd just nearly freeze. I'd be cold when I got there and cold when I left. I say, well, maybe that is part of my legs, too. [laughs] I say it's done caught up with me now.

Interviewer: Well, it took a long time.

MLC: Yeah, it sure did. [laughs]

Interviewer: Do you remember the names of any of the families of the children that you taught there are the Mableton school?

MLC: Well, there were some Andersons, and Sterlings, and Wilsons. I don't remember all of them. I remember that when I was down there at Green Grove a little girl, I think she was in the first grade, she said my name, I was a Bennett then. And she said, "Miss Bennett," she said, "Can you read?" I said "Yes, I can read." [laughs]

Interviewer: Did you know whether any of those children, those families, had family members that were buried here at the Mable House?

MLC: No, I don't know, any of them. No, none of them. So, all those down there at Green Grove, that's about three miles below Mableton, well they all moved to Atlanta or moved some other place, and then the people here in Mableton, most of the old people

died, and then some of them is buried down there are Little Bethel, and then a lot of them moved away. So, that's it.

Interviewer: Getting back to your school days, did you have to paddle some of the children sometimes?

MLC: Yes, yeah I sure did. I mean I'd have to really sure enough paddle them, because some of them just wouldn't mind. They wouldn't do no kind of way.

Interviewer: Can you tell us what you remember about some of that? What were some of the things they'd get into?

MLC: [laughs] Oh, well, I don't know, they'd get into something. Talking, and sometimes, well, they'd get to fighting, you see, and I'd really paddle them when they'd get to fighting. [laughs]

Interviewer: You'd have to wait til they break up.

MLC: Yeah. One day in Atlanta, I had a niece lived in Atlanta name was Louvenia Bennett, and there was another lady there named Artie May, and she saw, and I don't know whether they was at a meeting or what it was. Anyhow, this Artie May told her her name, and she told her her name was Louvenia Bennett, and she says, oh, she says, I had a teacher named Miss Bennett. She said, Louvenia told her, my niece, she said, that was my aunt, that's my aunt! She said, well, she's a good teacher but she sure would whip your back end. [laughs]

Interviewer: You kept those children straight.

MLC: I had to. [laughs] Then the last school I was at, then they'd run me out. That was where his daddy was. I more trouble with that school than I did with any of them.

Interviewer: Don't think that shows in Clarence today.

MLC: Well, he wasn't there but his daddy was. His daddy, he had a lot of brothers and, oh, there was a lot of children over there. But you know, most all those children that was at that school, most all of them are dead. There's not but a few living, and I have went to just about every one of them's funeral. Yeah, when one dies, well, they look to me to be there. They say, oh I know you was coming.

[break in recording]

Interviewer: About behavior, what would you say to your children about how you expected them to behave?

MLC: Well, I'd just tell them how they should be, and all like that, but after you tell them, some of them wasn't paying no attention. They'd get out there and they'd get to fighting, and about nothing I guess, but I'd tear them up though.

Interviewer: Can you tell us what you'd say to them about how they should be? What would you hold them up to be?

MLC: Well, I told them how they should not act like that. And they should be nice and grow up and be nice men and women, like that, something like that I'd tell them. And some of them would listen and sometimes they didn't. And A lot of times I didn't want to whip them, I'd keep them after school and make them stand up in the corner and do things like that. Whatever it would take, I would try to do it.

Interviewer: [inaudible] their mommas and daddies would whip them when they got home.

MLC: Yeah, well, they wouldn't tell nothing when they got home. Their mommas wouldn't know it unless they'd ask me.

Interviewer: Did you ever had to go talk to any of the mommas and daddies?

MLC: Well, I have, uh-huh, so they'd tell me, just tear them up. [laughs] So I'd try to do that.

Interviewer: [inaudible] I believe you told Mr. Brown that Ida Mable Bennett was Cobb County's first or one of the first Black teachers.

MLC: Who?

Interviewer: Ida Mable Bennett. Was she one of Cobb County's first Black teachers?

MLC: No, she wasn't a teacher.

Interviewer: Okay. So, she was not a teacher?

MLC: No, she wasn't.

Interviewer: We believe her mother is buried, as you know, in Robert Mable's family cemetery, and was one of Robert Mable's slaves.

MLC: Wait a minute, now who is that, please?

Interviewer: Ida Mable Bennett's mother is buried in Robert Mable's family cemetery, right there [inaudible], and was one of his slaves, Robert Mable's.

MLC: Oh yeah, well, maybe she was. I thought that you was talking about Aunt Ida and I know she was buried at Green Grove.

Interviewer: This was her mother.

MLC: Yeah, that's right.

Interviewer: And you think her mother is buried back here, then?

MLC: Right, I don't know, I guess so. I didn't know where she was buried.

Interviewer: [inaudible] Robert Mable's children really believed in education, and several of their children were teachers. I think Nancy, Joel, Margaret, and Ruth were Mableton's first teachers. Do you know anything about them?

MLC: I don't know them.

Interviewer: And we believe from what his descendants tell us that he believed in educating the slaves and taught anyone who wanted to learn in the little schoolhouse in front of his house. Have you ever heard of that? Of the Mables teaching the Black children as well as the white children?

MLC: No, I didn't hear that.

Interviewer: Okay. It seems to me to be probable that Ms. Ida and her mother were educated by the Mable teachers, and you're not aware of that at all?

MLC: No, I don't.

Interviewer: Do you know how far back in your family people could read and write, and that kind of thing? Are you aware of that at all?

MLC: Well, I don't know. I know my grandmother, neither one of my grandmothers or grandfathers, none of them could read and write. And my grandmother said, I'm sending you to school now, and then later on they started taking the paper, and every day, every afternoon when they'd get the paper, it was the Georgian paper, I remember then, that's a long time ago, and I would always read the news to them. Every day I would read to them.

Interviewer: You were really teaching your family.

MLC: Well, I tried to do the best I could, because my grandmother, she raised me, and she was slavery time, and she didn't spare the rod. [laughs]

Interviewer: She was in slavery times?

MLC: Yeah, she was a slave. Lou...

Interviewer: This is your grandmother we're talking about?

MLC: Lou Bennett Carroll.

Interviewer: Lou Bennett Carroll.

MLC: Uh-huh. Lou Bennett Carroll. She was a Carroll first, I should have said.

Interviewer: She was a slave where?

MLC: I don't know where she was but she said she was a slave.

Interviewer: And she knew how important it was for you to learn.

MLC: Yeah, that's right. She told me, she said, I'm sending you and your brother to school. I mean we went too, and I didn't ever miss a day.

Interviewer: She inspired you.

MLC: Uh-huh, that's right. Uh-huh. Yeah, I loved to go to school.

Interviewer: She must have been a [inaudible] woman.

MLC: She was.

Interviewer: A strong woman like you.

MLC: Yeah, I didn't think she should have whipped me like she did, but maybe she did. [laughs] I'd go over to Friendship, where he lives and where his daddy went to school. I think it's his cousin or something, when we have singing or something I'd go over there. He'd always have me to stand up. He'd say that lady there, he says, she didn't give me no trouble, but I gave her trouble. Say, she sure did used to whip me. Say, I appreciate it now. [laughs] Oh well. I told him, I didn't hit at him a lick a miss unless I hit at him and missed him. [laughs]

Interviewer: We had some more questions. Who was the first Black teacher you remember hearing about? The first Black teacher that you remember hearing anything about?

MLC: Let's see, what was her name. I think her name was Irene Kimble.

Interviewer: And where did she teach, do you remember?

MLC: That was in Smyrna where I first started at six years old. And then, let's see, I forgot the other's name. It's been so long I forgot the name, but I do remember Irene Kimble.

Interviewer: You must have had a lot of [inaudible].

MLC: Yeah. Well, they all had a lot of [inaudible] I don't know, I was the kind I just wanted to learn all I could. And I know when I was going to school in Marietta, well they'd want us to write essays or something. I'd hurry home and I'd just write them essays. I could really write then, do things, you know, like that. So, I still do a lot of things. I'm invited to a lot of churches, and I do things. I read papers and about two months ago in Smyrna they had invited me, they had a senior citizen. And I said, what do you want me to do? They said whatever you want to do. So, I laid in the bed and I said, what in the world can I do? And then it came to me, the twenty-third psalm in the fourth verse. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I'll fear no evil, for thou art with me. And I wrote about six or seven pages, and then when I went there that night, well see, I wrote it and I didn't have to read it all. I had it in my head, most of it. And I said it and one man stood up the whole time, and when I got through the whole church stood up and clapped, and the preacher got up and he talked and he talked, he says I just enjoyed it so much. He says, oh I know it took a long time for her to do that. Well, I don't know, I just learned to do that when I was going to school, and I just enjoyed it. And when I go to the Center, well I'm the chaplain over there, and I sing and pray and do [inaudible] things and the other, like that. I do something all the time. Yeah, I just enjoy it. And then, when I got through, when I was coming out, somebody told me, they said, you know you preached. I said no, I can't preach. [laughs] We have a new center manager at our Center, so she didn't know all what we did. So, the first time we had the meeting, well, I opened the meeting with a song, and then I recite a chapter in the Bible, and then when they have the meeting, it's my job to sing another song and pray and dismiss them. And so, after we got through and I prayed and dismissed them, she says, Mattie, are you a minister? I said no. She said well, you brought tears to my eyes when you was praying. She says, you sound like one. And she went and told another lady. She said, she says she's not but I believe she is. And she said, no, she's not one. And so, they all says I'm an inspiration to the Center. Well, I try to do what I can. I just enjoy doing things like that. And I go to a lot of different churches, I go to the white churches. And lately, I went over to the Center over there on Windy Hill Road

one day, and there was a lady there. I'd never see her, and she came to me. She said, you've got to come to Woodstock, to our church. And she says, we'll come and get you, fix you a good dinner and give you some gifts if you come. So, I went up there and she called me, she found out where I live and she called me. And she said, now you're going to do the whole program. I said, okay, it's okay with me. So, I went up there and especially she wanted me to do "Collard Greens" and "Cornbread" and then whatever else I want to do. So, I read some more, I had some more papers and I did that for her, and then, the last thing I did, I had a poem about, give me a little time to pray, and I did that and I prayed and I got through with that. And so, oh, they just had a fit and wanted me to come back, but I didn't get back. And they had a dinner, they fixed us a dinner. I had a guest, told me to bring a guest. And then after that well they fixed us a lunch to bring home, she fixed me a basket with a whole lot of gifts in it, and when I got home she had an envelope in there, I looked in that and she had fifteen dollars in there. So, I'm always stuck somewhere. [laughs]

Interviewer:

How does "Collard Greens" and "Cornbread" go?

MLC:

I'm getting mighty tired of collards,
Just listen and I'll tell you how.
I've ate so many of them things 'til at times I thought I'd die.
When Ma says dinner's served, I hate to take my plate
'Cause I know a pot of collards is going to stare me in the face.
I've ate them boiled and I've ate them fried
I fed some to my old hound dog, and he just up and died.
It might sound kind of odd, but I ain't one to lie
Ma pulled a new one and made a collard pie.
But I'll put my foot down if Ma makes a collard cake.
It's listed in the dictionary as an edible leafy green
And I've been eating collards long before I was weaned.
Pa's got me worried, he looks a little weak.
Last night I heard him talking about collard in his sleep.
Now it's just so much that a fella can take.
I wish that they would dump every collard
Into the middle of the lake
And when I get to heaven I hope that old Saint Pete
Hasn't gone and planted collards up and down the collard street.
Cause there's one thing I know, if there's a collard in heaven
I know what I'm gonna do.
I'm gonna catch the first train out and join my friends below.

And then the cornbread went with it. [sings]

Give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
It's good enough for me.

It is good with butter in it,
It is good with butter in it,
It is good with butter in it,
It's good enough for me.

Oh, give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
It's good enough for me.

It is good when you put it in milk,
It is good when you put it in milk,
It is good when you put it in milk,
It's good enough for me.

Oh, give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
It's good enough for me.

It is better when the flour was out,
It is better when the flour was out,
It is better when the flour was out,
It's good enough for me.

Oh, give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
It's good enough for me.

It will fill you when you hungry,
It will fill you when you hungry,
It will fill you when you hungry,
It's good enough for me.

Oh, give me that old time cornbread,

Give me that old time cornbread,
Give me that old time cornbread,
It's good enough for me.

[clapping]

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: I think you're one of Mableton's treasures, did you know that?

MLC: Oh. [laughs]

Interviewer: Would you at all be able to share some of that when we have our --
Could we ask her to share some of that when we have our day on
the, October third, our festival? Could you share with us? Could
you be there and share with the children and share with the people
who come to the festival some of the things you...

MLC: When is that?

Interviewer: October third, it's a Saturday.

MLC: This Saturday?

Interviewer: Not this Saturday, October, first Saturday in October.

MLC: Oh, October.

Interviewer: First Saturday in October.

MLC: Well, let me know.

Interviewer: I think it would just be absolutely wonderful. We'll find you a
pretty place to sit, and we'll sit there and feed you and give you
water and something to drink and take care of you, walk you back
and forth, and do anything you wanted to. Take you to a family
bathroom.

MLC: [laughs] Well, I don't think I'd have to do that.

Interviewer: You know what? I know exactly what you mean because
[inaudible].

MLC: You know what? I had a baby. And the baby lived eight and a half
months old. And my husband would take the baby to Atlanta to see
some of their people, and I didn't go. But he carried some diapers
along. That baby never did do nothing til he got back home.
[laughs]

Interviewer: [inaudible] I've got to get some of these questions. Where were you born, is one of them.

MLC: I was born in Chattanooga. I stayed there until I was four years old. My mama died when I was four years old, and my daddy brought me to Smyrna to my grandmother, and she raised me and my brother.

Interviewer: So, your mama was from here originally?

MLC: Yeah, she was from Marietta. Out from Marietta, out there in the country.

Interviewer: Was your daddy from here originally too?

MLC: Yeah, uh-huh.

Interviewer: They moved to Chattanooga.

MLC: That's right. He married, he moved to Chattanooga, and then my brother was born. And my mother died with typhoid fever, and I was four years old. And I remember one day my mother as going to take my daddy his lunch at work and I wanted to go with her. And we lived in a house with an old lady named Caroline, and she said, no, you stay here with Aunt Caroline, and I had some shoes, little red shoes, I was four years old. I remember those little red shoes now. And she said, I'll let you put your little red shoes on. So, she put those red shoes on me and then she went out the door, I cried. And that lady says, shut your mouth gal. I hushed, 'cause you know back then they'd do something to you and you would hush, so I hushed. [laughs]

Interviewer: Another question here is how did you have graduation? What was your graduation like? And I don't know whether they mean your graduation from school yourself or the graduation you did with the children you taught.

MLC: Oh, well, we had – well, I'm going to tell you. We didn't have much graduation then. It was mostly, we had sixth grade, and then when time to graduate rolled, they'd be done, quit or work or something or other like that. So, but we just went on mostly through the sixth grade.

Interviewer: [inaudible] maybe was that program you had them do?

MLC: Yeah, that was the end of school. School's out and we always had a big program...

Interviewer: My mother...

MLC: ...for their parents and they all enjoyed it.

Interviewer: My mother was a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse back in rural Mississippi and she did the very same thing. She [inaudible] she would tell me about having a program with the kids and [inaudible].

MLC: That's right. Uh-huh. Yeah.

Interviewer: A wonderful thing because I think it teaches children how to get up and present themselves.

MLC: That's right, uh-huh.

Interviewer: A marvelous thing.

MLC: Yeah, and they enjoyed getting up, saying their speeches. They liked that, uh-huh.

Interviewer: And another question here is do you have any memories or any stories that you remember of Ida Mable Bennett, or any idea of what her mother's name was?

MLC: Whose mother?

Interviewer: Ida Mable Bennett's mother.

MLC: No, I didn't know her.

Interviewer: Do you remember what her name was?

MLC: No, I don't. Bunny had said he was coming, I think they had told him. I think he remembered. [crosstalk] I didn't know them.

Interviewer: Okay, so you don't have any memories of Ida Mable Bennett herself?

MLC: No, I don't.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you remember any stories that anybody told you about slavery times at all? Do you remember any things that your grandmother who was a slave...

MLC: No, but you know I don't know, they didn't talk about it to us. I don't know why but they didn't. They just didn't, so I didn't ask nothing, but I know, they said they were in slavery, slavery times, but they just didn't talk about it.

Interviewer: So, the main focus they seemed to have was making sure their children and grandchildren were educated?

MLC: Yeah, that's right, uh-huh. They were really interested in that, and I appreciate it.

Interviewer: [inaudible] do like all the pioneer folks have done for a long time when they came over and started hard, they wanted their children and grandchildren to do better.

MLC: Uh-huh, that's right.

Interviewer: And you're a wonderful testimony to them.

MLC: Well, I tried to do the best I could.

Interviewer: Well, is there any favorite story that you haven't told that you would like to share with us? Anything that you can remember that's a favorite of yours?

MLC: I don't know. [laughs] Oh, you're talking about, long time ago? [laughs] I drove a – my uncle, he had one arm. He got his arm – that was my grandmother's son that was [inaudible]. He was working in a mill and he got his [inaudible] and it cut his arm off. And he started working for postal telegram and Western Union, he worked until he retired there. So, he bought a T model Ford, and so he brought the Ford up to our house. We lived on Banks Street in Smyrna. And he gave me a book to read, and I would read that book and I would go out there and do whatever it said to do and all like that, and so I kept on, and I'd back up, forwards, and all like that and kept on until I learned how to drive the car. And I told my granddaddy one day, I said, I'm going to Marietta. Yes, and somebody going to have to turn that car off for you, to you. And so, I said, uh-uh [negative], but I went on to Marietta, and I came back and I still started. Well, I started driving, and we lived in Smyrna, and I would come down to Aunt Ida's house down there, come down through the covered bridge and go that way. And so, the low gear would burn out in them T models, and, you ever been through that covered bridge?

Interviewer: Yeah, I sure have.

MLC: Well, I got down there one day, at the covered bridge, and the low gear burned out. And the roads weren't paved then. I just turned around and backed all the way up that hill. And when I get up the hill, then I turned around and go forward. So, one day, Aunt Ida and her daughter Mary Lee Anderson was up to our house, and – no, I was teaching school down there, and we went up there to see my granddaddy that was sick, and on the way back the low gear burned out. And I said, well that's all right, I'll get you, don't

worry about it. I said, I'm going to turn around and back up the hill. I said, it'll go then. And she said, I'm not going to ride up no hill backwards. I said, well that's all right. So, I went on and I backed up all the way from that bridge all the way to the top of the hill. And when I got there I turned around, and waited on her, and then I went on. And so, I learned if I couldn't go forward, go backwards. And my uncle, he came on one day in Vinings. You ever been to Vinings?

Interviewer: Yes.

MLC: There was a long hill down there that wasn't paved. He says I want to go down and see my friend, Homer Story. I said, well the low gear's burned out, but I said, that's all right, don't worry about it, I'll get you there and back. So, I went on down there and when we got there was a long hill, about a mile long, and we got there, and I said, that's all right, I'm going to turn around, I backed all the way up that hill. I got to the top of that hill. I turned around, brought him on home. And then one day his – R.T., that was Mary Lee's daddy – and they had come down to Mableton to something in his car, and when they came back that night, they come walking in, I say, where is the car? They say, down there at the covered bridge. Says, low gear burned out. And see, Uncle R.T. couldn't back up the hill, and my uncle was one-armed, you see, and he said he told them, well, R.T., if Mattie Lou was along we wouldn't have to walk. But they had to walk all the way to Smyrna, to Banks Street, and they came and I said, where's the car? Said down there at the covered bridge. I said, okay, I'd get somebody to take me down there in the morning, I'll bring it in. So, I got somebody to carry me down there. I said you don't have to wait. Go on, I'll get it there. I turned around and backed up that long hill up there and went on home. I learned if I can't go forward, go backwards.

Interviewer: That's a good message.

MLC: I feel like where there's a will, there's a way.

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, your aunt, was that Ida Bennett? Was that your aunt?

MLC: Uh-huh, by marriage. See, she married R.T. He was a Bennett, uh huh. And see, he and my daddy was brothers.

Interviewer: Okay. And they were all Bennetts.

MLC: Uh-huh. All Bennetts.

Interviewer: Did she teach school?

MLC: No.

Interviewer: She didn't teach school?

MLC: Uh-uh [negative].

Interviewer: Okay, and the Andersons, how did they get in there?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: How did they get in there?

MLC: Well, see, Mary Lee married an Anderson.

Interviewer: Bennett was the real family.

MLC: Yeah, Bennett was the real family. Uh-huh. That's right.

Interviewer: Do you know any names before Bennett in the family, whether your grandparents or anybody that you know besides Bennett in the family?

MLC: No, I didn't know them.

Interviewer: I was just wondering if you knew what your Aunt Ida's mama and daddy –

MLC: No, see, I didn't know them. See I didn't know Aunt Ida until she and Uncle R.T. was married.

Interviewer: And Ida's name, what was it before she married?

MLC: Let me see. I don't know what it – can't think what Aunt Ida's name was. I'd have to ask Bunny that there.

Interviewer: Where did she come from? Did she come from Smyrna, or Mableton, or --?

MLC: Well, she was in Mableton when I knew, I didn't know where she...

Interviewer: She was local then?

MLC: Yeah.

Interviewer: One of the local families.

MLC: Yeah, I didn't know her.

Interviewer: Do you know if you taught any of Drew or Ike's children or anybody in that family?

MLC: Uh-uh [negative].

Interviewer: [inaudible]

MLC: Well, now, wait, Cousin Emma Mathis, her granddaughter Emma Lee, she went to school in Mableton.

Interviewer: Okay.

MLC: She was living in Mableton.

Interviewer: Emma Lee Mathis?

MLC: No, she was Emma Lee Wilson, because her mama had married a Wilson.

Interviewer: Okay. And her mama was –

MLC: Ike Mathis' daughter.

Interviewer: She was a Mathis. Ike Mathis' daughter.

MLC: Uh-huh. Emma was her grandmother.

Interviewer: Okay. Oh, I see.

MLC: See because, her mama was Cousin Emma's daughter. Yeah.

Interviewer: So, her mama – the child you taught was –

MLC: Clara's. Her mama named Clara, and that was Cousin Emma's daughter.

Interviewer: Clara's child. And she was a Wilson.

MLC: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: [inaudible] we have two back here and they've been working hard on the project [inaudible] If they could just ask you one or two questions [inaudible] and they could get the information because we're going to do a storytelling project, Ms. Mattie Lou, and they could really use the information [inaudible] on the questions. [inaudible]

Interviewer: I met you at Little Bethel with Barbara.

MLC: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: The first [inaudible] we have that Emma Bennett was married to Ike.

MLC: What you'd say?

Interviewer: Emma Bennett was married to Ike –

Interviewer: Ike Mathis.

MLC: Oh, Emma. Cousin Emma wasn't no Bennett. She was – I don't know. She was something else but she wasn't a Bennett. Cousin Emma wasn't.

Interviewer: That was married to Ike Mathis?

MLC: Uh-huh. She was my grandmother's niece but she wasn't a – I don't know what cousin Emma was before she married.

Interviewer: That's the cousin Emma that was married to Ike Mathis.

MLC: Yeah, uh-huh.

Interviewer: That was your grandmother Carroll?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: Grandmother Carroll?

MLC: Yeah, uh-huh.

Interviewer: And Ms. Mattie Lou, this is [inaudible].

MLC: How do you do?

Interviewer: And I think Barbara was the other one who came to hear you speak.

MLC: Oh.

Interviewer: Barbara Howard [inaudible] who worked as a former principal for Cobb County Schools.

MLC: Yeah, uh-huh.

Interviewer: Do you remember where Ike and Emma's house was?

MLC: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that the one by the white house?

MLC: Yeah, I looked at it when I was coming by today.

Interviewer: It's by the white Mable, the second Mable home up there, the little house that's built out back.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: [inaudible]

Interviewer: Well, the other question I had was do you remember about the time your grandmother died? Your Grandmother Carroll, when did she die?

MLC: No, listen, I remember but I was little, and I can't tell.

Interviewer: Well, which grandmother died when you were [inaudible]?

MLC: That was Grandmother Bennett. She was Lou Carroll, oh and yeah, that was Grandmother Bennett.

Interviewer: Okay.

MLC: Well, I'm don't know whether I've even got it down when she did but I know she –

Interviewer: You were a little bitty girl?

MLC: Yeah. Not when, no, not when she – Lou Bennett, Lou Carroll Bennett, you see she's the one that sent me to school.

Interviewer: The one you took care of.

MLC: Uh-huh, and I took care of her, uh-huh. See I was grown then, when she died.

Interviewer: So maybe you were in your twenties when she died?

MLC: Yeah, I was somewhere in there, uh-huh. Probably, let me see. I was about to thirty then, I know. I was thirty, I think I was about thirty-two because I...

[break in recording]

MLC: Yes, yes I was.

Interviewer: And she was the one that you would go into town on Saturdays and clean houses, and then –

MLC: Yeah, see, we lived together. We lived together. Uh-huh.

Interviewer: And Emma Mathis was Lou Carroll Bennett's cousin?

MLC: Niece, niece.

Interviewer: Niece, okay. Who was her father? How was she her niece?

MLC: Well, I think she was a – Now I don't know what cousin Emma's sister was but – Let's see, now how does that go? [inaudible] but that was her niece because...

Interviewer: That was her sister's child, or her brother's child?

MLC: It must have been, must have been her sister's child, I believe that's the way it was.

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, you were talking about your Aunt Ida and then you were talking about your grandmother. Were they all Bennetts, both of them side of the family Bennetts?

MLC: You mean –

Interviewer: The aunt that you were talking about.

MLC: Emma?

Interviewer: Okay, your aunt that lived in Smyrna.

MLC: No, that was my grandmother in Smyrna. Uh-huh.

Interviewer: And when you were telling the stories before about your aunt and R.T.?

MLC: R.T., well R.T. was my uncle, see, but that was my daddy's brother.

Interviewer: Okay. And he married Ida.

MLC: Married Ida.

Interviewer: Okay, and Ida was a Bennett too? Was she a Bennett?

MLC: No, she married a Bennett, married my uncle.

Interviewer: [inaudible] Okay, R.T. Bennett. Bunny said that he thinks her last name was Mable before she got married.

MLC: Yeah, I guess so.

Interviewer: Okay. And that was your uncle who was the son of your grandmother?

MLC: Of, yeah, Lou Bennett. Lou Bennett.

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie, let me ask you one more question. Do you remember Drew Mathis?

MLC: Yes, I remember Drew.

Interviewer: When Drew talked, what did he sound like? Do you remember how he talked? We've heard he had a stutter. Do you remember that? Did he?

MLC: Yeah, he would talk, I'd hear him talking and I know – He would come up to, we lived in Smyrna, and see, he knew my

grandmother, and he would come up there, and spend the night sometimes. And she'd always make Drew a pallet on the floor, and if Drew got up in the night, where you going Drew? I'm trying to find the outhouse. [laughs]

Interviewer: Now did you have an outhouse?

MLC: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Interviewer: Do you remember when he was reburied, do you remember he was reburied [inaudible]?

MLC: No, you know what? Drew was buried, dead and buried, before I knew it. I didn't even know he was dead.

Interviewer: Okay, we didn't know, they moved his body and put him in another cemetery [inaudible].

MLC: Uh-uh [negative]. What did -- They did move him?

Interviewer: That's something we had heard.

MLC: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: That they had moved him. [inaudible].

Interviewer: Who did you say was buried in Monte Vista?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: Who did you say was buried in Monte Vista?

MLC: Oh, that's Mary Lee Anderson. Uh-huh. She was my first cousin, see.

Interviewer: And where is Green Grove Cemetery, do you know?

MLC: Down, I can go there -- Well I can't now, I used to go, I used to teach school down there. But it's about two or three miles below Mableton.

Interviewer: Down which road?

MLC: Going south, that way, you go down there. 'Cause I used to stay with Aunt Ida. Sometimes I'd spend the night there and then I'd go down to Green Grove.

Interviewer: Okay.

MLC: To teach school down there.

Interviewer: So down like Macon Highway, or down –

MLC: No, you didn't have to go – I can't think of the name of the road that you go to now, it's been so long.

Interviewer: Towards Atlanta? [inaudible] down towards Atlanta?

MLC: Well, you went that way you'd go towards Atlanta but you kind of go straight down this way, and that would – You know, I can't think of it. I'll try to tell you next time, or ask someone, Bunny or someone, what's the name of the road we'd go down there. But they done changed roads so much I might couldn't find it now.

Interviewer: [inaudible] Somebody you want to just tell us a bit more about [inaudible] you mentioned going to college to Fort Valley and Spelman. What was your college?

MLC: What was what?

Interviewer: What college experience did you have?

MLC: Well, but mostly when I was going I was just brushing up on –

Interviewer: Going to a normal –

MLC: Yeah, uh-huh [inaudible]. Things mostly that I had to do in school.

Interviewer: How was Spelman College at that time?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: Spelman and Morehouse?

MLC: Yeah?

Interviewer: How was it? We know the history.

MLC: Well, it was good. It was all right.

Interviewer: Was it a pretty big college?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: Was it a pretty big college?

MLC: Yeah it was big.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy going there?

MLC: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Now is it true that all of the girls would come from all over the surrounding areas to go down to Spelman because that was the only school...

MLC: Yeah, well...

Interviewer: ...for colored girls...

MLC: Yeah, well, I don't know if it was the only one –

Interviewer: I've heard other people say that they would have to go down to Atlanta to Spelman to high school.

MLC: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Was there part of a high school [inaudible]...

MLC: Well, they had that and other too.

Interviewer: ...and the college too? [inaudible]

Interviewer: Mattie Lou went to Lemon Street.

MLC: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was Spelman the high school before Lemon Street was, do you know that?

MLC: I think it was, uh-huh.

Interviewer: [inaudible]

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, who was your principal at Lemon Street?

MLC: Professor Maxey when I was going there.

Interviewer: I wanted to go back and ask you, do you remember how Drew talked? Did he have an unusual speech pattern, or do you remember anything like that?

MLC: It's been so long, I've forgotten 'cause he – I didn't hear him talking too much. He was mostly talking to Grandma or something, but he didn't talk so much when he was at our house. He wasn't there long though. He would come and stay all night and then next morning he would starting walking back to Mableton.

Interviewer: Well, where in Mableton did he live, do you know?

MLC: Up there at the Mable house.

Interviewer: In this white house?

MLC: He had a place up there where he stayed.

Interviewer: Was it in the same white house that Ike and Emma lived in, or was it another one?

MLC: Yeah well, I know he stayed out there somewhere, so I know he had a place or something out there. 'Cause Drew, and they were crazy about Drew, too. Nobody better not bother Drew. [inaudible] And you know they had a son [inaudible] lived in Atlanta and they went over to eat there and they carried Drew on over there. And they ate dinner, and Drew got through eating dinner and told them he wanted to go to the outhouse. And see in Atlanta then, now see, they had bathrooms. They carried Drew in there to the bathroom, he looked at that, Drew told them, I ain't going to do nothing to that pretty white thing. They had to bring Drew back to Mableton so he could go to the outhouse. [laughs]

Interviewer: Ms. Mattie Lou, either when we started or before we started, you were saying that the small house by the home [inaudible] down there that used to be a Maple home was built for Drew and Ike?

MLC: Well, it was built for Ike and –

Interviewer: And Emma?

MLC: Cousin Emma, uh-huh.

Interviewer: Okay.

MLC: Now I don't know exactly where he stayed but it was – He was there somewhere. I don't know where he had a [inaudible] place or room or what out there but I know he was there. But I do know Cousin Emma's 'cause I went to their house. Cousin Emma and Cousin Ike. So, I don't know. Drew was there somewhere.

Interviewer: Do you know anything about Ike and Drew's family?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: Mother?

MLC: Ike?

Interviewer: Do you know anything about Ike Mathis' mother or his family?

MLC: No, I don't know anything about them. Lived too far back. (laughs)

Interviewer: You're not that old

MLC: Almost 100 years old but that's past 100.

Interviewer: Did most of your family migrate from here, in this area?

MLC: Well, as far as I know, they've been here all the time.

Interviewer: [inaudible] Could you give me some idea of what the visits were like when you went to visit Aunt Emma?

MLC: When they'd visit?

Interviewer: When you went to visit Aunt Emma? Could you tell me –

MLC: Well, see, when I'd go to visit was my grandmother, well she had me in a wagon, and we'd go visit, and so we, me and my brother, we'd probably just be outside, something like that. And see, the old folks'd visit. Long time ago, you see, when old people, they'd go – children, they'd be outside playing, you know, they didn't stay in there looking in your mouth like these young folks do. (laughs) I know lately some people, somebody goes to see them, if the children are out playing they quit playing to go in there and whatever the folks are saying sometimes they tell them that ain't right. It's not like that. But we was so glad to get out to play. Because my grandmama made me do something all the time, wasn't nothing but picking up chips. She said idle hands was the devil's workshop. And so, I was so glad when somebody come so I could go out and play. Because I didn't get to play.

Interviewer: What did Ike and Emma's house look like then, when you used to visit there?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: What did Ike and Emma's house look like when you used to visit Mableton. Can you describe what it looked like for us?

MLC: No, child, I was so little and so glad to be outside, I don't know how it looked. But all I know, grandma would take us there, but we were so glad, we'd be out there in the yard, me and my brother. So, I don't know how it looked.

Interviewer: So, you're saying you would be out in this yard?

MLC: No, I'd be at their house, I'd be out there.

Interviewers: [inaudible]

MLC: I think about them every time I pass that house.

Interviewer: Do you know how old that house is?

MLC: No, but it's been here a long time. It'll last when these houses they've built now are gone. See they built the houses then when they had good lumber and all like that.

Interviewer: That house for Ike and Emma, was that built the same time that house was built, do you think?

MLC: No, see, that white house, see they built Cousin Emma's house later from the [inaudible], you see.

Interviewer: Do you remember when it was built?

MLC: No, I sure don't.

Interviewer: It was before your time.

MLC: It was there when I hear anything, because that house been there a long time. Because I done heard it [inaudible] a lot of times and that house was there then.

Interviewer: What do you think Ike did?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: What did Ike do for a living?

MLC: I don't remember. I guess he was old, and I don't remember him doing anything. I don't know whether he did anything or not.

Interviewer: Did he work on the farm at all?

MLC: I really don't know. All I know is just when grandma would come by there sometime and she'd stop and see Cousin Emma. I don't know what was happening.

Interviewer: Do you know whether Cousin Emma worked at the house there [inaudible]?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: Did she work at the Mable House, Cousin Emma?

MLC: Cousin Emma was kind of old, I don't know whether she was able to work or not, I don't know. She might have. I don't know whether she did or not.

Interviewer: So, when you knew them they were quite old?

MLC: Hmm?

Interviewer: They were quite old?

MLC: Yeah, they were old.

Interviewer: Okay. [crosstalk] We've had you going for a long time, I know you must be tired. Ms. Mattie Lou I cannot tell you how interesting this is.

MLC: Well!

Interviewer: It is just fascinating.

MLC: Well, I'm glad.

Interviewer: Mary and [inaudible] and I are going to try to work on some school stories and some things like that. I hope you'll let us work with you and maybe be the producer some of this if that's all right. If you don't mind coming back again sometime or something, would that be all right?

MLC: Okay.

Interviewer: All right. I really would love to get to know you better.

MLC: Okay.

Interviewer: Well, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

MLC: Well, you're welcome.

Interviewer: Can we get you anything?

MLC: No thank you.

[inaudible]

MLC: You're welcome.

[inaudible]

MLC: No, I don't want to go to the bathroom. We used to go off on trips with the senior center, and the center manager would say, "Okay," we'd stop somewhere way up the road, she'd say "Tee-tee time!" She'd say, "Oh but Mattie, she's stingy with hers, she carries hers home."

Interviewer: So, you've always been like that.

MLC: Yeah. I hope I stay like that.

Interviewer: Goodness, well, you're just looking so good today.

MLC: (laughs) Looks don't get me nowhere. (laughs)

Interviewer: You look like you're feeling real good and you just got a glow.

MLC: Yeah, well I try not to be down in the dumps like somebody, I try to stay up and go on.

Interviewer: Well, I tell you, Bunnie thinks you're just wonderful. Someone has to talk to him, and I'm looking forward to talking to you more.

MLC: You know he told me he was coming out this week. I don't know what happened.

Interviewer: I don't know, I asked him if he would.

Interviewer: It was a pleasure to meet you.

MLC: Well, pleasure to meet you all.

Interviewer: Ten potato pies at one time?

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: Ten potato pies at one time, you made? Ten?

MLC: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Ten?

MLC: Yeah, child.

Interviewer: Lord have mercy. I [inaudible] how'd you do that. You said you have a high chair. What, you mean you sat on a high stool?

MLC: Yeah [audio interrupted] and I made potato salad, made potato pies, I made a cake. And all that chicken and dressing. I say I'm not going to try to do that no more though.

Interviewer: [inaudible] I bet you will!

MLC: No, with my leg's like it is, and then I had to get somebody to put it in the car and so, I ain't going to worry with that.

Interviewer: But you're still going to do your ten potato pies?

MLC: Well, when they get ready, I always do that.

Interviewer: Sweet potato pies?

MLC: Uh-huh, yeah.

Interviewer: Boy I bet they're good. Do you ever make pies out of rhubarb?

MLC: No, I don't. I just don't care for rhubarb.

Interviewer: Not many people do but I've had one or two really good –

MLC: Sure enough.

Interviewer: -- that old time where they make the crust so it's kind of flat. You know what I'm talking about, hand rolled crust?

MLC: Yeah.

Interviewer: And I've had some – they call them turnovers or something where you just take that crust and flip it over, put the rhubarb in there.

MLC: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Have you ever tasted those? That kind?

MLC: I think I have, I don't know. You live here in Mableton?

Interviewer: No, I live in Marietta.

MLC: Oh, you do? Yeah. Well, all right. So, I live in Smyrna.

Interviewer: Okay. Any more that's close.

MLC: Huh?

Interviewer: Said it's kind of close sometime, anymore, with cars and everything.

MLC: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Far a piece otherwise.

MLC: Yeah.

Interviewer: You walked six miles every day?

MLC: No, not every day.

Interviewer: Just on Saturday?

MLC: On Friday afternoon I would walk from Friendship Church to Marietta. Go on down Whitlock Avenue up to the courthouse, catch the streetcar, and go on down to Smyrna, and I'd get off down there and go work for a lady two hours, and then I'd go on home, see after my grandma and all like that Saturday morning. I'd get up, go clean up Mr. Hughes's house, get through with his house, clean up his sister's house. Then I'd go get groceries, enough to last them the rest of the week. Then I'd wash whatever, clean up whatever need to be done, and so...

[End of interview]