

Interviewee: Mr. A. Byron Smith

Interviewer: Kellie Thomas

Transcriber: Caylin Wigger

I: Ok, it is August 29, 2007. I'm here with Mr. A. Byron Smith. Birth date February 10th, 1919.

Ok, Mr. Byron, where were you born?

ABS: I was born in Danville, Virginia.

I: Ok. Now were you born in a hospital, or were you born somewhere else?

ABS: I was born in the home. Yes. No, I was born at home.

I: Was that your parents' home?

ABS: Yes, it was, yes.

I: Ok.

ABS: My grandmother and my grandfather actually reared me. My grandmother's name, and I'm known as Mrs. Sally Lowman(?)'s grandson. You have to say all of that: Mrs. Sally Lowman's grandson. And, Sally's spelled S-A-L-L-Y.

I: Ok.

ABS: But everybody did that... But everybody called her Mrs. Sally Lowman.

I: Ok

ABS: And she was a wonderful person. Because of my grandmother, I can remember when I was two years old.

I: Well, why don't you share that memory?

ABS: Well, I tell you what, I have a picture of it when I was standin' up in the baby carriage like that, and my grandmother showed it to me when I was three. It was taken when I was two, and she showed and she kept me alive with that at all times.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: In fact, my grandmother writ me and she writ me so that everybody called me Mrs. Sally Lowman's grandson. Not Sally Lowman, but Mrs. Sally Lowman. And everybody referred to her as Mrs. Sally Lowman.

I: And what was your grandfather's name?

ABS: My grandfather's name was... is... he was a reverend, but he was a slave boy.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: Reverend King Solomon Lowman. King S... (laughs)

I: That's a strong name.

ABS: I... when they... and he told me that when they were comin' out of slavery

I: Mmhm.

ABS: His mother says, "Come on, show 'em. Let's get all ready. I said don't know where we goin', but (sings) come on, show 'em. Let's go." And she stopped and told my grandfather, said, "I named you King Solomon because I want you to be a wise man, do you understand?"

I: Mmhm.

ABS: And he never saw his father, because... but he was about fifteen when that happened. But somehow or another he came and got enough education, and he went to Hampton Institute.

I: Ok.

ABS: And that's... and he graduated. And he came back, and he was a minister. And, uh, he had quite a reputation as a minister (whispers) quite a reputation.

I: Yeah, and what church did he preach at?

ABS: Well, that, one permanently was Camp Grove Baptist Church in Danville. Camp Grove Baptist.

I: Ok. Now, um, did he ever tell you any stories about growing up, um, in the times that he grew up-

ABS: Every day! (Chuckles) Yea.

I: Can you share some of those with us?

ABS: Yes, um, the first thing... my grandfather, he preached at Camp Grove for s... well, not seventy years, but uh, pretty close to something like f... forty-two years? He was seventy-two when he retired.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: And, uh... as a results... every day that... (mumbles)... I either sat 'n listened to his stories or listened to my grandmother. My grandmother monitored my life. I mean monitored. And... this... I still remembers she says, "Come, I wanna tell you something." She always sat on this side, and she always took this hand, and she says, "I have something I wanna tell you, and when I tell it to you - don't forget it."

I: Mmhm.

ABS: That's right. Oh, I can remember...one... I was buttonin' up my jacket, ya know, and I button it up, and it was crooked like that up. She says, "Come. Let me tell you something, and when I do - don't forget it." She says, "This is the way you must button up your shirt. Say... you start at the bottom, put both ends together, and then reach the first button hole, and then you on track. And you hold it like that and you go up, and you always come out right. 'Cause, if you start off right..." And she says, "I want you to do this in your lifetime, too. If you start off right, you end up right. Don't forget it." My grandma was really a wonderful woman. (mumbles) You want a grandmother story?

I: Sure, absolutely.

ABS: Ok. (clears throat) Because I have about three thousand of 'em.

I: (laughs)

ABS: A-And, really, uh, my wife told me, "Don't talk about your grandmother. Just stop it." See, because, I talk too much, but when my grandmother... after she told me about buttonin' up this, and keepin' it straight on line,

I: Mmhm.

ABS: And the things that followed, her... her talkin' with me, and she would always sit down, and my grandma never raised her voice at me, but she... when I had done something wrong, she whipped me. We had a willow tree in our backyard-

I: Mmhm.

ABS: And when she, when she was ready to whip me, and she know I act mad, and yell atcha and all that. She just went out there and start pullin' on those switches, and pullin' 'em down, and when she get enough of 'em, she put 'em in her hand, and pull it through that like that.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: I could tell when you... when she pulled the switches through then leave them off and they're platted (?). And she come after me, and she really maul (?) me. And she would always say... And I would just...and... (muttering)... she whip me hard, I would cry.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: And... uh... And I settle down from cryin', she says now, "Don't do that any more." Same tone of voice. Same tone of... I says, "Yes, Grandma." And I tried to keep her word, but if I didn't, I got one of those spankin's. But... uh... when she got ready to tell me something, she always sat on this side of me, and took this hand, and... let me, I'll look, go up a little higher, um until a new story's, um... at another stage of my life.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: Um, (clears throat) You know what happened to boys and girls when they get right at... thirteen, twelve, thirteen years old, on up to fourteen. Now, human nature's the same thing, they start lookin' at little boys different, and little girls,

I: (laughs)

ABS: The boys start lookin' at them different.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: Ok. Now before I start doin' that, and it real is about two days before, my grandmother came, and she sat on this side. She says, "I wanna tell you something, and when I tell you – don't forget it." She says, "Don't ever go out with a dumb girl. Don't forget it. Or a dumb woman. Don't forget it." Listen to this, she says, "I tell you this because a dumb girl or a dumb woman can get a smart man, don't forget it, but a dumb man will never get a smart woman." Yep.

I: Oh, yeah.

ABS: (laughs) You - do you agree with that?

I: I do.

ABS: A dumb woman can get... she says so, "I want you to be a smart man, don't forget it." And watch this... she, she told me that... two days later, two boys, my classroom...they came during the down, said, "Man," say, "come on," say, "we gonna get some girls, you gonna (mutter), we went out last night, he got three girls, and I got two girls. We goin' out and get some more girls tonight." Says, "come on," and I step back (chuckles), he says, "C'mon man, go, you wanna go?" and I says, "No, I don't wanna go with you." Forgot all about what my grandmother had told me,

I: Mmhm

ABS: But they just frightened me with the way they... they were acting to get them girls.

I: Mmhm

ABS: And then they said, "Such and such a girl got the bad disease and such and such a girl gon' have a baby." And I said, "No, I don't want to hear that." But they went on, and... it... I realized my grandmother just told me about this thing of getting girls and going out with girls, so that... that's stuck with me, I don't know how much... because... them boys and the way they were talking about the girls that they had and how many they were gonna get... so I just stayed away from them. I wasn't interested (laughs) in any girls.

I: (laughs)

ABS: But that was... that was one of the stories she told me. But she t... told all about me when... when she knew that there was going to be a change in my life, or when something was going to come around. And that's why I was known as Mrs. Sally Lowman's grandson. When I started to school,

I: Mmhm.

ABS: My grandmother, um, she took me to a commercial photographer. Commercial photographer, and you have no idea what they look like then, but at that time, the commercial

photographer set you on the bench, make the room dark, pull something up over his head, and tell you to look such and such thing, and he had the light that would flash.

I: Mmhm.

ABS But I, my grandmother said me to they (?)... that the professional photographer to get my picture at age six because I was startin' school on Monday. I have that picture. And I... I just love my grandmother so much. Even today, there's some nights that I dream that I was with my grandmother or I saw her...

I: Mmhm

ABS: And it's just as fresh in my mind now, as it was then, but she would always says, "I'm gonna tell you something, and when I tell you – don't forget it."

I: And you never did.

ABS: I'm telling you, now if we got a whole lot of other things,

I: (laughs)

ABS: (muttering) What time I'm supposed to be at the library?

I and BS: (laugh)

ABS: But, um, my grandmother was just so, (mutters) so when I started the school...

I: Mmhm

ABS: All the school teachers didn't teach it, the principal said, "That's Mrs. Sally Lowman's grandson."

I: Mmhm.

ABS: Then went to the next teacher, "That's Mrs. Sally Lowman's grandson." And they told, the kids said, "That's Mrs. Sally Lowman's grandson." And that was the way I was known all along.

I: Well, now, let me ask you, um... so you say you were born in your parent's house?

ABS: Yeah.

I: Now where, where were your parents? Or what did they do for a living?

ABS: Well, (laughs), that's... question... My mother was very strict on me, but she, she and my daddy... my daddy loved to travel, he was,

I: Mmhm

ABS: He was a good man for working

I: Mmhm

ABS: And a good man to be my daddy, at... he... at one time he took me away from home (clears throat). But my fa- (coughs) excuse me, my father was hard-tempered.

I: Mmhm

ABS: So, (clears throat) he and my mom (clears throat) they went a lot of places. So, so I was stationary (coughs) and stayed at home with my grandmother because, um... I didn't wanna be... running different place. But one time they came and got me and they said, my mama told my grandmother that my daddy wanted to take a hold to me because I was his son, and he wanted... and, um, my mother came home to talk to my grandmother 'bout it, my grandmother was walked on, and she was quiet, I never heard her say his name, so they talked to my grandfather, and she just went back in the corner, and I know she cried.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: So, and they were in Richmond at that time, but (cough), my grand- my father, he could get a job wherever he went to, and so I lived with them, I don't know, maybe about six months.

And, uh, but he was nice to me. Nice... he, um, told me, well he, everywhere he go, he got a, the job that I remember, he had, was for a meat-packing company.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: And, uh, he drove the back (?), and he carried me over there to the meat-packing. You know, they had the cows out. Kingdom... was the name of the meat-packing (coughs). From there was the most famous, then.

I: Hm.

ABS: And, um, (mutters), having my father explain it to me all what it did, and, uh, I appreciated that. And one day, uh, he says, "C'mon son, we're going to a baseball game." You know, I'd never been to a baseball - and this is Richmond.

I: Mmhm

ABS: And, um, like I read (cough) to go to the baseball game, and, uh, in Richmond... Richmond being the capital city (mutters), but damn, it was a little country town. You... you didn't pay to go see no baseball game. But the great baseball players there, they just starred, and they became great-great, and at that time, of course, they didn't have any team that had a black person on it.

I: Mmhm

ABS: But, uh, there was some boys that became famous because of the way they could throw a curveball. Um, all the other things. But, uh, I remember my (clears throat) father says, uh, one, I don't know, about the second or third ballgame, he says, uh, he says, "Come on, let's get our shoes shined." (laughs) Getting your shoes shined? I didn't know nothin' about shinin' no shoes. And they had, at that time, in Richmond, the capital city, climb up on there and gotta shine your shoes (sound effects), and (laughs), I say, "I never seen something like that." So my daddy knew it, and he, he got me around for things, and, uh, we got out and he paid the man full for the shoes.

I: Mmhm

ABS: Um, I guess about the second time that we went to a ballgame, I mean, he said, "Let's get our shoes shined," I got up on this stand, and um, got my shoes, and when I got down, somebody had been there and had left some money for the guy shining shoes' tip for him.

I: Mmhm

ABS: And I said, "Dad look at this, look what I found." He said, "You didn't find this, (mutters), that belongs to the shoe shiner man," said, "Put it back up there." I said, I said, "No, what, nobody's gettin' this." I says, "I found this." He said, "You didn't find this, they placed it up there for 'im." (laughs) And you know, money, two dimes and a nickel, look like a whole lot of money. I said, "Dad, that should be my money." He said, "It is not your money. Put it back." (laughs) We went into the game, but, and of course, when (?), I tell you another incident that I have of my father. And we were home, I s- I said, "Dad, I'd like to have a dog. A pup, I'd like to have a dog." He said, "Son, you don't want one." I said, "Oh yes, I do. I want, I want bad." And he went to work and came back, I said, "Dad," I said, "Dad, you gonna get me that?" He says, "I don't think you want it." I said, "Yes, I do." Ok, he brought this puppy home to me, and he gave it to me, and I said, um, I said, "Oh," I said, "I'm gonna name him Jack. Come 'ere Jack." Don't know why, just playin' with him. And, um... he poop, poop right in the house, right on the floor. My daddy said, "Gather it up." Said, "You wanted him, so this is what you gotta do. Clean up behind him." I said, "I have to clean up?" I said, he said, "You gotta train the dog." (laughs) He says, "this is what

you have to do to train your dog. You wanted him, so train him.” And said, “Get that stuff up.” I said, “(muttered),” (laughs) He says, “Get it up.” I said, “get it up?” He said, “You asked for the dog, and this is your doggie. His name is Jack. You wanted him. I told you didn’t want him. You told me you did. Said, “Get it up.” I said, “Dad, take Jack back.” (Both laugh) And ever since then, I admire animals, but I don’t like to see people mistreat them. And that was the lesson I learned. He learned me a great lesson.

I: Mmhm

ABS: He took ‘im on back. But... my father (mumbles) and my mother traveled a lot, and, uh, as I’ve said, he was hot-tempered. Good man, everybody, nice farm,

I: Mmhm

ABS: But if you ever crossed him, you were in bad luck.

I: Mmhm

ABS: Um, so we went to New York, and up in New York and where everybody New York, but, uh, if you were unfamiliar if you were in the right place and I’m over you and all that (?), but nobody was going to be over my dad. Some guy said somethin’, he said, “you sayin’ somethin’ to me?” He slapped him, he slapped him back, knocked him out, and says, uh, “Yeah, I’m here, and I’m here to stay. Now the (mumbles), he fought real good. Strong. And, uh, one night while he was sleep, one of those guys came in and blew his brains out. While they were sleep.

I: Were you there with them at that time?

ABS: (interrupts) No, no, no.

I: Ok.

ABS: No, no. Oh, I tell you what, hah, before that, I, before that had I wrote back home and told my grandpa to come and get me. (Laughs)

I: (laughs)

ABS: (still laughing) I told him come get me (laughs) and my grandfather came down and got me, and, uh, the thing we rode back on the train. See, comin’ down I had rode with my daddy. We rode the bus.

I: Mmhm

ABS: The train was such a nice sweet ride; I’d never been on a train. My grandfather when he got back home, he says, “Sally!” say, “Here he is! Here he is!” and she was so glad to see me. She stopped talking, ya know, when, because she didn’t try to interfere with my mother and my father at all.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: And when she just went out the room (claps) just went right out. And grandpa says, “Here she- here he is, Sally.” And we came back (mumbles), and I never went wi- any place anywhere else with anybody. I just stayed there with my grandma, and I knew, I knew I had a good grandmother.

I: Mmhm

ABS: Oh, and, uh, everybody else knew that Mrs. Lowman, how kind she was. And nobody ever call her Sally. Only one person. That was King Solomon. (Laughs)

I: (laughs)

ABS: He said Sally, but nobody else. And, uh, we, at that, at this time, course, I, I grew back up, I kept growin’, and uh... once I went with my mother, after my father died, she was in Richmond,

and I went to Richmond. Oh, I tell you, when (mumbles), I'm talkin' too much, you tell me, because this is what they tell me. When I get into that mode, I just talk, talk, talk.

I: (laughs)

ABS: But I'm, I was, uh, (mumbles) I was in Richmond, and I hadn't been there long, and, uh, some of the boys around me, they would go downtown and sell papers. See, Richmond is whole lots different from any other city in the state.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: The capitol, the capitol... they got big tall buildin's, government (?) buildin's...

I: Mmhm

ABS: So you go down and sell newspapers, well I was courier papers then, but I hadn't been to Richmond, um, and this is where, (mumbles) you sell the paper for three cents, you had to pay two cents for it, and sell it for three cents. Now, sometimes, somebody would give you a nickel. Boy, that's... a- a nickel for a paper!

I: (Laughs)

ABS: (laughs) But when you go around the capitol, see, all those people, gettin' out of the capitol buildin', they don't want no change. They don't got... they give you a nickel, maybe a dime! Um, so some boys came by and told my mother, um, "Let us take him down." And they carried me down to show me how to sell papers on the street. And newspaper, new... when you get all the people comin' up, they were ridin' around, they would come by you, and right quickly you hand 'em the paper and they'd give you a nickel, dime sometimes, you know?

I: Mmhm

ABS: Hm, paper? Two cents for the paper? You know, and they go home. Well, I, I caught onto that real quick. I had no problem catchin' the guys that came. I think about the third day I was gettin' along too smooth for 'em... um... they came, my mother was (mumbles) and I guess she'd gotten about four, five blocks from home – she had to go downtown – and they start to rough me up a little bit, and, because I was enjoyin' it...(mumbling) I had never been in Richmond, outside of little old Danville, um nothing, you know?

I: (laughs)

ABS: And I was really enjoyin' it. And they felt like I was enjoyin' it too much. He said, "Look at you," say, "You don't even know who were you goin'." (mumbles) Say, "Look at you" say, "if it wasn't for us, you wouldn't even know how to get downtown." Then they started makin' me feel small, I said, "Yes I do too." He says, "You don't know how to go downtown. You know you don't." I said, "Don't you tell me." I say, I spoke up as bad as they were. Said, "I do know." Said, "Alright, you go head on, let me see." Said, "We goin' another way, you go on down there by yourself." I said, "goodness gracious, like," (huffs, laughing) So I had spoke up, but I did know how to get back, when I come back I would have a problem maybe. So I went on downtown and bought my papers, and I get on the street and sell them, and havin' a good time by myself. Just sellin' papers to people. And I was really, was the same thing all those people come out of those big buildin's down there, and, uh, I hear the car (Car sound effects)

I: Mmhm

ABS: I say "What he blowin' his horn for?" And I'm sellin' these papers you know. And then (Car sound effect) say, "What in the world they doin' all that?" And I saw somebody in the car almost hit somebody (mumbles) Somebody tryin' to say... (mumbles) cross the street without gettin' hit. That was my mother.

I: Oh no.

ABS: The boys went back and told her, say, "he went off and left us, we don't know where he is." And she was comin' to get me. And, um, when I saw her, I said, I said, "Mom, what are you doin' now," say, "Come on." She says, "I been lookin' for you because they said they didn't..." They have a thing out in Richmond, and this is true, two things, student doctors. Student doctors, really, at that time, if they saw a body, some, you know, somebody sick and get passed out or something, they take 'em out over to the medical school, and experiment with 'em. Um, they, student doctors did that and they would take up, if somebody they would say he was dead if he's just sittin' there and starvin', you see. This country had the biggest depression you ever had on about that time.

I: Mmhm

ABS: I don't know.

I: Mmhm

ABS: People were jumpin' out of tall buildin's all the way around committin' suicide. That was a big depression area. But, I, um, had no problem with it, and I told my momma, and she says, "Son," says, "I don't want you out here," says, "They.. they said you couldn't get back home, you was probably in here lost." I said, "I'm not lost." And, uh, tried to convince her, and she just cried. Said, mom said, "You come on and go home with me." I said, "Mom, I guarantee ya, I'll be alright, just let me sell my paper." And she, she didn't know that I knew how to get down there and that's why I see where (mumbles)

I: Mmhm

ABS: And, uh, she cried. I patted her a little bit, and, uh, then she quieted down. Let me go on and sell my papers. She went back home, and I found my way back home. And then, after that, I went. But that was hard, but after a while, I wanted to go home because I went that. This was another time and the boys at school, because I was a new student, you know guys just take advantage of you, and (mumbles)

I: Mmhm

ABS: I ain't have nobody take advantage of me. And, uh, well I didn't fight. One day, one morning I went into school and they grabbed me, and one, well, I always got that one time. Sometime I'd wait until the other starts the morning (mumbles), confrontation with 'em. But one boy took off my shoe, and threw it way down on the other side of the schoolyard, and boy took the other one and threw it like that and I had to go and collect my shoes. And I told my mom about it, and she went in and talked to the principal. You know what the principal told her? Says, "Ma'am," says, "I know your boy's (?)," he says, "But I don't have time to (?) paper (?) take care of your son." Says, "He'll have to come in until and make as best as he can 'til he get in school." And she tried talkin' to him and said, "Well I can't do..." So she left and she told me this, she says, "The principal didn't respect me at all. (mumbles)" And says, "I'm glad I went," said, "But if your daddy..." See my daddy was hot-tempered, was a good dad. Said, "If your dad woulda thrown his head out the window." (laughs)

I: (laughs)

ABS: Yeah, so she didn't want to send my daddy down there to do it.

I: Yep

ABS: Because of that, but I, um, I, I, and she said, "You'll have to protect yourself." Well, I'd never fought any boys, um, so one day I, some boy jumped over me, and when he jumped on

me, he jumped us right because I hit (laughs) knocked up my fist, oh, you always hit a boy in his stomach and draw him over like this and hit up like that and I started to fight. And he started runnin' and I started chasin' him. And when I was chasin' him some boy said, say "He, he, he, he lives right by close to the school," say, "Leave him alone let him go home." So I chased him, he ran because I was fightin' him. I could, I knew I could fight

I: Mmhm

ABS: But I didn't. So he ran and got home and he ran up on his porch, he had some people on his porch, I ran right up behind him, he ran through the house, I ran right straight on through the house,

I: (laughs)

ABS: And told him I would beat him up.

I: In his own house?

ABS: (splutters) Oh yeah, I'd say because we ran straight through the house.

I: (laughs)

ABS: Out in the yard, (laughs) I beat him up. (laughs) I remember that boy jumpin' on me, and say, "I can fight." And then I wouldn't have to send my mother to the principal and she wouldn't have to send my daddy because my daddy would, woulda beat the principal up. He didn't mind, he would just tore up the office with 'im. (laughs) And momma said I had to (mumble), oh go ahead.

I: Oh I was gonna say, well let me ask you one thing: um, did you have any brothers and sisters?

ABS: No brothers. No s-, I had a little sister, she passed right after she was born. But I, No brothers, no sisters.

I: Um, now when you lived with your grandparents, 'cause that's where you lived most of the time?

ABS: Yes, I did.

I: Did you have other family members that lived near by ya?

ABS: Oh yes, um, you see, with my grandfather being a minister,

I: Mmhm

ABS: We had a lot of relatives around, and, um, they were, the whole community accepted as well, in Danville, so, oh, we were well, uh, good. I (mumbles) grandfather retired from the ministry, he just sit out on the porch and everybody come by and everybody knew him, say, "Hi Reverend!" "Oh, hey, doll baby, hey," and, and he just like that.

I: Mmhm

ABS: And, then, after they go home, he say, "Son, I don't remember," say, "I have so many people go 'Reverend Lowman, my momma said hey' say 'Yeah' said you 'You married my momma, Reverend Lowman.' 'Yeah, give her my regards.'" He told me, he says, "I don't, I don't, uh, I don't know who these people are." And he said that all day long. Said, "Yes, yes I remember, I baptized, yeah I baptized..."

I: (laughs)

ABS: And do you know what?

I: Hm?

ABS: I'm in the bombin' business, in the real estate business and in the oil business,

I: Mmhm

ABS: And I been in that since fifty-four, before that I was in life insurance.

I: Mmhm

ABS: And I see people, "Hey, how ya doin?" (laughs)

I: (laughs) Ya learned from a, from a master, it sounds like!

(Both laughing)

ABS: I don't know who they are, I really don't.

(Both still laughing)

I: Now, describe the house that you grew up in. Was it brick? Was it wood? Did it have a garden? Was it in the city? Country?

ABS: Oh, it was in the city.

I: Ok.

ABS: And, uh, it was a, it was built fancy. It, it was something fancy. It, it was a nice neighborhood but it was a new house. And, uh, my grandfather and my grandmother... it was really, really something nice. But, um, now I must tell you... depression hit hard (?) and people would go around and say, "Give me a piece of bread." I can think of them now, "Gimme a piece of bread." And they needed a piece, just a piece of bread. Now if you put a little jelly on that bread, whew, they just can't stand it.

I: Mmhm

ABS: Well I was courier newspapers, and I tell you what my grandmother did – people thought we were rich, we were poor like everybody else. My grandmother, and I learned how to raise a garden from her, she started about, a, what, latter part of February, first part of March, garden.

I: Mmhm

ABS: Garden. And she just (?) garden. And, um, when, and something would come in, whatever she plant, along about April, some came in, and she says, when she takes up, (Mumbles), picks a beet or something, whatever, she say, "When you take something up, you put something back." and then she did that. My grandmother, we, we had, people thought we were rich. She said, "When you take something up, you put something in." We do this, and then she raised chickens, and, uh, we, and I, when I grew up a little bit, I got a, I got a paper route – courier papers, and, uh, I would fish, fresh fish.

I: Mmhm

ABS: It was so fine. Nickel a pound. Six pounds for a quarter.

I: Mm

ABS: (laughs) I would, I would go by, and (mumbles) when I go across town to get my papers I'd pass fish market. I would get fish for us to (?) home, ya know, and this is such good eatin'. But my grandmother raised, in the garden, I helped her with the garden, too and then she made preserves.

I: Mmhm

ABS: And watch, then she dried fruit. Fix it up so the sun covered it up and looked like piece of cloth so it (?) good, and dried fruit.

I: Mmhm

ABS: And we had, we just had plenty to eat all the time, and people just thought we's rich, and I was right by my grandmother's side, and I swear on my heart I'd raise a garden, and I got a garden now (laughs).

I: Do ya?

ABS: Yes, yes indeed

I: Well, what -

ABS: Yes I have.

I: What kinds of things are you growing in your garden now?

BS: Um, string beans, watermelon, cantaloupe, uh, okra, uhh, sweet potatoes.

I: Mm.

ABS: Oh, we- I got big sweet potatoes

I: Now is that similar to what your grandmother would grow? Or what are some of the things your grandmother grew?

ABS: Grow?

I: Mmhm

ABS: She grew vegetables. All of them. Fruit, and all of them. Um, we just had plenty to eat. And, uh, and, uh, and I'll tell you something else my grandmother too. She was an agent for that Madame C. J. Walker's, um, beauty supply. You know who C. J. Walker?

I: Mmhm. I've head of that

ABS: And we had a part of our house... She was a hairdresser, and she sold C. J. Walker's products. And, uh, I would keep her record for her. (laughs) Inventory, and uh... See because I stayed there, of all the time, and, I, my grandmother just felt like, she made me feel like I was just something she couldn't get along without. But I tell you what, (mumbles) you had men, then who had dairy's and cows and they would come by sellin' milk, and uh, I love buttermilk in my (?), I love buttermilk.

I: Mmhm.

ABS: But... everybody had the baked bread all of them, so you would have to have milk and butter from this man, and, uh, you (mutters) before you'd come by we would park and always buy my buttermilk separate from because grandma's buttermilk she make up the biscuits, and I (laughs),

I: Yeah.

ABS: I drank mine

(both laugh)

ABS: And sometimes she'd run out, um, (mutters) she'd ask me if she could use mine and I said, "Sure," for the family. And, uh, one day, uh, my grandmother stopped the man, and (mutters) uh she bought (mutters) and went in the house, and I thought whatever and I was short of money, and I told them what I want and I said I'll pay for this Friday. He says, "Alright." And grandmama says you, you (mutters) sell that boy (mutters) said, "Yes ma'am." Said I been doin' all alone and you just left here!

(Both laugh)

ABS: He says "If all the adults pay me like this boy, I would be alright." Say, "He comes up and pays his bill right on time." Says, "(mutters) I never say anything to you, but sometimes he doesn't have the money and I let him have it." Oh, I tell you, but she says, "Well, I don't, I don't know," but, but, when, when I, I know that, um, my mother was back with us sometime, oh and family, milk runs short. Says, "Can we use your milk?" Simply because I love buttermilk, so, I, I had to buy mine. Because I drank plenty of it.

I: Laughs. Keep telling, I'm gonna pause you right here.

End.