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Recommended Citation

Gregory, Dorothy; Oden, Deborah; and Lewis, Ishmael, "Gregory, Dorothy" (2013). *Video Collection*. Paper 118.
https://digital.kenyon.edu/gullah_video/118

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Dorothy and Beulah Gregory
July 17th, 2013
Interviewers: Deborah Oden, Ishmael Lewis
Warsaw Island, SC

DO: Hi, Deborah Oden and Ishmael Lewis from Kenyon College doing Carolina connections and we're here interviewing Dorothy Gregory, on July 17th, 2013.

Ishmael Lewis: And we're located on?

DO: Warsaw Island.

DG: Correct, Warsaw Island. Well, welcome to Warsaw Island.

DO: Thank you.

DG: Okay and you had a question in regards to the islands?

DO and IL: Yes.

DG: Like what? How many there is?

IL: Just describe growing up here. Can you first tell us where you were born? Your parents names, your grandparents names?

DG: Okay, I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in King's County hospital, in 1955. In 1956, my grandmother became ill, so we moved back to South Carolina for my mom to take care of her mother, which is our custom in the Gullah culture. So she came back to South Carolina because my grandmother was ill and my grandmother's name was Fanny Vultry and she died July 3, 1956. My grandfather's name was Mican Parker. My grandmother was married twice. My mother's name is Annie Parker-Aiken and my father's name was Joshua Allen.

IL: Could you describe your grandparents? What did they do for a living? Where were they from?

DG: I don't know my, never met my grandparents because my great great grandfather, Sergeant Parker was born 1850. My great grandfather Sergeant Parker Jr. was born 1845 and my grandfather was born 1876, I believe, so I never knew them, neither did I know my grandmother. She was born 1888, something like that, so she died when she was 57. I was just a year old, so I don't know her but from my mother's teaching and my father's teaching. On my

mother's side, my great grandfather Sergeant Parker was a farmer. He owned property. He fished, not so much for a living, farming was for his living. They basically farmed and sold their goods, you know, like that. On my father's side, my great grandfather's name was Josh Allen. He lived in Coosaw Island. That's the island that's going towards Beaufort that used to be predominantly black owned, has since changed, you know. So... In the Gullah culture they were either farmer, fisherman, carpenter, brick layer and, of course, you know, some just lazy along that line like that. So in our growing up, my father, he worked at the bowling alley. My old mother worked at the crab factory later on in life, but my mother worked as a young girl. She worked also in the field, until she moved to New York and my father also moved to New York, and that's where they wed in 1940s - 45 like that. They were in New York, my mom worked in some type of factory. I don't know for sure what my father did but when they returned to Warsaw my daddy worked at the bowling alley. My mother worked at the crab factory but they also farmed. My daddy farmed beans, okra, sweet potatoes and he fished. In the Gullah culture we ate seasonal. Whatever was in season at that time is what we were fed. It's not like today in the modern day, we purchase shrimp, put it in the freezer. We didn't do that. When shrimping season would come and my mother would say, "I'm gonna cook shrimp tomorrow", that meant my daddy had to go and hopefully cast and get some fresh shrimp and we would eat that. Everything was fresh. We had different type of fish that we ate based on the month. Each month it basically, kind of changed out. You know, the warmer month like September, like now, you know, we had whittings, you know, trout, we would eat flounder. My father would go gigging in the night time. Gigging is, you would go at night time and he would have a lantern, and that light he would have on, put on the boat, and he would have a spear, and that light will shine, and he could see to the bottom of the river, and he would spear the fish, and they call that gigging. And then he would spear the fish and bring the fish, you know, and that was flounder. We would eat that and then as the months started getting cold the fish would change out. So we would eat- in the winter months we ate mullet fish. Mullet fish is caught in a net, so he would cast the net and bring in the mullet and then when he would, you know, sometime he would come in one, two o'clock in the morning and he would maybe cook about six mullet, clean em, cook it, cook a fresh pot of rice. And he would wake us up and we would all get up and eat that mullet and he would fry it, stew it and make a gravy with it and we would eat that over rice and eat that and then we go back to bed. That's how we would eat. And then we did crabs but we basically eat- everything was always fresh and that's why I believe that in our culture, back in those days, there wasn't a whole lot of sickness. The typical maybe little cold, something like that, but not like cancer and what we're experiencing now. And I believe because we ate per the Bible, everything was always fresh in season. This time of year it's the summer time and school is out. God blessed us that every month there was a different fruit. In the winter there was nuts, so every month we had blackberries, juneberries, plums, persimmons, fruits, you know, plum granite, pear, you know. You know and we would... when schools was out we would basically just travel the island all over here. You never came home for lunch. Why would you? You had basically everything up there that you needed. And in the winter

months, you know, we had chicken, black walnuts, you know, so we would go out in the winter time, we'd take out our little bricks because they didn't allow you to take the hammers, so we would have bricks and would go and walk across the sand, and go to the other part of the island where they had the black walnut trees, and we would shake the trees, or throw something up in the tree and, you know, get the walnuts. We would crack that walnut and we would eat that all day until you came back home for supper, you know? That's what we basically did in the summer time. We entertained ourselves. We didn't have dolls. We didn't have bikes. We made our own toys. My first doll was a pepsi bottle with the rope and I would take the rope, put a piece of brown paper bag on it, wind it up, and stick it in that pepsi bottle. I would take my time to take that rope a loose and I would get the comb and we would comb as much as we could comb. Then we would braid, sit on that step, and braid that rope and unbraid that rope. Sometime if we had, uh, because we did our own quilting, we had a little piece of garment. We would get the thread and stitch it a little around the waist and put that on that bottle, and that was her dress. But I mean, you had to entertain yourself and sometime if you were fortunate enough to get that wheel from the bicycle and you would take that wheel with a stick, and man, we would push that all around this island. And if you had something like that you was big time, you know, but we had to entertain ourselves like that. There were many a days, when school was out, we would go out. Over here we have something I call a broom grass, that just grew wild. And we would go in the summer months, and we would get in the broom grass, and just lay in the boom grass with ya hands behind your head and look up to the sun and say, "When I grow up, this is what I want to be", which we always said a police, a teacher, or a doctor. That was dreams but that was always dreams, you know, and we would just lay there and we would talk about when we get old, what we gonna do and stuff like that. And then, when the winter months come, you know, it gets dark early, so sometime my parents would, you know, we would sit around a gas heater and they would tell us little stories about when they were growing up and, you know, things like that. And in the winter time, when they would plant, what they call the fall crops and stuff. We had this task that we had to do called uh... we had to pick sweet potatoes and put it in a bank. We had to make a bank. It was just basically outta of straw and sand. But you made a potato bank and what you had to do you had to go in, and to feel and pull the potatoes out the vine, shake all that dirt and all that, and my daddy would layer it in the bank, and that would take you through the winter. And sometime my mom would say, "Go in tata bank", not potato bank, tata bank, "and pull some potatoes", so you had to go in there and stick your hand in there, and she'll tell you six. No more than maybe six potatoes or something like that and we would bring that back. We didn't have a wood stove, we had a gas heater, so sometime when we just sitting around, she would take those potatoes and put it, you know, in that gas stove and just let it heat it, and let cook like that...you know like that. And that's how we would sit and eat that in the night time, while they telling us little stories about the headless man and all this type of stuff like that.

IL: Do you remember any of those stories that you might be able to share?

DG: The one about the headless man, you remember that one Beulah? The man that walked the road that didn't have a head on it and stuff like that. And the whistling man about the man who just whistled all the time. And the jack-o'-lantern in the tree but I think those were just folk lore stories to make us take heed and to not be, you know, like how some of these kids are, you know just, not fearful. But that was- instilled in fear in us for some reason to make us uh... I say "mine", like they say "mine us," you know, mind them and stuff like that, which mean "listen to them" but in the Gullah culture they say "mine me," that means listen to them like that, little stories like that. And then we would go play hide and seek in the field, you know, like that. And then when it came the time, on this island and most all of the little islands over here, we had what we called a Praise House because before 1953 we had no way of getting off this island except by boat. So my mother and all of those ladies, if they had to go to Eustis, they rowed the boat. They had to row the boat.

DO: They could go anywhere.

DG: Anywhere, when they left this island, it was by boat. So until 1953 they built what they call a causeway, to give us access, you know, because by then, people weren't getting cars, you know. But anyway, that they had to go was by boat and even though my father, even though he was in the 70s and 80s, where you coulda had a boat with a motor, he refused to do that, he rowed. When he got off from work, if my mother wanted something fresh from the river and he wanted, like I said, to go get the flounder, he had to go at night. So my daddy would row from Warsaw to Coosaw and that's not no hop, skip and a jump, in the car it is, but to row from here to Coosaw, was some rowing. And he would row at night and I remember I asked him one time- he was telling me this story about when he rowed the boat around to where the cemetery was at, that as he rode around that way on the cemetery, that these spirits was standing up at the edge of the water and was telling him to come and he said he told them, "No, you stay there and I'll stay here", and he said he kept rowing. So I says, "Daddy, wasn't you afraid"? And he says "Let me tell you, always remember this. The spirit is not going to harm you but it will cause you to harm yourself." He said, "Now, had I gotten scared and jumped off the boat, who was going to be in trouble, me or the spirit"? He said, "Always remember that", so he said, "If you see it don't ever," you know, but that's easier said than done, you know how that goes like that. What else did we do over here? Oh, on this island and most of the islands we had, because of the confinement, we couldn't get the church, you know, religion was always a big thing in our culture and we couldn't get the church, so we had a, what they call a Praise House, not prayer house, Praise House, a little old building with the hardest chairs I've ever seen or felt in my life, a bench. Like yeah, it was some hard but we went there and then like on New Year's Eve everybody had to go, who wanted to go, we had to go to a, what we call, watchmen service. And Ramsey Garden, at the time, was the elder and

Mr. Willy Taylor. They were the elder on the island, so they were more so about like king of the villages like, you know? So they would conduct their services in there. Of course, the children, me myself, let me speak for me. I didn't go to listen to what they were saying, that's how you get to see the boys and stuff over here, like that, so that's what I was interested in, but they did, what they call watchman service. And we would read, they would do the common reader and the common reader was, he would read a little black book, common meter, that said "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound". And from that, then you, another elder would sing "Amazing grace," all the time, you know, they would do the sound.

DG and BG sing Amazing Grace

DG: Then they'll read another verse and step back and pick up the common meter, you know. like that and sometime they would do-

DG sings

DG: The praising that they would do is called shouting, you know, that's how they would shout. And Eddings Point they still have too praise house and once a month, they meet and they would shout and do that like that. And that was in all the communities basically because we couldn't get from the island and get to church. And then a lot of times back in the 1800, 1900 before they built Ebenezer Brick Baptist, well, Brick is not really... Brick was the first church here but I believe it was built by the quakers, then they turned it over to Brick Baptist. But not turn it over in ownership, but they utilize it. And then they came with Ebenezer. I think Saint Joseph was next.

DO: Ebenezer is 129 years old this weekend, so I think it was Ebenezer and they break off.

DG: Okay, it was Ebenezer and then maybe Saint Joseph, somewhere along that line. Those churches are all right in the same vicinity of each other and stuff like that. But then that's how they did because the churches are based on... a lot of people go to the churches based on the community and ancestry.

BG: There's one more thing though. The praise house was used for telling the masses. Also, if somebody sick, if somebody had the baby, they ring the bell. So Mr. Gardener would be the one to do that and he would go and ring the bell. They had certain rings for death and they had certain rings for if somebody was sick.

DG: Fire.

BG: Yeah, fire. That's how everybody over here would know because they didn't have telephones or none that kind of stuff.

DG: Right and then he would ring it a certain way for each thing. I remember one, I was, I don't know how old but I remember my mother was standing up at the kitchen sink and he rang the bell and it seem like sometime I can still hear that bell, how he rang it because it was... bing, bing and my mom stopped washing the dishes and she said, "Someone died." And I said, "Huh"? And she says, "Someone died." And then he changed the ring... ding-ding, ding-ding, and she said, "Down road." This is called Mink point. Around the curve is called down road, so he ran the bell in a certain way and that would let us know that whether everybody needed to come this way or if everybody need to go that way. So we needed to go that way. So she said, "Someone died down road," so we went that way and sure it was someone that died. That was my first experience with death and seeing somebody dead and touching them, being nosy and curious. I did that, but that was my friend, that was my candy friend. I would get my candy from her all the time, so I had to see that. And in all the communities we had a, what they call a Juke Joint and that was what we called a shop when we were kids and stuff like that.

BG: We actually had two up here.

DG: Three really but Paul Matters was back in the 18 and 1900s. He had a little store but we had two Juke Joints, and we had- Jelly Belly was the famous one because he gave us stuff, candy stuff and the other one Mr. Black...(shakes head). So we was at Jelly Belly all the time and he would cook. He was a big guy, that's why we call him Jelly Belly. Big guy but he would cook a lot for the kids of the community. He would, sometimes we would go and he got a big pot of lima beans, tomatoes an okra, you know, his wife did fried chicken and potato salad. He would always act like he not going to feed us and stuff but he would just say, "Come on in here. Get something to eat and get on back home," you know, that type of stuff like that. It seems to me that that's one of the things in the Gullah culture, the talking aggressively but not meaning a word of it. The shop was a pretty good stop. Growing up over here we had a lot of fun. We had our own softball teams because, you know, it was still segregated and stuff like that but we had a lot of fun over here growing up and stuff like that. In the Gullah culture, when the oldest get old, they go away and they work and send money, send clothes and stuff back home. When they left, she's not the oldest, but when she left and my other sister behind her, they went to New York and stuff like that. And then they would, it was me and my brother left, so they would send, you know, school clothes back for us. I know I was saying something back in those days because those clothes came form New York and nobody down here had that type a, mini dresses, you know. Remember the hot pants and the go-go boots? They didn't have nothing like that. I was saying something then. Back in them days I was this big but I was saying something. Well, most of the responsibility of the oldest to do, we worked in the field in

the summer time. We picked tomatoes and cucumbers, at that time, that was the crop that was being planted down here. So we worked in the field and we got 25 cents a bushel. 25 cents a bushel. You know how many buckets of tomatoes you had to take? And we would dress, we would wear pants with a dress on the top because you could take that dress and fill that dress with as much tomatoes that you could get in there. You would walk down the isle with that dress balled up in your hand and that bucket on the top of your head, oh, you know, carrying it to try to get your boxes filled quickly, so that you could get enough boxes and stuff like that. It was, this Beulah, my other sister Pat, my brother Jimmy and, of course, I'm the baby, so you know I- but I worked. Then I got to the point- I wanted to work independently because back in those days, you know, I may work but I got my little... I wasn't gonna make no more than two dollars. But out of that two dollars, 25 cents was mine, the rest was for my mother. But 25 cents took us a mighty long way. You know and God forbid, if you got a dollar, you could eat a year on a dollar. I'm serious, ain't I? We worked for this guy named Blacco. He leased our heirs property and he planted tomatoes. Long rows, long rows, from one end to the other, long rows. And he planted over here and then he planted by the store, long rows. Sometimes you had to get down on your knees and you be so tired, you know, picking stuff like that. But I mean, it was a lesson. We saw the struggle of our parents and our neighbors. Anyway, back in those days a child could work and help that parent, mostly that mother, we did it. So we worked in the field like that.

BG: My mom worked at Blue Channel for a dollar and twenty cents an hour and then some weeks they then even make a full week, so whatever they made, that's what she had to feed us. She had to buy clothes. She had to pay the ride. She had pay for insurance because insurance men came around. Nobody actually knew that they were poor. All of us was the same, so you didn't know you was really poor, but we were poor. They still live like we are now but it was our house that my two cousins and we all was right around each other. If you didn't have no food at your house then you go next door to cousin Ardell or you go to cousin's sister and somebody is going to have food to give to you.

DG: That was one of the things in the culture and that's one of the things that we have lost. Not only as the Gullah culture but as black people in general. That connection and that caring for each other because, like Beulah said, you know, and then when they would plant, everybody wouldn't plant the same exact thing because what sense does it make for- I have field of beans. You have beans, okra, the same thing I have. But they planted like coincide with each other and then that way when my daddy picked beans, well, she may not have beans but he would make sure that that family get some beans, and this family get some beans, and vice-versa. And that's how they did it. When he went fishing and sometime if he caught, what he called a massive fish, everybody got it if it was just two fish. Everybody got a little something from what he caught and that was a good thing, you know, that was a very good

thing amongst our culture and stuff like that. Now, you know, we have gone away from that, so to speak, but we do a little bit of it still on this island here. We still, even in this day and age, we still do things to help.

BG: Community.

DG: Community things and things to help each other. If somebody has fallen back in their mortgage rent in common, let us know. We'll have fund raisers and raise money to get them back and we do do that over here, you know, still in our community and stuff like that. One of the things over here too, is you hear in the Gullah culture we use cousin, a lot of cousin, that my cousin, you know, stuff like that. May no be no blood relation whatsoever but that's how we were raised. This is your cousin, that's your cousin, you know, and farther down the line and stuff like that, but that's how we were raised. And we was raised also like when we were growing up and stuff like that. It didn't matter who the adult was. That adult could come from another plantation but if you were disrespectful that adult had the right to do what they needed to do to bring you back into respect. But we knew better than to disrespect our elder. We knew better because we knew by the time we got home, that word would've been home. I don't know how they got it but it was here and you really was in for something. To be disrespectful to an adult was not tolerated, was not tolerated over here at all. That's how we were raised. My brother, when he went fishing and stuff like that. He too would do the same thing. Everybody would get a little something. Two fish here, three fish there, so, you know, if you caught a lot of shrimp, you know, everybody would get a little something. And my cousin, he does the same thing now too. He only gives me one fish because it's just me, he says. She gets two fish because she has a husband, you know, that's what he says, "One fish Ms. Dorothy, one fish," so that's what he brings me. We still basically hold onto our Gullah culture because you can't, I mean you really can't lose it. You may come out of it for a little while but, you know, you really don't lose it. And when we all get together and all that Gullah talk, My daughter and her daughter, I think we must have some Spanish in us too, because her daughter, April, speaks 5000 miles per hour, and so do my daughter, and my Neshawn. It's something when they all get together, even though they all away from home, you know, and sometime drop a little of the Gullah, you know, and stuff in the work force. But when we get home, when they cross that broad river bridge, and smell that salt, it comes out. And sometime you don't know what they're saying and stuff like that, but we are what we are. I'm not ashamed to be a Gullah woman and I'm not ashamed of my heritage, you know, not at all. But um...you have any questions?

IL: Yes, a lot. Could tell us about any of your earliest childhood memories? Any more stories that you may be able to remember? Any school? Did you all have school on this island? Did you have to take a boat to a different island to go to school?

DG: No, by the time we came up, they were at St. Helena. Um, my brother, my cousin, Charles and those were-

BG: And my oldest sister.

DG: And my oldest sister. We had a school over here, The Warsaw School.

BG: When you go on back out, you'll see a yellow uh...

DG: Like a tractor like kind of thing, that's where it used to be.

BG: Well, right there, that's where the school house was.

DG: The county tore it down about-

BG: Mmm, a few years ago.

DG: Five, six years ago, the county tore it down. We were trying to, we had asked them to give it to us, to the community, so that we could repair it and keep it, use it for maybe not a school, but it could've been used for the kids having computer labs or something. But they opt to do it their way and they just tore it down, plum trees and everything, just bulldozed it down, you know. I did an article in my newspaper on that too because that was kind of, you know. But they went to the school. We had Charles and my sister all of them went to the school.

BG: They started off at the school.

DG: They started off at the school and then they built, St. Helena. If you were of a family that had money you went to Penn Center. If you didn't, you went to the school that was on your plantation, and a majority of them had one because Eustace also had a school, and Warsaw had a school. We had- I think there was a Mrs. Shirley.

BG: Mrs. Shirley Coles was one of the teachers there.

DG: It started out with a Mr. Washington. He was the first teacher that they had and this was back in the early 1900s. He taught, Mr. Washington, then they had Ms. May, and, you know, it was like Little House on the Prairie, everybody in the same one room school, and stuff like that. But we didn't experience that. By the time we came along, we had a causeway, and there was cars, so they could, you know, maybe one person mighta had a car but it was an automobile.

IL: When you went to school, was it segregated?

BG: Oh no, wasn't segregated until-

DG: until 1971.

BG: Well no, it actually was in '68, I think they started.

DG: Voluntarily right?

BG: Yeah.

DG: Voluntarily.

BG: The first people that left our school was in, I think in '68 and they requested that they had to be honor roll students in order to go to Beaufort high school. So that's what they did. In '68 those kids started leaving and then '69 and '70. '70 was the last class to graduate from St. Helena, as it was when we grew up.

DG: All black.

BG: All Black. '71, my sister and brother graduated from Beaufort high.

DG: Well, '71 they forced us.

BG: Everybody was there.

DG: We didn't have a choice. They gave us the option. First couple a years they gave us the option and then by '71 we didn't have a choice. They bussed us to Beaufort high school, which was, to me, educational wise, a mistake because when they bussed us it was so many students because they were bussing from St. Helena, Burton, Sheldon, all the black schools, they bussed us. We went to school in sessions, so you had from eight I believe, to eleven or twelve, something like that, then the next shift came in. So from those years I really didn't learn anything because when they bussed us like that and we got there, then we had the issue of, well, we didn't want to be there. The white kids didn't want us there. Then we start having the issue of schools' colors, mascots, fighting, you know.

BG: But they actually didn't learn. A lot of them didn't.

DG: We didn't. You didn't have time to learn.

BG: During that '71, '72, '73 years-

DG: It was a waste of time.

BG: They actually- these people did not think it through when they did it. They just said, desegregation. We gonna put these classes together and it was too many people coming in.

DG: Too many children. Too many.

BG: The first class, that '71 first graduating class had over 700 or something kids that graduate and they never have that here again. But that was the first class, that they had, you know, put together.

DG: Put together.

BG: So they had- it was a lot of them-

DG: And I came along and-

BG: And then some of them didn't even pass but those were the ones that passed 700 and something of them, that day.

DG: When I came along- I came along in '73 and it still was no better. We still were going to sessions.

BG: No, you graduated in '73?

DG: Mhm, but it was still from '71-'73, it still was no better, then they built Battery Creek. I think they built Battery Creek high school, so that kind of took away from the kids across the bridge and along a line like that. But it was just a lost generation up in here at that time, you know, educational wise. And then, you know, we were met with hostility, you know not only from the students, the teachers too. They didn't want to teach us. I remember one of the teachers, when you know they ask you the question, "Oh, what is it you would like to be when you finish school", and this and that. And one of the girls say, "You know, I would like to be a teacher", and she says "How? You couldn't be a teacher dear," but she never explained to her why not. So I always had to assume its because she was black and black people wasn't going to become teachers. But that was a lie because that's all we had at St. Helena, was good, black teachers. Strong teachers, very good, strong-

BG: And we had them until today and we still have them.

DG: And we have them and now we miss them today.

BG: Till today.

DG: Strong educators and the majority of them not even from here in the low country but they came here to teach the Gullah children. And we were taught, not only educational wise we were taught mannerism, appearance, you know, we were taught that.

BG: We have a lot of different um... that we didn't have material and stuff. We got the books from the white schools-

DG: Pages missing.

BG: So that's what they sent us.

BG: And the teachers had to- the little money that they were making here because they wasn't making that much money. And they had take their money to buy things and stuff for us to learn because a lot of the things the school superintendent and stuff here would not give to the black schools over here. So they would, like the microfilms and all that stuff, that old stuff they had to get friends that they had at the colleges and stuff to send them-

DG: Microfilms.

BG: Things for us to learn. And, you know, some of the teachers are still here. We still- Mrs. Faulkner. I think you met Mrs. Faulkner. Arabina Faulkner? You didn't meet her? Well, she be to the senator also, she comes there, but they did a lot to help the people here. If kids came to the school and didn't have money for lunch or didn't have no lunch they'll give em something. They'll make sure they got a peanut butter sandwich or something. But the teachers, it was just like that was your family-

DG: Parent or something.

BG: They didn't make you feel different because nobody didn't know we all was just in the same shape, poor. But they didn't have that much but they would help. And even till today we have Mrs. Faulkner, Mrs. Mann, Mrs. Mitchell, Mrs. Hudson, they all are still-

DG: A part of our community and our lives.

BG: And we have functions over here. This is a park on the side of us here that my brother built about fourteen years ago and we have different functions and stuff there, and everybody is welcome. They all come and-

DG: Sit and eat, laugh and joke. But again, that's the Gullah culture because back in the 18 and 1900s they had three bands over here.

BG: And people had to come by boat to come over here.

DG: Yeah, they came by boat but they travel and played. Sometime they went to Savannah. On Captain Dick's boat, they would go to Savannah. Fourth of July was a big thing and they would go to Savannah and they would play, you know, their instrument. I remember my cousin Charles' grandfather, we called him Shorty. Him and- well, we called him Good Lord, I think they were cousin or something but they blew the bugle, trumpet. And sometime they would come and they would- Shorty, he would come down that road and he'd be blowing that trumpet but they never learn music on their music, but somehow they could play. They could play it, which is something, I think, that's just in us, you know, just in us, you know, like that. And they did um, they used to, over here too, they used to plant- do the indigo plant, you know, that's that purple- where you get that purple dye and stuff like that. But you know basically the slaves were brought here to grow rice. But because us being low and wet, you know, it did pretty good. But they found that cotton produced more money, so that's what stopped with the rice. We are called the Gullah Geechee people. We do eat rice seven days a week, at least I do. I love it but um... yeah, I like rice. They call us the Gullah Geechee people. So what else, questions?

IL: Could you tell us about heirs' property? You mentioned it earlier. What is heirs' property and how did you all-

DG: I was gonna tell you about that part. What I was gonna tell you was, back in the day, in the you know, after slavery, slavery was freed what, 1859, that was the end of slavery?

DO: '63, after the civil war.

IL: People down here got it before everybody else needed it.

DG: After the Civil War, yeah what happened was, the white slave owners, from doing my research this is what I'm coming up with, allowed the free slaves to purchase property. But they let them purchase all the waterfront because, like I said, they didn't live over here and they

figure nothing but malaria. And they figure that when the storm come it would be tidal waves. So they purchased nearly all the waterfront and if you go through the island, the majority of our cemeteries are on the water. They always said that when they died the spirit would go back across the water, back to Africa, so the majority of our cemeteries are on the water. We have heirs' property. In order for them not to take the land away, it was in heirs' property. That means that every heir in that family is entitled to a piece of that property. And I think that was also to ensure that everybody would have a homestead because if you notice in the Gullah culture my mother may not have but five acres of land, but she might have six children. But out of those six everybody would get a little something and we all live around each other, almost like compounds I reckon. But if that's all they had, that's all they had. So with heirs' property, we have heirs' property but... I think they're changing that.

BG: They trying.

DG: No, they have changed it. The governor changed that in 2006 or 2007. He changed it in a way that could hurt. I'm not going to say how he did it but he changed it in a way that he could hurt heirs, ok. That was a way I believe our ancestors did it, so that the land will always be in the family and held onto. But, you know, nothing stays the same and when you have the majority of the waterfront property, and that is the value now, and the beauty now, so we coming back to redeem those. So we have to figure out how we gonna do that legally. We have to figure out how we gonna do that. You asked a question about Hilton Head. When we were small we used to go to Hilton Head, to this, what we called a black beach, Singleton Beach. Well, I don't think all of Singleton beach is there anymore but that was a black beach and that's where we went, you know.

BG: Singleton and Bradley.

DG: Singleton, Bradley, you know, it's not like that anymore. And I think one of things with it is to was the— with the heirs' property is the increase of the taxes. The waterfront property taxes are like 800% if you ask me but it has gotten extremely high. Say, for example, several years ago, you might have payed, you were on the water here, and you might've paid 300 and something dollars a couple years ago. Well, that has gone from \$300 to maybe \$2700. Same property but you're on the water.

BG: It's a way for— they want to force you out of the waterfront properties now, so in order to do that they raise the taxes. So you can't afford to pay the taxes. So that's what they're doing, trying to take the heirs' property from you. We have the Parker all across there, that's where our house is. And here, going back, where mine is, going back is the Parker. We had 25 acres and

about in 1995, that was '96 I think, we went down and we found out that they had took eight acres of the property, but nobody could find it.

DG: We couldn't find the record of it.

BG: We could not find no record of where the eight acres are. My mom and her cousins, her first cousin, they was paying every year for this 25 acres but then we couldn't find it in '96. And the lady told us, "Well, you all are lucky that you came down here because next year it was gonna be Shaun S. Marsh land." So we said, "But well, where is it?" We knew over here that that was the Parker land but you could not find this eight acres. So we still never did find. We tried to get a lawyer and stuff but it was so much money. And a few years ago, before I move here in 2010, my sister saw the newspaper and in the newspaper it said-

DG: "Quick claim deed."

BG: Quick claim deed and it had something about Sergeant Parker and she called us and we called and she went and found out. Well, the eight acres is when you first come in across the bridge there, the eight acres is over to, when going back, it's going to be over to the right and this guy has a gate up there. Well, he was sold at land.

DG: Well, he did squatters right but we weren't old enough to understand what he was doing because I remember growing up, seeing that camper in that road, so he did squatters right. Then the county came up with—

BG: The marshlands.

DG: With um, what do they call it? No, it's something that they call and what it means is they don't know who own the property and there's no owner. They call it uh... they post it too—

BG: Is it an unclaimed property?

DG: Unclaimed, unknown, unclaimed property or something like that and that's how they sell it. And that's what happen because in 1996 that's when we went from 25 point something acres to 16, it brings us to 16. Then the next year it took us back to 17 point something and all I search in that county, couldn't find it.

BG: Couldn't find it.

DG: I couldn't find where my great grandfather had 26 acres of property. When we went and they says, "Access denied." And we couldn't find it.

BG: He cleared everything. He cleared it all.

DG: And we couldn't find it, so the master of equity gave the property to the white guy because he said we couldn't prove that it was ours. We couldn't find any records at all. Lesson learned, you know, but that's one of the avenues that they're doing with heirs' property, you know, and this, um, using this governmental thing uh... something of domain—

IL: Eminent domain.

DG: For if there's something they're trying to do and you have the little script or something in there and they need it, they pull that on you and it's gone. I think because back in that time they didn't, like I said, they did not realize the value of the water because they was afraid. Because in 1893 in South Carolina here, there was a terrible tidal wave that came through at midnight that killed a lot of people, so I think that too instilled a lot of fear in them that this island will flood. And being that you in the island when that tide come up, you know, like that. I think that was one of the things too that they thought, "Well, lets give them all the waterfront" and stuff like that. How many years ago that was? There was some family down there, what they call Lanzin. Ted Turner, came to develop forty acres or sixty? Forty or sixty? Forty acres or whatever, he came to develop. Now, anything on that water, you know, that's going to be a resort and he came to develop this property not knowing that it was heirs' property and they had their papers in order.

BG: They fought him.

DG: And they fought him and he left and he said that he was, "Not aware of the fact," and I quoting now because I read it in the paper, that he was "Not aware of the fact what this island and the property" and stuff like that "meant to the Gullah culture." So he pulled out and he said that, you know, he don't go out there and buy property, his manager, whoever does this and stuff like that, he was going to develop that, but he left it alone, you know. But it was some guys that got together in the 1900s, put their little money together and bought 300 and something acres.

BG: I don't know what it was but it's a lot.

DG: I know they didn't pay but 200 maybe a hundred something dollars because it was, I forgot what the paper said how much it was per acre, but they had all this ducks lined up in a row. So he, you know and ritual is good.

BG: All those people, so they won. They saved the lands and beach

DG: They saved the beach and everything because they had they papers lined up. Huh? She always wanted to be so serious all the time. What else did you want to ask us?

IL: Could you talk about what did you do after high school? Did you leave? Obviously you came back

DG: I did after I got married.

IL: Were your parents strict about that?

DG: At very young. No. Were they strict about that?

IL: Yea

DG: No, because I got pregnant. And they weren't strict about it. They didn't like it, but you know back in them days too, in the early seventies if a girl got pregnant that was almost an embarrassment you know in the family and stuff like that. So you either got married or you have your baby and your parents would take it and you would go on about your life. You know so I got married and I chose to stay here but she left (points at BG.) All of them left and I was the only one here. Cause she went to New York, my other sister went to New York, and my brother went in the military. So, yea he went in the Navy, so I was the only one here. So I got married and I stayed here until I left here in 1985? 85. And I went to Houston with them.

IL: Do you remember your parents ever talking about home remedies? If you got sick or anything, did they ever?

DG: Oh yea they did home remedy.

IL: Could you tell us about it?

DG: Ok, which one of the remedies?

IL: Any and all of them.

DG: OK, and we still use some of them to this day. Ok, we have a light everlasting [note: unclear] is -

BG: You make a tea.

DG: It's a tea.

BG: And if you have.

DG: Cold.

BG: Cold, fever and you.

DG: Boil it.

BG: Boil this tea. Now they sell it in whole helm [note: unclear] and now they don't want you do that no more down here and now they sell it in a whole.

DG: In the store, GNC.

DG and BG: Health Store.

DG: But we can't go out there and pick it wild like we used to and brew it because they say it's a hallucinogenic drug.

BG: But we still have it.

DG: But we still do it.

BG: Let me show you (stands up and walks off screen).

DG: Because that remedy, like say you get a cold and what they would do is brew that tea. Tastes horrible, bitter. They brew it as black as they can and they would give you a cup of that tea with a little sugar, maybe a little honey if they had it, and put you to bed and put the covers on you and you couldn't get up. But when you wake up the next morning, you didn't have a cold. Ok. And now that (Looks over as BG sits back down).

BG: This is how it looks. We brew the tea and we keep some

DG: You better get that off that thing girl.

BG: If you, this is my tea (everyone giggles), and you.

DG: You drink it.

BG: You drink this.

DG: With a little tadin [note: unclear] in it. Gin or moonshine. Back in those days it was moonshine.

BG: And I think they don't want you to, because this is how it looks. (Shows it to the camera).

DG: It looks like Mary Jane (laughs). You know? It looks like Mary Janes. But it just grows wild and that's where they would go and get that. It smells like a tea.

BG: It smells like a tea.

DG: And it's very strong when you cook it all so then you boil it. But it's like a tea.

BG: But they don't want you to get it so we keep it.

DG: We get it when we find it.

BG: In some areas around here, they still have it.

DG: Mmhm (meaning yes)

BG: And some of them don't.

DG: And then we would, when you would get, say you would get the fever. My mother had, we had, there was a plant that grew around here. It was called "the old maid" and she would cut the leaves off of that "old maid" and she would tie it to the bottom of your feet or put it (coughs) or she would put that leaf to the bottom of your feet and you would put your socks on. Put it on. And what that leaf does, it pulls the fever out of you. And when you wake up in the morning, the leaf looks as if it was sauteed. It's shriveled. It shriveled up. Because it had pulled all of the fever out of you. That's what the old maid plant did.

BG: We have it in the yard.

DG: We got some in her yard. She have some in her yard. (points outside) That's some Old Maid. And then, what they would do too, like, my sister had an allergic reaction to cutting the okra, and my mother took the, the okra has a blossom a yellow little blossom on it, look like a little flower, and she took that, cut that blossom off of that okra bush and she put it in a cup. And she mashed it and she mashed it and she mashed it and she mashed it and stirred it. And then it became into a paste. And she took that paste, and my sister had a boil, and she took that paste and she put it across it, on that boil. And then it got hard hard hard, and it drew everything out of, out of that boil like that.

BG: Or they would put a penny and they would cut a piece of salt meat. And they would put that penny in the salt meat on that boil and it would draw it and bring it to a head. And it would burst. And all that inflammation and stuff would come up.

DG: And if you stepped on a rusty nail, because you know they said that if you stepped on a rusty nail it would give you locked jaw. So if you stepped on a nail, they would take a board and wherever that nail punctured, they would beat it with that board. And then they would take that salt meat and they would put that salt meat to that wound and tie it up. And you can feel the salt in it. You can feel it, they say, pull out all the pizen out of it. You know they're going to get the pizen out. That's Gullah. You know that. Like that, and they would do that and then

BG: They had another one too. If you have a baby and you don't breastfeed and you want to pull the milk out, you wrap it with cabbage. And you take the cabbage and you wrap it around

DG: Raw cabbage.

BG: The leaves on the cabbage. Wrap it around both breasts and you tie it with a towel. And you pin it. And then the cabbage will draw all that milk out of there. It'll be hurting, the pain, so you tie a rusty nail around your neck and then you put that cabbage on and it draws it all up.

DG: And if you were asthmatic, they would take you to a tree and they would take a nail with moss and they would take you to the oak tree. And they would go up so many inches above your head (puts her hand about a foot above her head) and they would take that moss and roll that moss, and take that nail and nail that moss to that tree. And when you reach that height, that asthma's out of there. That's what they would use.

BG: They had all kinds of remedies. If you had high blood pressure, they put the moss in the shoes. And if you wear that moss in your shoes, it would keep your pressure down.

DG: We never got colds and stuff like that, because also the remedy for colds where every month castor oil, cod liver oil you had to drink that every month. Sick or not.

BG: And you had this thing called the “Dog and Cat.” Dog and Cat was for worms. Cause walking in the dirt around here, it gives you worms.

DG: We had worms a lot

BG: And it came out in your bowel movement. So they would give you dog and cat and the dog and cat will cut up the worms.

DG: The worst thing you ever tasted in your life. It was a red medicine. It was, oh my gosh. But one of the other things with us here with the worms. These were dirt roads. And, you know, we were not like constantly taught, they said “wash your hands,” so we would go outside we would play all day in that sand and come in and pick your meat up and eat it and stuff like that. But we found that dirt is where the eggs of the worms, the eggs are in the sand, but we didn’t know that so we just we just played and came in and ate. And that what was giving us worms and stuff. We had a good epidemic of that here, that worm. Because they started treating us in the health department. Giving them that “dog and cat” medicine, you know, to take for the worms and stuff like that. And, like, if you had a toothache, they would put the tobacco from the cigarette, but with a little aspirin, and they would put it in there. Because, you know, we didn’t go to dentists. How were you going to -

BG: We didn’t have insurance.

DG: Yea, how were we going to go to a dentist? We had no insurance, you know and stuff like that. And when you had a tooth that was shaky, you tied a string, the thread, around the tooth, put it on the door, and slammed the door. And plook (gestures a tooth coming out), it would come out. Sometimes you couldn’t get it out like that, they would tell you it was not shaky enough, you know, something like that. Or your parents would mess with it and they would say “oh my gosh look over there,” and you would look over there and gsh (gestures tooth coming out from being pulled.) And you know, medical-wise and stuff like that, but you know, we were hardly ever sick. We were hardly ever sick like we are today. Change of meal, like the way we’re eating. Change of eating habits, that’s not good for us.

BG: Everybody always grew their own.

DG: Everything was fresh.

IL: Organic.

DG: Organic. Yes. But they stop us from doing organic farming raising our chickens. They stop us because, I remember.

BG: Hogs and everything. We had everything right here. We had our chicken coup. The hog pen, you had your goats.

DG: We had fresh eggs.

BG: We had everything.

DG: We had all the kinds of stuff like that, but they told them that the way. Ok my father worked at the bowling alley so therefore he brought what they call "slop," when people didn't want to eat everything they did is "slop." He would bring that and that's how he fed his pigs. The farmers, they would grow corn to enrich the soil for the next year of planting, so they would plant the corn and give you the corn, they would feed the chicken the fresh corn, you know and stuff like that, but they told them that they way they were doing it was not sanitary and not healthy. So they had a feed store they put on the island, so they had to go and buy, what they're telling them, to feed your pigs and feed the chicken. They couldn't afford stuff like that so they stopped raising the animals and then when they started with the planting. You know a lot of them had to slaughter their animals to get rid of it. And that is in regards to planting our garden and stuff like that, well they came up with that, the beets and stuff like that that's touching the ground was not sanitary because that and them used the fertilizer from the -

BG: The manure out of the cow pasture.

DG: And all that's not this and that. The beets touching the ground and stuff, you have to put plastic down and plant it on stake. Well, they didn't have money for that, so they stopped. When we were growing up this whole entire island was clear. I could stand in her backyard and call all the way over here and tell her "look, come over here, we gonna play baseball, meet us on the field." We could hollar all the way around to tell what we were getting ready to, everything was clear.

IL: So all the trees that we see when we come, that was not here?

DG: That was not here. No.

BG: We could holler to my cousin. Lives down, he was a parker [note: unclear], he was at the water. You could see all the way down to his house. His house was clear over there. All this was clear.

DG: Everything was clear because they farmed. As soon as they stopped them from farming, it just grew up.

BG: Then all the trees and stuff grew up.

DG: But we could holler.

BG: All this used to be farm.

DG: All this used to be farm. and clear.

BG: All this back here (gestures behind house), my mom used to farm.

DG: You could see the water. We could be in this, out here, everything was clear and you could see the traffic on 21 coming on down. We could see Lady's Island and half of Coosaw. Just walking down sometime when the tide would get low and when the sand is hard you can walk on it. You can walk along the shore. You can see Lady's Island and Coosaw. We could just holler all over and say "look, we playin' ball, meet up in the field."

IL: Talk about "the ball." Baseball. You all play softball?

BG: We played softball.

DG: We played softball.

IL: Could you tell us about that?

DG: She (pointing at BG) played before me.

BG: Well we played. Over here we didn't have that many young ladies so the few of us, we joined with the ones from Oaks. So that's how we became a Warsaw Oaks baseball team. And we had to go over there for practice and that was, back then in the sixties, when we had that, and we played baseball until I left. I left here in 1969. And after we left -

DG: They took over (laughs a little)

BG: The younger ones, they formed a baseball team over here. But then, they had enough young ladies over here when I was, it was just three of us, my sister Pat, Ernestine and myself, so we had to join with Oaks team. But, it worked out cause we didn't have no cars to pick us up, so we had to walk over to Oaks for practice. And we had one of our play brothers, he would

wait for us every afternoon when we went to practice and walk us back home then we go around and take Ernestine. Then he would come on and drop me and Pat off because that's where our mom, our house, our greenhouse over there. And he would drop us off and he would go down to his aunt.

DG: And when they left, we took over. We had enough young ladies to have our own team. I played first base.

IL: What were you all called? Did you have a mascot?

DG: "The Warsaw-ettes" (laughs). No, we didn't have a mascot, but that's what we were called. We were good.

BG: They were good.

DG: We were good. I think we had, you know, when we were playing, we weren't connected with the county so even though you held first place, we didn't get trophies and stuff like that. But, we were good. And we travelled. We did the island. We did Stewart [note: unclear] we did Sheldon, Bluffdon, Dale. We travelled. We were the travelling Warsaw-ettes. But we were good. And, you know, we started getting old and getting married so we the county started taking it over and we didn't want the county taking us over because we would have to fall under their regulation and do what they say because we would have to use their equipment and that type of stuff. We played softball strictly for fun and sports. But the county was, it was gonna be too much rules and regulations. But we had our women team and then the guys had their team. But my cousin tells me all through his life, Charles was 71? something, all his life growing up there was always a male baseball team over here number one back in the twenties and thirties, forties. Always baseball and music over here. Always. But we had that softball. But we kinda stopped about maybe 75' 76' we kinda break it up.

IL: You mention music and earlier you talked about jook joints. Could you explain what that is?

DG: A jook joint?

IL: Yes

DG: All communities had what they call a "Jook Joint." We called it a "shop." The reason we called it a shop is because you could get bread, lunch meat. A shop. You could get a little shopping.

BG: It was like a store.

DG: But it was like a little store with a club. It had a piccolo. Ten cents got you 2 or 3 songs on the piccolo. It had a pool table. It was a place for meet, hangout, a hangout. We had some fun. We were children and you were not allowed in there all the time. Like this time of afternoon like this, you got to be steppin. But like on Saturdays, we would hurry up and do our chores so we could get to that shop and peep through the window.

BG: Well that's where they had the baseball games and stuff too.

DG: Yea, there was baseball at the shop.

BG: The diamond, the baseball diamond was by the shop. So everybody, on Saturdays, and Sundays because you would play baseball on Sundays. But that's where you would draw everybody. Everybody went to that little jook joint. We called it a jook joint.

DG: And on some of those weekends, when the baseball men, when they travel and we didn't go and stuff we would stay. But we know that after the game they was coming back. And, you know, in your little community you have the ones who bring drinks. And, you know, like to dance and all that. So, to us, that was exciting to peep through the window and see how grown folks be acting and stuff like that, in the shop. But, that was a highlight of, they were grown and gone, we were little kids. "Hurry up and do your chores," so you can get down there and see what's going on. And get some cookies. And a bottle of soda. Big bottle of soda.

BG: And a cinnamon roll they don't have it no more.

DG: A cinnamon roll. Man, I'm telling you, if you had a quarter, you had but a five dollars. If you had twenty five cents, you could buy stuff and got change back. You know, back in those days, like that for us, and stuff like that.

BG: The cookies was three for a penny.

DG: That's what a jook joint is.

IL: How about moonshining?

DG: Moonshine?

IL: Do people moonshine?

DG: You want a shot? (laughs).

IL: Sure

DG: No, you better cut that. (laughs)

BG: We had, my brother in law, him and some of his brothers I believe, they did moonshine. His brother, two of his brothers, three of his brothers did moonshine.

DG: They had a still over here too.

BG: They had a still and they, I actually had to get pumped. I snuck in and drunk it. I just went crazy. But they got me to the hospital and they did pump it out. But they, those people said that that moonshine. It was moonshine.

DG: They had several stills because back in those days now, they're mines now. Even though it was illegal. Moonshine was a lucrative business. (laughs) You know? And like she was saying about our brother in law and stuff, he, I think he, did very very well with that. But they had moonshine, I mean, moonshine stills over here. But they would always put the still on one of the other island over there where they go through the boat. But, you couldn't really fool the cops because he knew you always have somebody who's going to talk you know? Because I remember they had they had the buck. My cousin had an old black cadillac in the bushes and that's where when they would go to the other island over there and cook it and then they would drain it in in the bucket something that looks like the seed out of a corn. A little corn. It's corn, cause that's what it's made of. And he had it in that car, and my brother went and drain it. Aw the first time I heard some cussin, comin out of him, he was some kind of drunk that day. But I never saw the still, but we saw that in the car and stuff like that. And that's what they used to go and steal. And sometime even they say you. My cousin said that one time they and they chewed it. They didn't know the extent of how much they had absorbed in there and he said "boy were they stir crazy." He said that goat took them all over. They had a big goat and one of the guys was a carpenter over here built them a wagon, but the little thing hook up on the goat would ride him and my brother. He said they didn't even have to tell him where to go. They were so drunk that they jumped in the cot and the goat just took off and brought them right on home. He said when they got to his house and stopped, almost let the goat say "get out" you know and stuff like that. They drink that moonshine and they still drink it to this day. You know. Till this day. And, you know, when you shake it, the more beads it has, they say it's good. I only had it one time and we skipped school. I had it one time. It's potent. It's very potent. But it's good for colds. When we did the life everlasting, we drop that in there and it sweated on out. But it's good.

IL: What was the favorite dish? What was the favorite food? What did you have? say for instance

BG: Collard greens.

DG: That I like? or just.

IL: Yea. I mean, that you liked. What did you like? Like something your mother would make?

BG: Fried chicken and macaroni and cheese. That was my favorite.

IL: How did you fry it?

BG: The fried it.

DG: Pan fry.

IL: In a skillet?

DG: Mhmm. They call it “pan fry.” We don’t do that anymore.

BG: And my mom used to make. When we came from school in the wintertime, because she did not work in the wintertime. She’d always have a big pan of baked sweet potatoes and she would have, we call it shortnin’ bread. And she’s the only one (points to DG) that makes the shortnin’ bread now like mama used to do it. And she’s the baby. But, she would make this shortnin’ bread, and it’s real real light. And it’s like a biscuit, but it’s larger than a biscuit. So, we would have a pan of that and a pan of sweet potatoes. And that way, by the time she finished cooking, you almost full and she didn’t have a lot of food, so you would be filled up on the sweet potatoes and that shortnin’ bread and we would have this about everyday. When you would come home from school.

DG: In the winter months.

BG: In the winter months.

DG: Cause remember we had a, they banked the sweet potato during the winter, so you would have something to eat. But you know like, my sister’s fried chicken, but they’re mine now. Fried chicken was a delicacy. Wasn’t something you ate everyday and every week. Sundays and Sunday’s only. You know she would tell you “go out there and get that chicken over there,” you had to catch that chicken.

BG: Had to catch that chicken.

DG: You know and they would ring that chicken neck and pooh (sound of chicken neck), you know and chicken went into the pot you know and stuff like that. And every now and then, you know, you had collard greens and stuff like that. You know, but my favorite when I was growing up, I used to like chicken feet and tomatoes and okra, over rice.

BG: Never had that.

DG: Never had that? We eat that, they eat that to this day. And sometimes when my mother used to cook down the count, y'all call it snail, we call it count [note: spelling unclear], but you know, she would just put that in a pot and boil it, aw man. They make count stew, but I don't like the soup, I just like it in the big chunk like that and cut it up in some hot sauce. I like it like that. That was one of my favorite dishes. And another one was mullet, stew mullet, with the yellow gravy over rice. That. You know, we ate that in the winter time. I like that, you know. And we were not, let me tell you know, we were not given sweets. You may think I'm lying, but we only had orange and apple Christmas time. May think I'm lying. Only Christmas time and that's it. Christmas time. Unless you, well she didn't get nothing because she didn't go out the house, she didn't travel to Arla [note: unclear] like we did and go and get those black walnuts, but only at Christmas time, once a year we had oranges and apple.

BG: And you got that from everybody else.

DG: And you went Christmas morning.

BG: Christmas morning you walked the whole island and everybody.

DG: Gives you a little something. Some people didn't have orange and apple to give you, so they'll give you pecans or maybe 5 or 6 pennies. But them pennies went a long way. And when you would leave, once you would open up all your gifts for Christmas and then the kids start coming, knocking on the door. So my mom have to give them orange and apple or whatever, you know -

BG: And a slice of key and wine [note: unclear].

DG: And coca-cola wine.

IL: Coca cola wine?

BG: Coca cola wine.

DG: It was called that but it didn't, it has nothing, no nothing like that. It's just, it's just fantastic. It's just good. You get a big pound cake with pecans on the top. And they sliced that.

BG: And they took this long.

DG: It's a long cake and they give you that with a glass of coca cola wine and your little orange and your apple. And you go to the next house, everybody have a, you got a bag now, you got a pillow case. If you didn't have, yea a pillow case, if you didn't have a bag you took a pillow case and you went from, we'll start from my cousin here, my next cousin, and we'd go all around the whole island. You'd be getting back home about this time here. And when you get home and you, oh you can't wait in that pillow case to see all them goodies and how much candy you had. And when some would give you candy and there was a candy that looked like a "S." Boy if they gave you one of those candy. It looked like a little "S." You know.

BG: But that was only christmas time.

DG: That was only christmas, but we didn't eat candy otherwise. We didn't have sweets like that. It wasn't like you could go in there and say "well we going to fix up a thing of kool-aid." No. You didn't, those things was rare and when my mother got sugar and butter and all that type of stuff, it was for a purpose. I love butter now I used to go in there and dip my hand in there until she caught me and I lied. I didn't know that butter would put grease on my mouth. But I loved butter, the taste of the salt. But it wasn't that you went in there and just have your way. No. And we knew better, not to do that. But we would take that chance you know.

IL: Are you going to keep the shortnin bread recipe? Or are you going to pass it on?

DG: I gave it to my daughter but she told me "mom, please," you know, but I showed her how to do it, how to make it. She's mostly the baker in the family too, so I showed her how to do it. Because normally we'd do, well the only person who'd really ask me for it is. And not one pan, three, four pans for her to take somewhere.

BG: I gotta take one to the center now.

DG: See? See? I'm a -

BG: I can do it, but mine just don't come up like her's. Her's come up just like mama's. and mine don't come up like that.

DG: But, and then we used to have that in the wintertime with tea. Like she said, I would play brother, he would stop, and my mama would have that tea, hot tea, waiting for him and we would sit down and eat shortnin bread and tea while they be telling us these stories. My daddy smoking his pipe, my mama smoking her pipe.

BG: And knit his net.

DG: And knit his net. My daddy made his own net for casting. He knit his net. And they would be sitting there talking and jiving and stuff like that. And I would, in the Gullah culture too, one of the things that was very very rare, we hardly ever saw our parents show affection. Sometimes we used to, I used to, say “kiss her daddy, kiss her,” and they thought that was so funny. But, you know you look in that “Leave it to Beaver” and all that type of stuff. And you’re saying “well, how come our parents don’t do that kind of stuff?” You know. But it wasn’t something that, that wasn’t something that was.

BG: That they parents did.

DG: In their era, that wasn’t something that, that type of stuff wasn’t something that was just done. You know, not where you could see it and stuff like that. But, I remember we used to tell them that “kiss her daddy, kiss her daddy.” Oh and he would grab her and he would just be giggling. But, to us, that was “woo man,” you know that kind of stuff like that. I mean it’s different now, you know, we have learned to show that emotion and feelings and that kind of stuff like that. You was asking about the story, she wasn’t bad like me, she stayed in the house. I mean, me, Pat, and my brother Jimmy. My brother’s deceased now. But we had, my father told us to go and take the bucket, he borrowed this old man’s bucket (cell phone rings and BG stands up and walks out off screen) and he told us to go take the bucket so we went, we were supposed to go this way (points to her right), bad as we were, we went this way (points to her left) and one of the guys, he had a big field of [note: unclear] watermelons. And what we used to do, back in those days, was just eat what they call the “heart of the melon.” And we went in his field and boy we were just busting those melons, picking it up and busting those melons and take our hand and take out the heart and eat the heart and just left the melon. And we went to tore it up. And then we went up to his, we saw him and we told him “Shorty, we saw gorenzi [note: unclear] in your field” And boy that started, we didn’t know that it was going to be that kind of you know, boy we took off when he was busting, but we had busted up about ten of his melons. Boy that melons was, back in those days, it was good. And then we came on around and we dropped the bucket off to the old guy and then we went to my cousin’s house and she says “come on let’s go crabbing.” One of the things with the Gullah culture is, was, you stay away from that river. I believe in that mine [note: unclear] was because their ancestors was taken from Africa at the river. So we were told “you never go to that river” unless someone was with you. So she said “come on, let’s go crabbing,” so me and my sister we were gone

crabbing, we were gone all day. We got back home about this time of evening here. One little crab in the bucket like this. So happy to show my daddy, "here we have a crab." My daddy never said a word. He didn't say a word. Only thing he said to us was, cause we were muddy, this is in June now, only thing he said to us was "go wash off." And back in those days sometime till you wash off in the yard now, you would have the tub of water outside and let the sun warm it. Girls wash off first, boys wash off behind same water. But that's what you had to do. That was what we did. And so we washed off, me and my sister washed off, my brother washed off, and then he says "get in the bed." I couldn't believe it. I'm saying "bed? hot sun, bed?" He said "get in the bed." He put three of us in the bed. This is June 90, 100 degrees. He downed the window and he put the blanket on us. I know what a sauna was before they invented it. I mean it was hot, and when you're like that and you touch, "don't touch me." My brother's saying "get your leg off me, get your hand off me" We had one bed and so he put three of us in it. It was-

BG: Six of us that slept in that bed.

DG: Or on the floor. And it was hot. It was hot. And we stayed there until my mother got off. And in the summertime, crabs is plentiful so she worked long hours and she must have got home about 6-6:30. I mean I done sweat until I couldn't sweat no more. Now that's what my daddy did. He didn't whip us. But, what he did, you betcha you learned. And I betcha I never went to that river again. Or when he told me "go do this and come back" I learned that lesson. But he never whip us, whip us. He never did that. But that was a punishment. And you know, you could hear all the kids laughing and giggling, playing, the rest of the day and my cousin who told us to go crabbing, she playing. The three of us lay out in bed with a blanket on us, man please. And then back in those days, we made our own quilt, so that quilt was like 90 pounds. Because we made our quilts and then like some of the ladies that worked on the Parris Island, you know, I don't know if they lifted it, or if it was given to them, but they would bring that army blanket which was very, it would stick you. But that blanket was put in the middle. You know cause you sewed your quilt, we did it on hand, with the needle. And that, you would put the quilt on the blanket in the middle, and then on the other side, you would have, like a sheet. They would, all this is done on hand, stitch that sheet. And stuff like that, so you, man, got an extra fifty pounds on you in that bed, plus that heat. But, you know, it was childhood. It was learning. You know, that was our culture. That is our culture. You know, like that.

DO: So how many rooms did you have? Cause you said you had one bed.

DG: Four rooms. Right? (looks at BG)

BG: Four rooms. Two bedrooms, my mom's room, and then we had one room.

DG: And the kitchen.

BG: And the kitchen.

DG: And the living room.

BG: And the living room.

DG: A box house, looked like a matchbox. That's what I used to say when I used to catch the box, I said "boy we live in a matchbox."

BG: So all six of us used to stay, some of up to the head, some up to the foot. Or we made it.

DG: Sometimes my brother would sleep on the floor. Or one of us would get mad and go down on the floor. But I mean, like she said, we never thought of being poor. We didn't know what poor was. We started seeing the differences when they segregated us and we started going off this island. But, I mean, we never thought we were poor. We never thought about it. Because we ate, we might not have had the best of clothes and stuff, but my mother always had us, one thing she taught us, if you don't have one underwear, one, you take that off and you wash them every night. As long as it's clean, you know, "be clean." But, if that's all you got, that's all you have. So, we never thought anything about being poor. We had shoes, you know, and sometimes we would go to school, we would see kids that we would say "they poor." You know, raggedy shoes and stuff.

BG: We had a lot

DG: But we had

BG: My daddy had a white lady that he worked with, at the bowling alley, that used to give him clothes. So my sister and myself, we could wear her clothes. And he would bring those clothes home, and every year she would sent us, during the winter, she sent us the winter clothes. And in the summer, she would send us summer stuff. And I was the only one, I had small feet, so I had like a five and a half six, and I could wear her shoes too. So we used to be shocked. Everybody thought that we had, but we didn't.

DG: We didn't have. And you know, even to this day, and I often think about, I don't know, maybe she may know because she older than me (points at BG), but you know, sometimes I think about it. I remember when we were growing up, I remember my mother always used to tell us to come and eat. But I never remember seeing my mother sit down and eat. And I don't know whether we didn't have enough for her to eat or what. That has always bothered me, that

I never even asked her because, you know, hmm. But I don't know whether she ever, her and my dad, I don't know whether they had enough, but it was almost as if she made sure the four of us.

BG: Six.

DG: Six? Well, six of us, ate. And, you know, I guess that's a mother.

BG: Cause we had an older sister, but she was already married and stuff. So she wasn't with us

DG: So I don't know. I've often wondered about that. And another thing she used to do too, when we were growing up, and, I don't know a lot of times they didn't explain things to us. And you knew not to ask them. Because you didn't ask grown people questions. You know, and I think about it too. I never understood why my mama never, we never ate crabs from her in the hull. Never. I don't know if it's because she worked at Blue Channel and she always picked that crab took that meat out. But like how we ball crabs now and just crack it and eat it, we didn't do that. That crab was always out. And she fried it, or steamed it, or something like that. But I never had a crab claw. You know? I don't know what it was with that. Could be a lot of things they did was the Gullah culture, but they didn't explain to us because you don't ask them "why this?" and like "how these kids act these days?" [note: unclear] You didn't do that. So, some of the things that we saw and witnessed and lived we don't have answers to. Because we don't know. You know, we don't know.

IL: One of the thing was nicknames.

DG: Oh.

IL: Could you tell us about nicknames?

DG: Well my nickname, well I don't know if my, mine is "dot." I guess that's short for Dorothy. My daddy's nickname was "Po' boy." Why? I have no idea. His name was "Po' boy." My mother's name, real name, was Annie but they call her "Dorothy." But her name was not "Annie Dorothy," I don't know where "Dorothy" is coming from. We have nicknames over here like

BG: And her name, her nickname was "Lut" [note: spelling unclear]

DG: Yea they call her "Lut"

BG: We don't know why they call her "Lut."

DG: Why? We don't know. My cousin, we call him "Borey" [Note: spelling unclear]. My brother, we call him "handsaw." My other cousin, we call him "mullet." Now I know why they call him "mullet," cause he got big eyes like the mullet fish. So they call him mullet.

BG: There's one we call "turkey."

DG: We got one they call "turkey." Are y'all overtime?

IL: No, but keep going.

DG: Oh. But, what else we have? We have the bull ants. He like to say "he bad like a bull ant." So that's a nickname for him. You know, the characters bring on the nickname. You know, and I don't know why they call Turkey "Turkey," but I guess he might have been

BG: It's cause his eyes, cause his eyes are so big.

DG: Oh I guess, or he was a "Turkey," I don't know. But, not only so much with the nicknames, but in a lot of things too, down here in the south, we all have two first names. For whatever reason, it may be, the majority of us have two first names. I'm Dorothy May, Bula May [note: spelling unclear], Patricia May, Patricia Ann, Leola Gurdy [note: spelling unclear], Henry William, you always have two first names. Why? I don't know.

BG: [Note unclear]. That's your name. First name and your middle name.

DG: Yeah, but my first name is Dorothy and what is May? Don't people be named May? Ok. And then another thing that they did in the Gullah Culture as far as name was, they named the children the same. And back in those days some of them, they didn't distinguish. "Junior" or "Senior," but they named the children like, I may have a son, I'm going to name my son after my father, "Frank," then my son'll have a son and he'll name his son "Frank," "Annie." And I think we have five "Annies" in the family, three "Odens" in the family, three "Franks" in the family. But the only thing that distinguishes the difference is the year of birth. You know, so they did that a lot because way back in the, you know, 1850's and along that line, they gave biblical names. And then they started coming out of biblical names. And started naming their slave owners' name. "Frank," whatever the slave owner children was, "Frank Jacob," along that line like that. So they did that a lot, they named the children the same thing over and over. Every generation the same thing over and over and over like that. Now, we're getting away from that. But that's one of the things that was in the Gullah, our family, and not only that, "Januarys," "March," and "Julys." Those were famous names also. You know, and stuff like that. But, we are what we are.

IL: Is there any last words of advice you want to give young people that will see this or parts of this?

DG: In your?

IL: Anywhere.

DG: Well, I mean in general for young people. Just always remember who you are and where you came from. Don't be ashamed of that. You know, embrace it. Learn what you can learn from it. And learn about the Gullah Culture, because, in actuality, I believe all Afro Americans really started from this southern Helena island in the low country. If you really start doing some history and some searching, you'll find that we may be related. You know?

IL: Well thanks a lot.

DO: Can you tell us real quick about the Warsaw Island hero. What made you decide to start your news?

DG: My newspaper?

DO: Yes, your newspaper.

DG: Oh, well I moved home in 2006 from Atlanta and I was just sitting in the house one day and I says "You know Lord? The idle mind is the work of the devil." And I says "You know I just would like to be doing something." So I said "get up and write." So my newspaper started one page, one page, May of 2006, it was nothing but one little page I did. And I asked them "what did y'all think about this?" And I had like, it wasn't much, her anniversary (gestures at BG), a little bit of some of our birthdays. Just one little page with a red rose on it. (laughs). That was it. And, they liked it. So I was doing it every month, I kinda lagged off a little bit. But I'm gonna start doing it again. But, I stopped doing it I was doing a research for a friend of mine, wanting to learn some history on the family. And that took me almost, a year? Pretty near a year. To put all that together for her. So that and then I started doing some, another one. But now what I'm doing is, I'm doing a historical research on this island. Starting from, you know the census only give me 1870, I can hit a little bit of 1850, so that's what I'm working on now. But I'm going to start back with the paper, because people are asking me "can you do?" And my paper goes from South Carolina to Washington.

BG: She send it through the email.

DG: I send it through the email to everybody. And they enjoy reading it. You know stuff like that. But that's why that came about. Just, didn't want to be idle.

IL: We'd like to thank you for this interview. We are on Warsaw Island. July 17th, 2013.

DG: Right.

IL: And the interviewers were Dorothy Gregory, Bula Small. Interviewed by Deborah Oden and Ishmael Lewis. Thank you.

DG: You're quite welcome.

BG: Thank you.

[End of Interview]