

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Fred Green, Jr.**

Interview Date: 01/21/2012

Interviewer: Roberta Terrell

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

Location: Grace Community Bible Church, 5121 FM 359,
Richmond, Texas

11 Pages



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Transcript

TERRELL: Thank you so much for coming. Would you tell me your full name please?

GREEN: Fred Green, Jr.

TERRELL: When and where were you born?

GREEN: About four miles down the road here on Briscoe's farm on October 12, 1930 at six o'clock. That's what my mother told me. I was born at home with a midwife.

TERRELL: You're an only child?

GREEN: The only one

TERRELL: What brought your family to Fort Bend County?

GREEN: They were raised here in Fort Bend County so they didn't go out of Fort Bend County.

TERRELL: What about your grandparents?

GREEN: Now my grandpa was from Wharton. My grandma was from right across the road.

TERRELL: So your parents grew up here and they lived on the Briscoe property?

GREEN: Thirty-four years on the Briscoe property, but before that my daddy was on the Imperial Prison Farm and my mother was right across the road up here on Harps Farm.

TERRELL: On the Imperial Farm, did they help with sugar cane?

GREEN: NO, ma'am. Once upon a time there was a prison farm. They had prisoners there, after that they went to cultivation. He was a regular cultivator, worker, yes ma'am.

TERRELL: What was your grandmothers name?

GREEN: My grandmother on my fathers side, Emma Green. My grandfather was Tom Green. My mother and father were Caroline Green and Fred Green, Senior

TERRELL: Okay, you're a junior. I have here that your grandfather, I assume that's Tom Green, lived on FM 723 on the Hobbs property. Did you have other grandparents who lived on the Foster Farm?

GREEN: No, my auntie...my mama's sister and brothers, my uncles. They were named Louis Green, L. D. Green, and Robert Green. My grandpa come from Wharton, my grandpa... Tom Green come from Montgomery County. Tom Green, had seven daughters and three sons, my daddy, my uncle Anthony and my uncle Tommy, Jr. There was ten children, all born here. In other words, he drifted from up there and then they got married here. The same thing from Wharton, my grandpa over there drifted from there over here.

TERRELL: It was a good place to come.

GREEN: Oh, yea, its nice over here.

TERRELL: Do you know the names of all the girls from Montgomery county?

GREEN: These over here, okay. Matilde Green, Rachel Green, Savannah, Dorothy Mae, Classi, and Pearlie. Uh, yea now maybe there were, five of them; seven of them. The last one just died here last year. Rachel, Matilde, Savannah and Dorothy Mae and Poetry and...

TERRELL: The other side of the family, I guess the Greer's?

GREEN: Three boys Hildi, Louis and Robert, and two girls Margaret and Ruby.

TERRELL: Describe a typical day in your childhood.

GREEN: I was a normal boy and played and stuff like that.

TERRELL: But you were an only child, so who did you play with?

GREEN: My first cousins, my aunt Margaret's two children, Roberta Elson and Robert Lindsey.

TERRELL: Tell me about your childhood.

GREEN: We farmed, hooked up the mules, chopped and picked up wood chips for fire wood.

TERRELL: What did you farm?

GREEN: Cotton, corn.

TERRELL: Did you pick cotton?

GREEN: (enthusiastically) Whew, hou, hou, hou, hou, yes ma'am.

TERRELL: Hard job!

GREEN: Yes ma'am. (laughter)

TERRELL: How old were you when you started doing that?

GREEN: Eight, seven years old, because I started driving a car at that age. What they would do is turn the car around in the road and put me in it and I would drive to that end and daddy he would drive to the house.

TERRELL: That was probably fun.

GREEN: It was, it was.

TERRELL: What was the most rewarding thing, do you remember?

GREEN: They had these summer showers and we would be picking cotton and I'd see the cloud making up and I would pray to the Lord (in a whisper) "Please send that rain." And he would send the rain on us. We were off the rest of the day. Then we got to play.

TERRELL: That's good. Where did you go to church? Was there a church in this community?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am. Right up that road there at Willis Branch Baptist Church.

TERRELL: When was it formed? Is it old?

GREEN: It's a 109 years old right up the road FM 359. It still has the original bell in it.

TERRELL: Oh, that's fabulous. That's connected with the Foster museum?

GREEN: In the beginning Reverend Jake Sanders was looking for a place to build him a church. Mrs. Mary Briscoe sold that land to him for \$25. Its more than an acre.

TERRELL: Was that Mason Briscoe's mother?

GREEN: Yes, Annie.

EDITOR'S NOTE: See Mason Briscoe II's interview on the FBC Historical Commission website at <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/home/showdocument?id=37309>

TERRELL: Did you have a garden or crops at your house?

GREEN: Oh, yes, ma'am. My mother canned corn and pears, peaches, things like that.

TERRELL: What about green beans? Tomatoes?

GREEN: No, no we didn't fool with no green beans.

TERRELL: You didn't eat those green veggies? (laughter) They're good for you.

GREEN: Mustard greens, no, I didn't like that.

TERRELL: How big was it?

GREEN: Oh, thirty by sixty something like that.

TERRELL: Was it just used for your family or did you share?

GREEN: When the families come around, if they were goooood, we'd give it to them!

TERRELL: Did you keep any animals?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am, hogs, chickens, turkeys, dogs, and cats.

TERRELL: Did you have a pet dog or cat?

GREEN: One dog was Mean Jack. He was my companion since I was an only child. That was a wonderful dog. He's just about that high there. What happened to him, we was coming home from church and it was about nine o'clock that night and he come running down there and (slapping noise)

TERRELL: Got hit.

GREEN: OOOH, that hurt us!

TERRELL: What about a mule or a horse or a cow, did you have a milk cow?

GREEN: (chuckle) Yea, ma'am, we had a cow, a milk cow. Milk the cows, I did that. Two cows, horses, stuff like that they used for the farm.

TERRELL: How much land did you have?

GREEN: 33 acres that we farmed. Share cropped 33 acres.

TERRELL: When you sharecropped how much did you have to give to the owner? Who owned it?

GREEN: Mr. Briscoe...half of the thing and then they got third and four...third and four. The first part of it was on halves. My daddy asked Mr. Briscoe could he go third and fours. So that's what we did.

TERRELL: I am not sure I am following you third and fourth. I understand the half.

GREEN: A hundred dollars, seventy-five dollars to the man and the other man took twenty-five to them.

TERRELL: Oh, to Briscoe. So he helped you out?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am. See my father stayed on there, we all stayed on the farm for thirty-four years and I went into the army. I got drafted into the Korean War.

TERRELL: You must be the same age as my husband. He was in the Korean War. Did you actually go to Korea?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am. Got shot. Nicked, just nicked me a little bit. But I stayed in there eleven months at the rate of four points a month. You're following me? Your husband, he knows about it. Four fours, that's how you had to rotate back to the states. I went all the way to Korea then, I went to Humoli, Pammunjon, Seoul. I was there two years total.

TERRELL: When you got out, what did you do?

GREEN: I come back home and I stayed there with my mama and daddy until I got me a job at Imperial Sugar Company. On August 16, 1953 at 4:30 PM I married my wife, Maurice Green, in Rosenberg.



Maurice and Fred Green, Jr. were married and lived in Rosenberg, Texas, for 58 years until he passed away in 2013.

TERRELL: You're a good man, you remember that. Lets back track a little bit and go back to your childhood. I got out of sequence, that was my fault.

GREEN: Yea, go back there.

TERRELL: I asked you what kind of animals you kept on the your acreage. Did you have beef cows or hogs that you butchered yourself?

GREEN: We bought our hogs.

TERRELL: Did you butchered them yourself?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am. My daddy did.

TERRELL: What about beef?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am...it was a calf once a year. After I got married we split it. I got a half and he'd get the half.

TERRELL: You raised it? What about chickens?

GREEN: I brought two hundred heads of chickens from Sears and Roebuck. I raised them up and we ate them. (laughter)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sears and Roebuck established a mail order catalog business in 1893 and were soon selling pantry staples such as flour, lard and butter. America's housewives could stock their farms with animals sent right to their door. In addition, Sears stocked hundreds of different food items. By the early 20th century, the catalog offered a wide variety of ethnic foods to cater to America's growing immigrant population. You could send away for Jamaican ginger, canned frijoles, pickled pigs' feet, and a surprisingly wide variety of herring and other fish from Norway, Sweden and Scotland.

--courtesy www.history.com

TERRELL: What about your schooling?

GREEN: My schooling? Jones Creek.

TERRELL: Did you walk?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am. Four miles and a quarter, down there to down yonder.

TERRELL: Goodness, what happened when it rained?

THIRD VOICE: Still the same thing.

TERRELL: Walked in the rain?

GREEN: I hated it, but the school bus passed us by. It carried the white kids at that time and passed us by and they wouldn't even ride us.

TERRELL: They wouldn't pick you up?

GREEN: No, ma'am, they threw spit balls and onions at us. I told the teacher, the teacher told Mr. Hartlage, the Superintendent. He asked the bus driver about it and he said. "No ain't nothing like that. We ain't never had nothing like that done to us."

TERRELL: Well, I'm sorry.

GREEN: It was one of those things.

TERRELL: Thank goodness times have changed.

GREEN: Yes, ma'am, it has changed.

TERRELL: What about middle school or junior high?

GREEN: During that time we just went from first grade all the way on up in the same school.

TERRELL: Did you graduate from high school?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am. I went to Jones Creek School to the seventh grade and we were promoted to the eighth grade but I was young and I was scared and dad and them didn't want to run me way down the road so I went back to Jones Creek one year after that. So I put in eight years up there in Jones Creek and then I went to Rosenberg for the last three years.

TERRELL: Then what did you do?

GREEN: We worked from 1950 on the farm. On the 26th of January 1951 we went to Houston. I was called go into the service.

TERRELL: Were there any teachers who stood out?

GREEN: Miss Lenora Jones was my favorite. We had Miss Lee, Miss Webb's sister in Richmond, and another little lady named McDonald.

TERRELL: Lenora Jones, was she from this area, too?



Old Jones Creek School served its purpose until Stephen F. Austin Elementary was built.

GREEN: Yes, ma'am. She stayed in Houston but she come out here to teach school during the week. Then she go back to Houston on the weekend, Friday.

TERRELL: What did you do for recreation, once you were in school?

GREEN: We played baseball, basketball, and football, too.

TERRELL: Did you ever ride horses.

GREEN: WHOOO, yes, ma'am. I tried to be a little bull rider one time. Eighteen years old I tried to be a bull rider. Them bulls stopped me and broke up all of that.

TERRELL: Did you get hurt?

GREEN: Yes ma'am. My back hurt (laughing)

TERRELL: Did you ride for pleasure or work?

GREEN: Pleasure.

TERRELL: Tell me about your work after you were married.

GREEN: Imperial Sugar for 43 years, twenty-two jobs. I learned to operate Imperial Sugar Company there. I would lash black foam in the melt, melt the hot foam where they bring the sugar in, wash it, dry it. Prepare for the bags. I first went down there with \$1.23 and I left there at \$14.16 an hour. There was people, Kempner's from Galveston, they don't give no raise a whole lot and they are going to give you two pennies to start.

TERRELL: Can you tell me a little bit about when you started and when and how you progressed through to those jobs? I mean exactly what you did, because somebody listening to this won't know what you did. And I am interested (chuckles).

GREEN: When I first started there I worked on the dump. We dumped that sugar and strained it through big mangles. When I left there, I started drying raw sugar. They had 750 RPMs. Big drums, yes, ma'am. It washed the sugar. It's the same as wash and rinse. They did it with hot water. Spin and wash it. Then I left there and worked on the dump driving pay loaders, dumping the sugar. We emptied the boxcars out. It came in boxcars and we'd drive little tow motors in and out and drop it, dumped it into a hopper. Then they sort it out.

Each car consisted of 112,000 pounds. We had to dump it out and cool it and get some more. In 1978 I got a promotion and I stayed there until 1984. I worked and got the foreman job which paid \$3.26.

TERRELL: You were foreman but you were doing the same job?

GREEN: Right, right, yes ma'am.

TERRELL: That's great. Do you have children?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am, three boys. Anthony Green, Homer Green and over here is Fred Walter Green. Homer was the preacher at Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Rosenberg. Then he went to West Columbus at Blue Run Missionary Baptist Church where he died. He and Anthony are both deceased.

TERRELL: I'm sorry. Do you have grandchildren?

GREEN: (gruff chuckle) Yes, Ma'am. How many we got? Nine.

TERRELL: Are they here in the community?

THIRD VOICE: Only Anthony's three kids live in Fort Bend County. Marla, Andrea and Xavier.

TERRELL: Were you a member of any organizations? The church?

THIRD VOICE: Mason

TERRELL: You're a Mason?

GREEN: I was. They weren't treating some members good.

TERRELL: Well, that's not good.

GREEN: I got out. I dropped the dues, you know.

TERRELL: Where were you a Mason in Richmond or...?

GREEN: In Rosenberg.

TERRELL: How long were you there?

GREEN: From 1953 to about 1970.

TERRELL: Are you a member of the church?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am, deacon at the church right up there on FM359.

TERRELL: Where do you live now?

GREEN: Rosenberg.

TERRELL: Is your wife still alive?

GREEN: Yes, ma'am.

TERRELL: Did she ever work?

GREEN: I worked... when I come home, I want a report where each child is. Not down the street, at the house...that's the only way to raise children. We done a pretty good job that way.

TERRELL: What are the major changes you've seen during your life time?

GREEN: I can ride the bus, I can go to the picture show, I can go to the cafe, sit down and eat. Just to be able to go to the doctor's office and not have to go through that Colored door to get in. I am eighty-one years old.

TERRELL: Those have been good changes?

THIRD VOICE: Their good changes, yes, ma'am. The county has done fine.

TERRELL: What is the strongest memory you have good or bad, childhood or adult? The senior prom?

GREEN: The junior-senior prom. My wife invited me to go to the junior prom. Neither one of us knows how to dance and we sit down for dancing...we all stepped on our feet... our toes were sore the next day (laughing).

TERRELL: That's a great memory.

GREEN: We have been married 57 years. We have some photos and copies and things at the house, one with the cowboy picture on a horse.

TERRELL: Thank you so much for talking to us.

Interview ends