

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Nancy Stephenson Woods**

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Interviewer: Diane L. Ware

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

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44 Pages



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Transcript

WARE: Please tell me when and where were you born.

WOODS: I was born in DeWalt, Texas, on the Dew Plantation, July 2, 1933.

WARE: Were you born at home?

WOODS: At home.

WARE: Was there a doctor there?

WOODS: (laughing) No, it was a midwife.

WARE: Did people use doctors for delivery for babies, or did they usually use a midwife?

WOODS: They used to use a midwife.

WARE: Do you remember your midwife's name?

WOODS: I knew it once upon a time, but I can't think of it right now.

WARE: How did your family first come to the Dew Plantation area?

WOODS: I really don't know because when I was born, they were THERE. Evidently, they had been there a LONG time.

WARE: Your grandparents, too?

WOODS: My grandparents, yes.

WARE: Were your great-grandparents still living?

WOODS: No, just my grandparents. I don't remember my great-grandparents. My grandmother's name was Nancy Stephenson. My grandfather was named Louis Stephenson.

WARE: You only had one set of grandparents there?

WOODS: Right.

WARE: What was your momma's name?

WOODS: My mother's name was Roberta Malone Stephenson.

WARE: What type of work did your grandfather do?

WOODS: I don't know what my grandfather did, but I'm sure he worked in the field. My grandmother washed and ironed at the big house.

WARE: At the Dew Plantation house?

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: What about your mom?

WOODS: My mom did not work. My father, Louis Stephenson, was a cowhand who worked with the horses and the cows.

I had an 'Aunt' Eliza Watkins. She was my daddy's aunt. Eliza and my grandmother were sisters. My daddy had a sister who worked there, Ida Bell Jackson. I called her Aunt Let. They ALL worked there at the Dew Plantation. Eliza was the cook.

WARE: I've heard good things about the cook at the Dew Plantation!

WOODS: Oh, yeah, they had good food. (both chuckling)

WARE: Your mother didn't work, which indicates to me that you had brothers and sisters.

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

WOODS: I had one brother, George Louis Stephenson, and one sister, Jessie Mae Brooks.

WARE: As you were growing up, what did your parents do for leisure, to relax? Did they ever relax? (laughs)

WOODS: No, the only way I know they ever did was work seven days a week! (laughs)

WARE: When you were born, who lived in the big house?

WOODS: Mr. George Dew and Mr. Frank Dew.

WARE: Doctor Dew was already deceased when you were born, correct?

WOODS: Yeah. But he wasn't living there anyway. Miss Lalley and Jesse Agnew, the two sisters lived in the house.

WARE: Someone told me that one of the sisters fell.

WOODS: Out the window. That was Miss Jesse Agnew.

WARE: And it killed her?

WOODS: Yes. In April, 1968.

WARE: You've got a GREAT memory!

WOODS: I never will forget that.

WARE: I've heard stories that the house is haunted.

WOODS: It IS (said very matter of factly).

WARE: Tell me about that.

WOODS: I used to keep Miss Moroney's boys. Well, before I started keeping the boys, I would be there at night, sometimes with Miss Jesse. You could hear people walking and a ball or something, rolling on the floor. It IS haunted.

WARE: When you were downstairs, you'd hear it upstairs?

WOODS: Mmm hmm.

WARE: What year was that?

WOODS: Well, I worked there all my life, like (laughing).

WARE: So, how young were you when you became aware of the fact that you thought it might be haunted?

WOODS: Oh, well, I was grown and had children, so I was maybe thirty.

WARE: So, in the early '60s.

WOODS: Yeah. Mmm hmm.

WARE: Your brother and sister, what kind of work did they do there, as they got older?

WOODS: They did not work there. In later years, my father moved to Houston and my sister and brother went with him. I lived with Eliza.

WARE: What year was it that your dad moved to Houston?

WOODS: I was, like, eight years old.

WARE: So, around 1940 or so? Do you remember WHY he moved to Houston?

WOODS: He moved to Houston because he started working for Mr. Tom Booth, who was from Booth, Texas.

WARE: Someone told me that around 1940, they thought that the Dew and Hutchins Store closed down. Do you remember the Dew and Hutchins Store?

WOODS: Yes, I do.

WARE: Was it there a long time?

WOODS: Yes, it was there a LONG time. When we were little kids, we used to go over there.

WARE: Tell me about the store. What it was like?

WOODS: It was the Dew Mercantile Store and it sold EVERYTHING. It had material in it, and clothes in it, and there was a post office in it. They sold meats and everything else. Beans and rice and stuff like that.

WARE: So they had a butcher?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: When you bought things at the store, did you buy them on credit? Did you just tell them to charge your mom and dad's account, or your aunt's account, or did you have to pay them money?

WOODS: No, we paid for it. Once, one time we had ration books. I have some but I don't know where they are now.

WARE: I would love to see those. Do you think that was during World War II?

WOODS: It would have to have been. I don't know WHERE I put those things. You put stuff up and then you can't find them! (both laughing)

WARE: Put them in a SAFE place! Did your mama raise a garden or have any farm animals?

WOODS: No.

WARE: What was the area like when you were a child? Were there a lot of crops?

WOODS: There were a LOT of crops. Corn, cotton, hay. My uncle always had a GREAT big garden with everything in it.

WARE: What was your uncle's name?

WOODS: Sam Watkins. He used to milk cows and he planted this big garden. He had peas and okra. Ohh, we used to have to pick okra and pick peas! I said I would NEVER shell another black-eyed pea! (laughs)

WARE: Sam Watkins, I presume, was married to Eliza. Did he have his own property?

WOODS: No, no, no. That was on the Dew Plantation. We all LIVED on the plantation.

WARE: But he raised a garden for the family?

WOODS: For the Dew family.

WARE: What were the houses like that y'all lived in when you were kids?

WOODS: (chuckles) They were wood-frame houses, very old houses. They had four rooms in them, and we had a fireplace.

WARE: Was it a shotgun-style house?

WOODS: No. It was not a shotgun house.

WARE: What was the kitchen like?

WOODS: We had a wood stove in it and a table, and some chairs. Wasn't very much in it.

WARE: Did you have an outdoor privy or indoor plumbing?

WOODS: Indoor plumbing.

WARE: Hot water or just cold water?

WOODS: Just cold water. No hot water. It was years before we had hot water.

WARE: Where did you go to school and what was it like?

WOODS: It was a one-room building, a great big building with just one room. It was called Saint John School.

WARE: Near a church?

WOODS: Yes, we had a church next to it. It was Saint John, too.

WARE: Was the school run by the church?

WOODS: No. We had a teacher.

WARE: How many grades did you go to school?

WOODS: We went through the eighth grade.

WARE: So, it was effectively a one-room schoolhouse that kids from the first through the eighth grade went to. About how many kids were in this school, at any given time?

WOODS: There was quite a few kids.

WARE: Kind of crowded?

WOODS: Well, everybody was at their own desk, so I guess it wasn't TOO crowded.

WARE: Did you walk to school, or did you have to take a bus?

WOODS: No, we walked to school.

WARE: Were there Mexican children in the school?

WOODS: No, the Mexicans had their own school. Their school was right there on Highway 6. There was another school there for the Spanish kids. The white kids went to Missouri City.

WARE: When you were in school, what were your favorite classes?

WOODS: ALL of them. I LOVED school.

WARE: Did you ever participate in any sports or any activities like that?

WOODS: We didn't have sports and activities when I was going to school.

WARE: If there was a medical emergency, was there a doctor that would come out or did you have to go to a doctor? How was that handled?

WOODS: They used home remedies on you, and, thank God, it never was really an emergency. But there WAS a doctor that they could have gone to, who was in Sugar Land, Doctor Slaughter.

WARE: Carlos Slaughter. Do you ever remember him coming out to DeWalt?

WOODS: Yeah. He used to come to the big house on Sundays, you know. (laughs)

WARE: For meals? (laughing)

WOODS: For a meal and a party, or whatever.

WARE: Tell me about church activities.

WOODS: We had a lot of church activities. Well, not a LOT because we only had church the first Sunday. Later on in years, we had church on third Sundays. Then we had prayer meeting on Tuesday nights, and we had BYTU--that's Bible study.

WARE: What does that stand for?

WOODS: I don't know.

WARE: Baptist Youth? Was it young people?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: Was it a Baptist church?

WOODS: Yes, it was a Baptist church.

WARE: Probably Baptist Youth something. You had a circuit pastor who came around and was just there the first Sunday of the month, usually?

WOODS: Uh huh. He always stayed with someone. A lot of them stayed with my Auntie, where I lived, Aunt Eliza.

WARE: So, the pastor would come around and stay Saturday night, preach on Sunday morning, and then go on to the next.

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: Do you know where any of those pastors lived, that used to come out there?

WOODS: Some lived in Houston, and one lived in, I want to say Wharton, but I don't know.

WARE: Do you remember any of their names?

WOODS: Reverend R. E. Edwards, that's who baptized me.

WARE: How old were you when you got baptized?

WOODS: I was, like ten years old.

WARE: I asked you already what children did when they weren't in school. Were there any friends that you played with?

WOODS: Oh, yeah. We used to shoot marbles and play ball.

WARE: I used to shoot marbles, too!

WOODS: You had three holes and you'd have a line on there (laughing).

WARE: When you say, 'play ball', you just mean like baseball?

WOODS: Yes, baseball, out in the pasture.

WARE: Can you name some of the other children that you played with?

WOODS: Sure. Irene Hays and Annie Lee James, Lula Pickett.

WARE: Did Lula have a sister named Bertha?

WOODS: Bertha and Lillie Mae.

WARE: I've been trying to get hold of Bertha Pickett because I interviewed her years ago in Sugar Land, and I was going to ask her about DeWalt, but I haven't been able to get hold of her.

WOODS: Bertha passed. Lil is still living. Bertha passed last month or the month before last.

WARE: Well, I sent a letter to her address, but I never got a response. I called and called her, starting last November, she must have already been ill.

WOODS: She had been sick, really sick.

WARE: I am SO sorry to hear that. She was a FINE woman.

WOODS: Yes, she was! Yes, she was. I knew her parents. They lived here in DeWalt on the Dew Plantation, too. Their mother washed and ironed there, too.

WARE: That was Daisy, wasn't it?

WOODS: Daisy Pickett, that's right! Sure was.

WARE: I am SO sorry to hear that. So, there was a large community of people, and everybody pretty much worked on the plantation? Did anyone NOT work on the plantation that lived in your area?

WOODS: The ones that did not work on the plantation, worked at Imperial Sugar Company in Sugar Land.

WARE: How did they get to Imperial? Did they drive or did they ride the train?

WOODS: They drove. They had cars then.

WARE: What do you recall about any special community activities or holidays?

WOODS: The nineteenth of June was the only BIG holiday here. Everybody was let off work, and the Dews would barbecue and have ice cream and a lot of stuff. Everybody would have a good time, go house to house and eat and enjoy each other.

WARE: So that was a holiday that the Dew family celebrated for the people that worked for them. Tell me some things you remember about the 19th of June celebrations.

WOODS: We always had a LOT to eat! (laughing) We enjoyed it because a lot of people that used to live in DeWalt would come back home. You'd get to see people that you hadn't seen in a long time and that you didn't see often. A bunch of kids would get together, and we would play ball.

WARE: So it was a day off.

WOODS: Mmm hmm. And THEN, they got where on the 19th of June, they would let the colored people come to Playland Park. You don't remember Playland Park?

WARE: I don't remember Playland Park. Where was that?

WOODS: It was on Main Street in Houston. They had roller coasters and they had EVERYTHING! But the colored could go ONLY on the 19th of June. That was the only time.

Miss Lalley's husband, who worked downtown, would drop me and my sister off there in the morning, and when he'd come home from work in the evening, we'd be standing in the road, and he picked us up. God, that was a long time ago! (both laugh)

WARE: But you STILL remember it, don't you!

WOODS: Mmm hmm.

WARE: Did the Dew family have any big celebrations at the house that you remember, that you helped out with?

WOODS: Yes, they did. They had parties ALL the time. They had BIG parties, not little ones. Everybody from Richmond came.

WARE: Describe one of those parties for me.

WOODS: They would have food of ALL kinds. Viney Sanford would come and cook. And Effie Blake would be the other cook.

WARE: Effie Blake was from Richmond also?

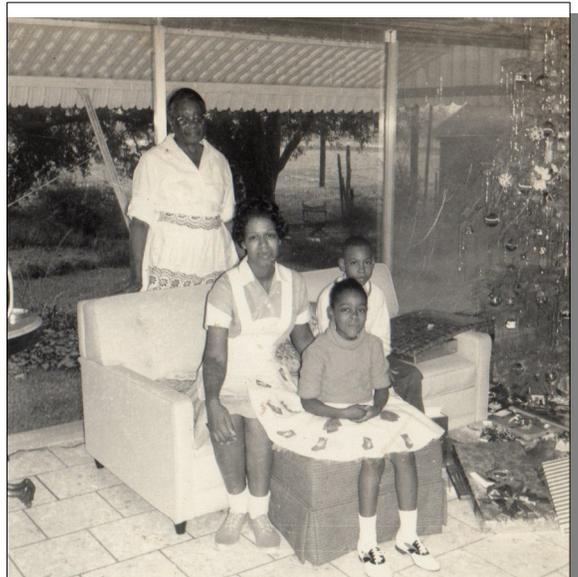
WOODS: Uhh uh. She was from DeWalt. Her husband, Slim Blake, worked on the plantation, too.

WARE: So, they actually had more than one cook for those occasions.

WOODS: Oh, you would HAVE to for all of those people! And for what they ate! They had all kinds of food. They had fried chicken, beef, and fried corn. They just had ALL kinds of food.

Back then they drank liquor. They didn't drink beer and wine. They drank hard liquor.

WARE: How many people attended a party?



Left-right, Effie Blake, Nancy Woods, with children Debra and George.

WOODS: Oh! Fifty or a hundred. Sometimes, we worked 'til one and two o'clock in the morning. We had to wash all the dishes and clean up, and it would take FOREVER to do all that.

WARE: Did people stay at the house after the parties or did they go home?

WOODS: No, most of them went home because they had chauffeurs. A lot of them had chauffeurs. A lot of them could drive home.

WARE: Do you ever remember people from Sugar Land coming?

WOODS: No, uh uh, no.

WARE: Other than Juneteenth and these other occasions, were there any community celebrations? Did you ever have parades?

WOODS: No. Nothing like that.

WARE: When you were growing up, how often did you get into Richmond or Sugar Land or Houston?

WOODS: (laughs) We went to Richmond when it was time for school to start. Our uncle would take us up there on a bus. There used to be a bus station, and you could get off before you crossed that bridge, and we had to walk across that bridge. I was always scared to walk across that bridge. We'd walk over that. What was the name of that store we used to go to? RB, something like that. It was a clothes store. We'd go there and get some school things.

WARE: So you bought most of your clothes when you were growing up, or did your mom and your aunt make your clothes?

WOODS: No, we bought them.

WARE: Otherwise, how often did you get to Richmond or Houston or Sugar Land?

WOODS: We didn't go.

WARE: Did your uncle have a car?

WOODS: No.

WARE: I would think cars would have been a very expensive commodity back then.

WOODS: I'm sure they were. We didn't have any transportation.

WARE: Tell me about some of the other members of the Dew family. You mentioned Miss Agnew, how she fell out of the window, but tell me about Miss Agnew.

WOODS: Miss Agnew didn't do very much. She liked to play bridge. She would have people out on weekends to spend the night, and they'd play bridge all weekend, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. That's about ALL she did. She didn't do too much. Now the other sister, Miss Lalley, was head of the American Cancer Society. She was on the board in Richmond for the Museum.

WARE: The Fort Bend Museum?

WOODS: Mmm hmm. She didn't have any children. Neither did Miss Jesse. But she DID a lot of work. They made Easter baskets and sold them for the American Cancer Society. She worked very hard for that cancer society, because she LOVED that. What got her really interested in the American Cancer Society was my aunt, Eliza, HAD cancer. They used to take her back and forth to Houston.



*Ruth Dew Lalley, Jesse's sister.
Nancy Woods took care of the
two sisters in the Dew House.*

WARE: So, Miss Lalley would take your Aunt Eliza back and forth for treatments?

WOODS: Mmm hmm. She was really a nice lady, very nice. I took care of her until she passed.

WARE: When did she pass?

WOODS: Before 1995. Like '93, something like that.

WARE: Your Aunt Eliza worked as cook for the family. How old was she when she started working for the family?

WOODS: She died when she was 65, and that was in '59. She was working there when I was born!

WARE: So she'd been working there twenty-some years by the time she passed.

WOODS: Or MORE!

WARE: Anything you remember about the men in the Dew family?

WOODS: No, I don't remember much about the Dew brothers. I barely knew Mr. George. I knew Mr. Frank, and then I knew Mr. Walter and Mr. Henry. I just knew them when I saw them.

WARE: What details do you remember about the Dew House, from your childhood?

WOODS: For Christmas there was a BIG tree in the front. They would light it up and all the kids that were on the plantation would come over, and they would give ALL the kids something for Christmas. Mr. Frank was always the Santa Claus.

WARE: What type of gifts would they give you?

WOODS: Bags of fruit and candy and stuff like that.

WARE: Do you remember the Hutchins family?

WOODS: Not really, no. I remember him being in the store, and that's about it.



The Dew House in its original setting. It was moved and restored as a museum to Missouri City in 2008.

WARE: Do you remember where they lived?

WOODS: Yes, they lived there in DeWalt in that house where the Tuckers used to live. It's the only house in DeWalt now.

WARE: It's still there?

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: Do you remember, at any point, when the Hutchins family moved away?

WOODS: No, I don't.

WARE: Do you know of anyone that was buried in the Dew Plantation area? Did they have any cemeteries?

WOODS: Yeah, they had a cemetery over there in the sand field.

WARE: The sand field?

WOODS: That's what we called it, the sand field.

WARE: Is that cemetery still there, do you think?

WOODS: No, because Quail Valley is built over it! (laughing)

WARE: (laughing) So, the answer is, it MIGHT be!

WOODS: But I know there's still people IN that cemetery. They tried to take out some, but I KNOW they did NOT take out everybody. They didn't take all those people out of there, because there was a LOT of people buried there.

WARE: About where in Quail Valley would that be?

WOODS: From DeWalt, there used to be a bridge there, that you would go across that bridge. There were houses and it was back over there.

WARE: So, was the bridge right about in front of the Dew House or was it down a bit?

WOODS: It was across the railroad track from the Dew House. They took that bridge out now.

WARE: Where was the store in respect to the Dew House?

WOODS: Across the railroad track. It was right there, cross in front of...well, I call it the Tucker's house, it's right down from the Dew House, but across the railroad track.

WARE: Could you see the store from the Dew House?

WOODS: Yes. I know EXACTLY where the store was, by going to DeWalt.

WARE: So, as you're driving down what's now Highway 6, you would come to the Dew and Hutchins Store BEFORE you came to the Dew Plantation, as I'm driving towards Fresno?

WOODS: Right. Like when you go back to Sugar Land, you pass the bus barn, and then you pass Burger King. It's RIGHT past there, on the right hand side, was that store. There used to be a gin in DeWalt where they would gin the cotton.

WARE: Was that behind the store, beside the store?

WOODS: It was right there where the bus barn is.

WARE: It's hard when you look at the pictures. Those landmarks, none of them are there any more. It's hard to figure out.

WOODS: Uh huh. You had to LIVE here, in DeWalt, to really know where everything was. I thought I would always want to live there. But once it became Missouri City and commercial, I said, "Outta here".

WARE: That's my next question! When did you move away from the Dew Plantation area and why?

WOODS: When I built this house, and that's been twenty-three, twenty-four years. It must have been '85.

WARE: The reason that you moved here was because...?

WOODS: Well, the real reason was because I had purchased this land here, and I wanted my kids to have something after I was gone. Because I know I couldn't live THERE and then be gone. They'd have nowhere to go. So I purchased this land, and I stayed in that brick house because Miss Agnew built that brick house for me and my family to live in, as long as SHE lived. Because she asked me not to ever LEAVE her, to always be there to take care of her. And I was. I was there. I stayed there a LONG time after that because Miss Moroney came and lived there.



*Jesse North Dew, later Agnew,
joint owner of the Dew House.*

WARE: So you lived in the brick house that was on the property, that Miss Agnew built for you. I didn't realize that! When you said the Dew Plantation, I thought, just in the general area. I didn't realize you lived RIGHT there on the property, later on.

WOODS: I ALWAYS lived close to the Dew House. It was a house where the pecan

orchard was. Now the pecan orchard is gone. It was an old house in the pecan orchard. That's where I lived, with my aunt and them. We could WALK to work! It was right there! Then the house got so bad that she built this house for me and my family to live in.

WARE: About what year do you think she built that brick house?

WOODS: It was in the '50s, I guess the late '50s.

WARE: You mentioned that your Aunt Eliza had cancer. For the records, what type of cancer did she have?

WOODS: Uterus.

WARE: We have this picture of Miss Lalley. Do you have any other old photos or newspaper clippings or papers or anything that I could copy, that we could put in the Museum?

WOODS: Uh huh. But I have to find them. She's in a magazine where she was sitting in a wheel chair. I have them, but I'll have to get them.

WARE: How did you come to know Miss Muffie Moroney?

WOODS: I took care of her when she was four years old. She used to come out to the plantation and live there during the holidays or spring breaks. She LOVED horses and she had horses out here. She would come out here to ride. So, I would have to watch over her.

We have a movie of her. When she was four, they had the birthday party at the big house. I don't remember Mr. Moroney taking that picture. Her son had some movies made of some of this stuff, and we were watching them. I saw this little girl on this horse. I said, "WHO in the world is that?" Come to find out, well, I was the one taking care of her, so it was ME! (both laugh)

WARE: I would LOVE to do that. That's wonderful footage. That's good stuff.

WOODS: I wish he could get the one fixed where they had the baptizing down on the creek.

WARE: There are films of that?

WOODS: Mmm hmm. Robert's been going to get 'em fixed, but he hasn't yet.

WARE: Is that Robert Moroney?

WOODS: Robert Renshaw, Miss Moroney's son. Because he's the one that had those done. It's really interesting.

WARE: Those are the type of things, that if you are playing it in a museum, that's fascinating. Because people really SEE what went on in life.

WOODS: When I went to George Ranch, they had some of those movies that you could go in and see.

WARE: That's exactly what we're trying to do.

WOODS: I wanted to go back to see if my father was in any of them.

WARE: Did your father work for the George Ranch? Or did they have films from the Dew Plantation?

WOODS: No, they were some of the ones in Richmond, but my father worked for Tom Booth and he was a cowboy. It was a LOT of cowboys on that. I knew quite a few of them.

WARE: I'm going to ask you if I've forgotten to ask you anything?

WOODS: While you're asking me, I can't even think! I guess I should think and jot some of it down.

WARE: Okay, I'm going to say thank you and I'm going to stop there.

Interview Part One Ends

Interview Part Two Begins

WARE: I'm going to add to what we recorded last time. You mentioned that you lived right next to the Dew House, very close to the Dew House, correct?

WOODS: Correct. Yes, I did.

WARE: Who else, besides you and your Aunt Eliza, and your Uncle Sam Watkins, lived very close to the Dew House?

WOODS: We were the only ones that lived there, at that time. Another house was on the place, and some of the people that worked there, lived in that house. Such as Emma Anderson. She lived there.

WARE: What did Emma do at the house?

WOODS: Wash and iron.

WARE: Did her husband live there also?

WOODS: No, she didn't have a husband that I know of.

WARE: Do you remember anyone else?

WOODS: There used to be another lady there that cooked sometimes. Her name was...they called her 'teenintesy', but her name was Estella Harris. She cooked there once upon a time and she lived in that house, another little shotgun house that was over there.

WARE: Tell me a little bit about your Aunt Eliza Watkins.

WOODS: She was a VERY nice person, very giving and always ready to help people, and do. She just was a good person.

WARE: Give me some examples of things she would do with you, or for other people.

WOODS: She always cooked and always made sure we had plenty to eat. She washed and ironed and carried me to church. On the plantation, there really wasn't TOO much to do! And we didn't have transportation, so we didn't do too much.

WARE: What were some of your favorite foods that she cooked?

WOODS: Just food, period. Whatever she cooked was good. I ate her fried chicken, her baked chicken, and tomato dumplings, and peach dumplings. Aaah. Berry pies. Just whatever she cooked was ALWAYS good.

WARE: How do you think she learned to cook so well?

WOODS: I have no idea! Because they would just cook. They didn't measure anything. They just cooked! And it was on a wood stove. I would always be SO happy when she cooked cakes because they would always do a sample. They would put some in a little pan and put it in and cook it to see whether it was going to be okay. It was ALWAYS good.

WARE: So, you got to eat the samples?

WOODS: Oh, yeah.

WARE: Did your Aunt Eliza and Uncle Sam Watkins have any children?

WOODS: No.

WARE: Tell me about your Aunt Let.

WOODS: I really didn't know her too well. I mean, I KNEW she was my aunt and she came to live with us after her husband died, but I guess I was small and didn't pay much attention. We just played a lot and that was about it.

WARE: What was her husband's name?

WOODS: They called him Bully, but that was NOT his name. I called somebody about two weeks ago, and they told me what his name was.

WARE: When you remember, we'll just write it down. Don't worry about it. Did your Aunt Ida Bell, your Aunt Let, have any children?



Eliza Stephenson Watkins, cook at the Dew House until her death in 1959, paternal great aunt of Nancy Woods, ca. 1916.

WOODS: No.

WARE: Did you have any cousins or anybody other than your brother and your sister that were related to you that lived at the Dew Plantation?

WOODS: No, that's all.

WARE: Someone asked me about the history of the Freedom Tree in Missouri City. Do you remember anything at all about the history of the Freedom Tree?

WOODS: I just heard about that Freedom Tree about a couple of years ago. I had NEVER heard about that tree. I don't have no idea where it is.

WARE: (chuckling) We'll go to Missouri City some day and I'll show you. It's right there in the city itself, not in DeWalt.

WOODS: Oh, okay. I had NEVER heard of it.

WARE: You showed me a picture earlier with Frank Dew in it. Do you remember anything about Frank Dew's death?

WOODS: Not really. Just about what people said.

WARE: But there were rumors about his death?

WOODS: Yes, it was that he was killed by this lady friend of his. Her name was Lucille. That's all I knew.

WARE: How did the family react and how did the community react when Mr. Frank was killed?

WOODS: I don't know, because we didn't go to the big house until the weekends to do stuff, to clean silver and stuff like that. I don't know how they really reacted.

WARE: Do you remember if his funeral was there at the house?

WOODS: No, I do not remember.



Ida Bell (Aunt Let) Sanford Jackson holding Johny Barnes with L. Stephenson, Jessie Mae Stephenson, and George Louis Stephenson.

WARE: Tell me about the types of work you did at the Dew House, other than watching Linda Moroney. What other types of tasks did you have to do there?

WOODS: (laughing) We picked peas and cleaned silver and helped clean the house. We did whatever needed to be done because my aunt worked there, and we were there to help her.

WARE: When you say 'we', do you mean...?

WOODS: My sister would come over sometimes.

WARE: Did your brother ever help out?

WOODS: No.

WARE: When we talked before, you said that there wasn't much medical care out there, but you used old medical remedies. Give me some examples of some old medical remedies that you remember.

WOODS: Well, they would give you castor oil, number one. We HAD to take castor oil to clean our system out. They would give you some kind of tea that grew out in the pasture. They would make you a hot tea, and you would drink that.

WARE: For what? To clean your system out also?

WOODS: Yeah. For whatever was wrong with you. They would give us black-draught remedy stuff. God knows what was in it, but you had to drink it! (laughing)

<p>EDITOR'S NOTE: Black-Draught is the name of a once-common commercial liquid syrup laxative, sold since the late 19th century, a cathartic medicine composed of a blend of Senna and magnesia. Much like castor oil, it was a commonly used folk remedy for many ailments. --courtesy of Wikipedia</p>

WARE: (laughing) Did it taste pretty good?

WOODS: NO! It did NOT taste good (laughing), but you had to take it. But we never were sick. You cut your foot, they put a piece of salt bacon on it and tied it up. I don't know what that was for or for what reason, but your feet never were sore. You just went on about your business.

WARE: HUH! That's interesting.

WOODS: You had the earache, they would warm some oil, it wasn't mineral oil, but some kind of oil. They would heat it up, and they would pour it down in your ear. They had ALL kinds of remedies that they would do. It worked back then.

WARE: Who would come up with the remedy? Your Aunt Eliza, or someone else?

WOODS: My aunt. I'm sure my grandmother did too, before I moved in with my aunt because we lived with my grandmother. Then after she passed, my mother and father went to Booth, and then from there, they went to Houston. That's when I started living with Aunt Eliza and Uncle Sam.

WARE: You had mentioned before that your father was a cowboy on the Dew Plantation. Do you remember the names of any of the other cowboys on the Dew Plantation?

WOODS: No. He used to break wild horses and things, but I don't remember any other ones that were on the Dew Plantation. Down at Booth, there were some more cowhands down there.

WARE: You mentioned that in April of 1968, Jesse Agnew died. She fell from the window and died. Do you remember any details about that?

WOODS: Yes. I had gone into Houston twice that day. She was getting ready for a BIG party that Saturday night in Richmond, and Miss Ruth and Miss Jesse were going. I told Miss Jesse that I couldn't drive her. I was just too tired, and I had to take care of my family. So Miss Ruth picked her up. They went to Richmond. When they came back I was still up. I looked out the window and I saw the car lights. They stayed there SO long until I came over to the big house. Miss Ruth told me to go upstairs and see about Miss Jesse, so I did. I went up there and she had gone to bed, which was VERY odd. She never went to bed with her jewelry on. She had her jewelry on and I took her jewelry off and she said, "You go home. You know we've got a big day tomorrow." I said, "Yes'm, I know. I'm going to go in a little while." I hung her clothes up. I stayed there until about 12:30, and then I locked the house up, and I went home.

Well, in the meantime, Miss Ruth called her to see if she was okay. She evidently got up and went to the bathroom. She used to have some kind of attacks where she couldn't breathe. She evidently raised that window to get some air. That day she had talked to the guy that sprayed the pecan orchard, and she didn't lock that window back. She didn't lock the screen back. Evidently she just fell out on her head!

WARE: You said Miss Lalley came to pick her up. Where was Miss Lalley living then?

WOODS: Up there where her house is now.

WARE: So, Miss Jesse lived all by herself at that point?

WOODS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. She was there by herself.

WARE: When they found her, she was in front of the house.

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: So, her bedroom was upstairs. When you're looking at the house, was it on the left or the right?

WOODS: It was right in the front of the house.

WARE: Was there a porch upstairs then?

WOODS: There was a porch that was made into a bedroom.

The next morning, I got up and I went to the washateria about six o'clock. I went out through where I lived. I didn't come through the big house way. When my husband left, he came around the circle there in front of the house, and he saw this person lying down there. He thought it was the lady that lived in the garage apartment, Miss Libby. He went and looked, and he saw who it was. Then he went and told the cook, and then he went and told Mr. Roy Smitty, at the sheriff's office. Then he came up to the washateria and told me.

When I got back to the house, Mr. Smitty asked me a LOT of questions; a LOT of people asked me a lot of questions about her death. They didn't let no one go IN the house because I was the last one there. I guess they thought maybe I pushed her out the window?! I don't know what they were thinking! Didn't many people know that she had revised her will and put me in it. So, they just asked me a lot of questions about what really happened to her. The only thing that I really believed that happened to her was that she could not catch air. Because she had had attacks like that before, but she was downstairs at those times.

WARE: She had been scheduled to go out that night with Miss Ruth and decided not to go out because she did not feel well, correct?

WOODS: Oh, no, she had gone out, but she came back and went to bed with the jewelry ON. But really, she had quite a bit to drink, too, that night.

WARE: Where did they have Jesse's funeral?

WOODS: In Richmond at Calvary Church. But they had a wake or whatever you would want to call it, at her house that Saturday night or was it that Sunday night? I don't remember.

WARE: What day of the week did she die?

WOODS: On a Saturday. Many times after Miss Jesse passed, me and the cook, Effie, would go to the house EVERY day to take care of everything. Sometimes we would be sitting downstairs, because Miss Jesse NEVER came downstairs for breakfast. She would always call for us to bring her breakfast to her. I could hear her, just as PLAIN. She was saying, "Nancy" and I would say, "Ma'am" and then I would come to myself. Well, she's gone! But that would be her voice, calling me SO many times, she would call me. I would answer. I just wasn't thinking. I would just say, "Ma'am."

WARE: Now, did Effie [Blake] ever hear her call?

WOODS: No. Just me.

WARE: Did you ever hear her call you in any other instance, or just usually in the morning?

WOODS: Just usually in the morning. When we were in the house, and we'd be downstairs. Sometimes I have heard her in the afternoon, call me just as PLAIN. But I was not afraid of her spirit or anything. You know, a lot of people say, "Are you scared?" and I say, "No." And I wasn't.

WARE: Remind me of your husband's first name?

WOODS: Samuel. They called him Sammy. His name was Samuel Woods.

WARE: Your husband had grown up in the DeWalt area?

WOODS: Oh, yes.

WARE: You mentioned that there was a Miss Libby that lived in the garage apartment.

WOODS: Libby Pickens.

WARE: How did she come to live there?

WOODS: She was a friend of Miss Jesse's and them. I guess they had known her for a LONG time.

WARE: How long was it after Miss Jesse died before anybody lived in the house again?

WOODS: Miss Jesse died in April, and Miss Moroney died in October. Then Linda "Muffie" Moroney and her husband came down there to live. It must have been in November of that year.

NOTE: See Muffie Moroney's interview on the FBC Historical Commission Web Site at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=42954>

WARE: So you just lived there during those months and kept the house.

WOODS: Oh, yes ma'am. Because I was living in the little brick house.

WARE: What happened to the little brick house?

WOODS: They tore it down.

WARE: When you pulled in to the big house, where was the little brick house, from the big house?

WOODS: It was between the big house and the pecan orchard. It was closer to the pecan orchard. It was another driveway that you could come in, that came straight to the little brick house.

WARE: So it had a separate entrance?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: The house that is still standing out there, was that the Hutchins house? That is next to where the Dew Plantation was?

WOODS: Yes, that's the Hutchins house.

WARE: That's the only house left out there, correct?

WOODS: Uh huh. The Tuckers bought that from Miss Jesse.

WARE: Do you remember the Tuckers' first names?

WOODS: Her name was Crystal. I can't remember Mr. Tucker's name. He was Lucy Adams' brother. Halsey Tucker?

WARE: Did your children ever work at the Dew house?

WOODS: No.

WARE: Did they ever work in summers out of school or anything else there, on the plantation area?

WOODS: No.

WARE: This may be before you were born, but do you remember Mr. Agnew at all?

WOODS: No.

WARE: He had passed before you were born?

WOODS: Yes. I think he died in 1933.

WARE: Do you remember anybody talking about the details of his death?

WOODS: No.

WARE: What about Miss Ruth's first husband, Carl Calloway? Do you remember him?

WOODS: She never talked about him.

WARE: Did he pass away or were they divorced?

WOODS: I think they were divorced. I don't think he passed away.

WARE: Was Jesse was still married to Mr. Agnew when he died? Or were they divorced also?

WOODS: No, she was still married to him.

WARE: Do you remember when Ruth married Mr. Lalley?

WOODS: I don't remember the exact time, but I remember him VERY well. Mr. Lalley just was not a very nice person, in my view. He was always ugly. Never had nothing nice to say or anything.

WARE: Was Miss Ruth that way?

WOODS: No. Miss Ruth was VERY nice. She was a nice person.

WARE: We were looking at pictures earlier. In the pictures, there were several pictures of Miss Ruth in Havana and other places. Do you remember anything about her traveling?

WOODS: No. That must be when she was younger.

WARE: Did Miss Jesse ever travel?

WOODS: Oh, yes. She and her friends went to Hawaii. They used to go quite a few places. But she always went with her friends. When June Moroney went to Stanford College, she went with her.

WARE: When the Moroneys moved back out to the Dew House, did you still work at the house?

WOODS: Yes, I started working for her then.

WARE: What types of things did you do for her?

WOODS: Cleaned the house. I used to cook sometimes, but after she had those two kids, I took care of those boys.

WARE: When did you stop working at the house?

WOODS: When she went to Virginia and stayed a year, and then she came back. But then she moved to Houston. She lived with her father. She said the transportation would be too hard to take those kids back and forth every day to school. That's when I started to work in Houston. I still lived in the country, but I would always go back by the house and see what was going on because there still was a lot of furniture, a lot of stuff, in that house.

WARE: How long have you worked for Alice Hahn?

WOODS: Since Miss Lalley passed. I don't remember when she passed. It was maybe in '93. I think she passed in '93. That's when I started working for Miss Hahn.

WARE: Before that, you worked for Miss Lalley? You've kind of worked for everybody in the family, haven't you?

WOODS: (laughing) Yes, I have! I was telling Mr. Hahn, "I'm going to be seventy-five. I'm thinking about retiring." He said, "Well, just think about coming one day." (laughs)

WARE: (laughs) I think they'd miss you!

WOODS: Yes, yes. I think they will too.

WARE: Is there anything I didn't ask you about that you want to tell me?

WOODS: Unless we want to talk about when they farmed, and they had the cotton gin. They ginned cotton there. They had plants where they cut spinach and stuff and sold them. They also had cabbage. Then they had someone to ring the bell at 5:00 in the morning for people to get up and go to work.

WARE: Who DID ring the bell at 5:00.

WOODS: Garbill. He rang it at 5:00, at 12:00 and at 6:00 in the evening, when it was time for you to get off from work.

WARE: You could pretty much hear that bell?

WOODS: Oh, YES! I just wonder what they are gonna do WITH the bell. Muffie still has the bell. Leon Salazar had put it up, they had made a thing that they put it up on, and they would ring that bell when they'd have a New Year's Eve party. They'd ring that bell at twelve o'clock at night. (both laughing)

WARE: When you said they had cabbage and spinach and all, did they actually have a canning plant there? Or did they send it out?

WOODS: They sent it out.

WARE: What other crops do you remember besides cabbage and spinach?

WOODS: They had corn, Ooooh, God, they had corn. They had beans, green beans. They sent the green beans out but not the black-eyed peas. They always kept the black-eyed peas, and they canned them at home. Aunt Eliza and them used to can all that stuff.

WARE: So, they would can it in the kitchen of the house?

WOODS: OH, YES! Oh yes.

WARE: That's a job!

WOOD: When my uncle milked the cows, they made their own butter. They had a milk separator, a thing where you put your milk in, and it separated the milk and the cream.

WARE: You said your uncle, Sam Watkins, had a pretty big dairy? Milk cows and beef cattle?

WOODS: Oh, yes. They had a LOT of cattle.

WARE: About how many cowboys do you think there were when your dad was a cowboy there?

WOODS: Maybe about ten people that helped them with the cows and things. They had to get them up, spray them, brand them, and worm them, and stuff like that.

I was trying to think what Bully's name was. I'm talking about Annabeth's husband. This lady told me, and I think I wrote it down at home somewhere, but I don't know WHERE it is. I'm going to have to call her back, again! (laughs)

WARE: Do you remember how your uncle, Bully, died?

WOODS: They SAY he was killed.

WARE: Like an accident?

WOODS: No.

WARE: Murder?

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: Out at the plantation?

WOODS: No, not at THAT plantation. I don't know where he was when he was killed. I don't know if he was at some joint or something like that. I don't know.

WARE: Your Aunt Eliza died in 1959. Did your Uncle Sam ever remarry?

WOODS: No, he was already dead. I don't remember when he died. I have it all written down in the Bible.

Part Two Interview ends

Interview Part Three Begins

WARE: I was talking to Rothwell Ward and he said that his grandmother, Louise Pugh came from the DeWalt area. Did you ever hear of the Pugh family?

WOODS: No.

WARE: He said that there was a Woodmen's Lodge in the DeWalt area. Do you remember that?

WOODS: It was a Progressive Order of Pilgrims.

WARE: What was that?

WOODS: It was a very small insurance that paid \$380.

WARE: Life insurance?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: Any of your family members purchase that?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: Like who?

WOODS: Like me! (laughs)

WARE: (laughing) Was it fairly common for folks to purchase?

WOODS: Yes, yes, it was.

WARE: More like a burial insurance?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: How long was it out there?

WOODS: It was out there for a LONG time. You would have meetings. They had a building but it was, we called it The Bottoms, but it's not the bottoms.

WARE: Was it near Mount Olive Church, in that area?

WOODS: It was AT Mount Olive Church. It was another building sitting on the right-hand side of the church because of the cemetery and all. It was a LARGE building there.

WARE: So they met once a month or something at the lodge?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: Was it men and women or just men?

WOODS: It was men AND women. On the annual days in July, all the ladies wore white dresses and would march from WAY down the road back to the church.

WARE: Like a parade?

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: Just the women would march? Or men and women?

WOODS: Just the women because the women had the white dresses on, but the men did not march.

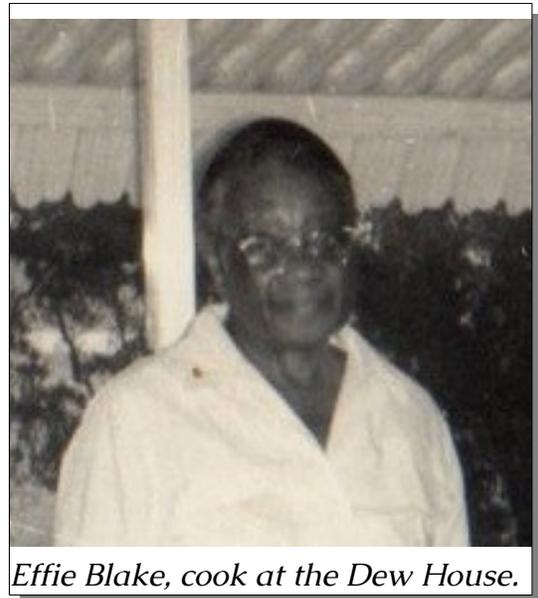
WARE: The Progressive Order of Pilgrims?

WOODS: Effie Blake, who was the cook at DeWalt, used to be the secretary of that for a while. I was the last secretary of it, until it went out of business.

WARE: When did it go out of business? What year?

WOODS: I'd have to look on some papers at home. It's been out now for like maybe five years. It was a black organization. It was something like the Eastern Star.

WARE: It wasn't the Jericho Lodge?



WOODS: No. This was separate. Mr. Kennedy was the one that organized it.

WARE: About what year did he organize it?

WOODS: When I first got in it, I was a little girl, because I was a juvenile. When you get a little older, you become a Pilgrim. You would be with the older people. If I was eight years old and I was born in '33...

WARE: That would be 1941.

WOODS: It could have been before then.

WARE: To totally shift gears a little bit, Reddick Edwards...

WOODS: He baptized me. Reverend R. E. Edwards. He was the pastor of Saint John's Church.

WARE: About how long was he the pastor there?

WOODS: Maybe ten years.

WARE: How old were you when you were baptized?

WOODS: I was ten years old when I got baptized.

WARE: His grandson is fairly famous, right?

WOODS: Al Edwards?

WARE: Is that his grandson?

WOODS: (chuckling) YES!

WARE: Why, you don't think he's famous? (laughing)

WOODS: He's okay. (laughing) YES, YES, YES. He IS famous because he does a lot of things.

WARE: R. E. Edwards, did he live out in DeWalt?

WOODS: No.

WARE: He was a circuit pastor? Came once a month?

WOODS: Yes. Back in those days, once a month, first Sunday.

WARE: Mr. Ellis had a farm out at DeWalt, and he lived in Stafford. Do you know anything about him?

WOODS: I don't remember him having a farm. There was Ellis, the water well man from Stafford. That's the only Ellis that I knew.

WARE: Who was the pastor after Pastor Edwards left?

WOODS: I do not know if Reverend Marshall came after Reverend Edwards.

WARE: Do you have notes on Saint John's Church? You were the secretary for a while, weren't you?

WOODS: Yes, I was. I have a few notes. Like when my children got baptized and the Hayes's got baptized. When quite a few people were baptized.

WARE: Before, we were talking about Daisy Pickett and her daughter, Lillie Mae. You mentioned that Letha Simpson was a good friend of theirs?

NOTE: See D. C. Pickett's interview on the FBC Historical Commission Website at <http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=30505>

WOODS: YES!

WARE: How did they know each other?

WOODS: I think they went WAY, WAY, WAY back. They all lived there in Stafford. Daisy Pickett and them used to live in DeWalt. Miss Lethie used to live with my Aunt Eliza and Uncle Sam. She was kin to Aunt 'Liza. I don't know how they got to be kin, but they were kin.

WARE: That was before you were born, though?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: Tell me about how Letha passed, where she was and what was going on there.

WOODS: She wasn't feeling well and they carried her to the hospital. When she was dismissed, Leah and D. C., I assume, went to pick her up. She came back to Leah's house, and Leah was taking care of her. Leah told me that she went in because she would get up during the night and go and see whether she was covered up and was she okay, because she had oxygen on. When she went in the room, about eleven o'clock, and said to her, "Are you okay?" She said, "Yeah. I'm not 'sleep." She said, "Okay, I was just checking on you, to make sure you're okay." She said, "Well, I'm fine!" By one o'clock, she got up and went back in there and she had passed.

WARE: Where does Lillie Mae live?

WOODS: I think the name of that street she lives on is Ash. It's right across from that church. I can't think of the name of that church, in Sugar Land. Mount Pleasant?

WARE: That's a NICE house.

WOODS: It IS a nice house. Really nice house. Yeah, him and his brother, Charlie, live there.

WARE: Are they the only three children left?

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: Effie Blake has passed already?

WOODS: Yes. They didn't have any children, her and Slim.

WARE: Do you remember Rothwell Ward's grandparents at all?

WOODS: I don't remember VERY much about them. We used to go up there and get grits and meals. They had a shop up there where they grinded those grits.

WARE: Where was the shop?

WARE: Do you know any of Rothwell's family that's from the DeWalt area?

WOODS: No.

WARE: His grandparents were wealthy people, weren't they?

WOODS: Yes. They had a LOT of land in Stafford.

WARE: I was talking to Joe Falsone on Saturday, just talking to him, not recording him. He was telling me about a man named Al Joland, who was a very old man when he was born. Did you know Joe Falsone, in Stafford?

WOODS: I've heard that name, but I don't really know him.

WARE: He was telling me that the road to get out to DeWalt, that you had to go down Avenue E and all. How was the road different?

WOODS: As far as I can remember, we used to go to Stafford and we would come out Highway 6. What would FM 1092 be? I guess it was Stafford Road? But we would come all the way up to Fifth Street and go through there to Stafford and Missouri City.

WARE: Okay, so you'd come in FM 1092 and then go down Fifth Street.

WOODS: Because that's where most of the black people lived, and you know, we were going to visit somebody.

WARE: That's where Miss Letha lived.

WOODS: Yeah, I think that was Stafford Road. That's been SO long ago. Oh, Lord!

WARE: Did you know a woman named Queen Esther Jackson? It seems like she had something to do with Saint John's.

WOODS: I know some Jacksons that live down in The Bottoms, but I never heard of a Queen Esther.

WARE: That's what Ann Rockwell said, that her father was from the DeWalt area. Maybe that's the same Jacksons that lived down in The Bottoms.

WOODS: Because my aunt was married to a Jackson, from down in The Bottoms.

WARE: Which aunt was that?

WOODS: Aunt Let. The one they called Bully. His mother was named Lena.

WARE: But you never heard of anybody named Queen Esther Jackson?

WOODS: Uh uh. They might have just called her that, but that wasn't her name. Because people have nicknames and you don't know what their names are. But it was a LOT of Jacksons down in The Bottoms, but I don't remember.

WARE: I have come across some documents where they ran the road straight to Mount Olive, and a lot of people signed it, giving right-of-way on their land, a lot of our families that lived down in The Bottoms.

WOODS: Like I say, with a nickname, then you can't think of the name. This guy was called Two Dollars, but that was NOT his name. The Fergusons, owned a lot of land down there.

WARE: They called the son Two Dollar Ferguson?

WOODS: I think it was his nephew. I don't even know what his name was.

WARE: Do you remember seeing Thompson Ferry down there? What was still standing down where the ferry was, when you were a kid? Did they use the ferry during your lifetime?

WOODS: No. If they did, I didn't go down there. I never went down there to that ferry. I just remember Thompson Ferry Road and that's it. We used to go down to Oilfield Road. Then they changed it too, they tell me. The school bus used to go down there and pick up kids that lived in The Bottoms, to bring them up to school.

WARE: To Saint John?

WOODS: Mmm hmm.

WARE: There was a bus that picked them up for Saint John's?

WOODS: No, not at Saint John. That's when they started going to Stafford. Because we walked to school.

WARE: Was there a school for blacks at Stafford?

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: What was it called?

WOODS: New Hope.

WARE: Where was New Hope located?

WOODS: On Staffordshire.

WARE: Now, you never went to New Hope?

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: You DID!

WOODS: Mmm hmm.

WARE: I didn't know that! I thought you only went to Saint John.

WOODS: No. When they closed Saint John up, we went to New Hope.

WARE: What grades did you go to, at New Hope?

WOODS: Must have been like seventh and eighth, because then I went to Yates.

WARE: I didn't know that you went to Yates High School!

WOODS: Mmm hmm. I didn't like it, either.

WARE: Really? Why not?

WOODS: Because I didn't like the city. I didn't like the kids, either. (laughs)

WARE: (laughing)

WOODS: We were country kids, and they were city kids, and you know how they are! Mmm hmmm. (laughing)

WARE: I do. I was a country kid! (laughing) Tell me about going to school at New Hope. Compare New Hope to Saint John.

WOODS: We had the same teachers there, so it was REAL good, very good.

WARE: What was your teacher's name?

WOODS: Miss Lula Belle Goodman, Miss Addie Roach, and Miss Alberta Malone.

WARE: Were all three of those teachers at Saint John's.

WOODS: No, the only teacher there that was at Saint John's was Miss Goodman. That's where they had the school named after her in Fresno.

WARE: Lula Belle Goodman, was she from the DeWalt area?

WOODS: Uh huh, they used to live down in The Bottoms.

WARE: You never told me that before.

WOODS: You never asked me! (both laugh uproariously)

WARE: Miss Malone and Miss Roach, did they live in The Bottoms, too?

WOODS: No, they lived in Houston.

WARE: She was your teacher at Saint John's, and then they closed Saint John's?

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: Did she come over to New Hope?

WOODS: Miss Goodman did. I think Miss Roach was already there in Stafford.

WARE: What year was that? How old were you?

WOODS: I don't know (laughing).

WARE: Eleven or twelve, maybe?

WOODS: Probably something like that. Because I have my diploma.

WARE: Can I make a copy of it?

WOODS: Sure.

WARE: You get it out, when you get home.

WOODS: Okay. I've got it hanging up on the wall. It's in a frame.

WARE: I need to come down to your house! I can go out to the Dew House to check it, and I'll just go right on to your house!

WARE: The Pickett family, there was D. C. and Charles and Lillie Mae and Bertha.

WOODS: And Lula.

WARE: And Lula has passed.

WOODS: Yes.

WARE: Then Bertha passed just...

WOODS: Uh huh. They had another brother.

WARE: What was his name?

WOODS: Rudolph Warren. He has passed, too.

WARE: Did the family stay in DeWalt a long time, or did they actually move into Stafford?

WOODS: They stayed in DeWalt for a LONG time, as long as they were farming. Then when they quit farming, they moved to Stafford.

WARE: They actually had a farm out there?

WOODS: In DeWalt? OH, LORD, YES!

WARE: Big farm?

WOODS: Mmm hmm.

WARE: Where was it?

WOODS: All over. (laughs)

WARE: (laughing) Now, that's not an answer!

WOODS: Well, they farmed cotton, and they had spinach and cabbage and corn. They always had a watermelon field, and my uncle always had a big garden, but that was just for them. At the big house they had ducks and chickens and guineas.

WARE: They had guineas? They're FUNNY-looking.

WOODS: They are. They had their own eggs, and they had cows Uncle Sam used to have to milk. They separated their own milk and made their own butter.

WARE: Do you remember using a butter churn?

WOODS: Oh, yes. Yes. I thought that was fun.

WARE: Did you?

WOODS: Uh huh.

WARE: It had a pulley on it. Did your butter churn have a pulley?

WOODS: It was a real tall thing. It was called a milk separator and it had a handle on it. You would turn that handle and it would separate the milk from the cream. Then, once you got the cream, they had a tall thing that you put that cream in. It had a stick in it, and you would make your butter.

WARE: Did you like making butter?

WOODS: Oh, yeah. It was fun, doing that. They had this wooden thing that made a pound of butter. My aunt would fill that up in this little wooden thing. It had a handle on it, and once it got full, you would put it across that, and it would push it up and the butter would come out.

WARE: So you'd have exactly one pound?

WOODS: Right.

WARE: Was it round?

WOODS: No, it was square.

WARE: How often did you make butter?

WOODS: Nearly every weekend.

WARE: Go through a LOT Of butter in life, don't we?

WOODS: Yeah, but what they did was make butter and take it to all their friends in Houston. They used a lot themselves because they partied a lot, and they always had company and something going on there, ALL the time.

WARE: But they would take butter in to people in Houston, their friends?

WOODS: Yeah, their friends. They had a LOT of cows, so they had to milk a lot. My uncle did.

WARE: About how many cows do you think they had?

WOODS: Oh, LORD. A whole lot-full.

WARE: The lot was across Highway 6, right?

WOODS: No, the lot was in the back of our house. They had two because there was one in the back of our house and then there was one across the railroad track. That's where they used to keep the cows when they got ready to brand them and spray them, or whatever they wanted to do. They kept the mules and the horses over there.

WARE: So the dairy was right there behind your house, but the other cows were across the track. Those weren't dairy cows?

WOODS: No. Those were the ones they sold. Had calves and things.

WARE: Were there pigs across the track?

WOODS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. When we stayed next to the lot, we had a pigpen there in the back of us. I had forgotten about that.

WARE: Then did you cure your own hams, or did you sell the pigs?

WOODS: No, they would kill them. They had a smokehouse. They would kill them and make sausage and hang that meat and stuff up in there. It would last FOREVER.

WARE: Because you smoke it? Now it goes bad in two days!

WOODS: It DOES. But that was good sausage back then. Those people really knew how to make that sausage.

WARE: Who made the sausage?

WOODS: I don't know. Probably my auntie and them.

WARE: I bet so. Your Aunt Eliza?

WOODS: Uh huh. And Aunt Let. They had a big meat grinder.

WARE: In the house itself or in the smokehouse?

WOODS: I think that meat grinder was in that smokehouse.

WARE: So they had a smokehouse back there, and they had the dairy. That was all right there on the site, and then they had a pecan orchard on that site, too.

WOODS: Yes, that pecan orchard.

WARE: Anything else they had back there?

WOODS: At the pecan orchard, it was just a wood frame house. That's where I lived when I was a little girl. In that wood frame house with Aunt Eliza and Uncle Sam. In the back of our house, there were fig trees and pear trees. We used to climb on top of that barn and pick the figs.

WARE: I would have had a heart attack if you were MY children! (laughing)

WOODS: (laughs) Well, we had nothing else to do.

WARE: What would you do with the figs? Just eat them?

WOODS: We would eat some, but they preserved them. We had to pick them to take them back to the house. We picked pears and took them back, too.

WARE: And made preserves out of the pears too?

WOODS: Oh, yes. We used to have to pick berries, and they made jelly out of the berries.

WARE: What kind of berries?

WOODS: Dewberries. The ones we used to pick were BIG black ones. Oh, LORD, YES!

WARE: Those just grew wild?

WOODS: Yeah. They grew wild. All out in that pasture on the fence lines.

WARE: Your Uncle Sam used to milk the cows and drive into Houston and do errands, right?

WOODS: No. I guess the men did, Mr. Frank and them. They had a chauffeur whose name was Roland Gurtman.

WARE: Was he from the DeWalt area?

WOODS: I don't think so. I don't know where he was from. I know he used to chauffeur.

WARE: Did his wife and family live there?

WOODS: He was not married.

WARE: Thanks Nancy. I think we're done, at least for today.

Interview ends