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H. E. Reid

Interviewee

Rt. 2 - Box 151

Monticello Miss. 39654

Address

Priscilla P. Gohansen

Director

Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin
Regional Library

Aug. 17 1978

Date of Agreement

The logging industry and county supervisor's responsibilities in Lawrence

County, MS.

Subject of Tape(s)

Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Oral History
Data Sheet

FULL NAME Henry Ervin Reid
ADDRESS Rt. 2, Box 151, Monticello, MS PHONE _____
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH September 23, 1907
EDUCATION Bowman School, Tilden, MS; Robinwood School, Monticello, MS; Monticello School, Monticello, MS. Completed the ninth grade.

OCCUPATION Farmer; County supervisor

TRAVELS New Orleans, LA; Peoria, IL; Houston, TX

SPOUSE'S FULL NAME Ollie Evie Davis
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH December 26, 1910
OCCUPATION Housewife

NUMBER OF CHILDREN Two (2)

NAMES OF CHILDREN

Sadie Mae Reid Butler

Jane Reid Lambert

FATHER'S FULL NAME Lemuel Steven Reid
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH May 11, 1875
OCCUPATION Farmer; logger

MOTHER'S FULL NAME Alice Townsend Reid
BIRTHPLACE Lawrence County, MS DATE OF BIRTH October 17, 1877
OCCUPATION Housewife; farmer

MAJOR NATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL EVENTS OF IMPORTANCE DISCUSSED _____

INTERVIEWEE'S AREA OF INTEREST AND/OR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

Rafting logs down the Pearl River; Robinwood Mill; Logging with oxen;
Duties of county supervisor - building roads, bridges, etc.; Water grist
mill on Pearl River.

His home - Rt. 2, Monticello, MS
August 23, 1977
Evelyn Benham
INTERVIEWER

DATE

PLACE OF INTERVIEW

Henry Ervin Reid
INTERVIEWEE'S NAME

An Interview with

Henry Ervin Reid
August 23, 1977

Interviewed by
Evelyn Benham

Mississippi
Department of Archives and History
and the
Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Oral History Project
Monticello and Vicinity

BENHAM: This is an interview with Henry Ervin Reid, Route 2, Box 151, Monticello, Mississippi, August 23, 1977. Interviewed by Evelyn Benham.

Mr. Reid, what is your full name?

REID: Henry Ervin Reid.

BENHAM: When and where were you born?

REID: I was born about five (5) miles south of Robinwood here in Lawrence County, on the old Pearl River Road.

BENHAM: And when were you born?

REID: I was born September 23, 1907.

BENHAM: What is your father's name?

REID: My father's name was Lemuel Steven Reid. S-T-E-V-E-N Reid.

BENHAM: And when and where was your father born?

REID: My father was born about eight (8) miles south of here, south of Robinwood. Back about two (2) miles north of Tilton.

BENHAM: Do you remember when he was born?

REID: He was born May the eleventh (11), 1875.

BENHAM: What kind of work did your father do?

REID: Well, my father he, he was a logger and he farmed a little and of course he logged with oxen.

BENHAM: Well, you know when I was talking to you before the interview, you said that your father at one time rafted logs down Pearl River.

REID: Rafted logs, right, when the sawmill came in here. And that was the most transportation then. They'd rafted logs in here and shipped

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some in by rail. He would raft logs in the fall of the year, get them tied together and the river came up, why they floated them down to the mill.

BENHAM: Oh, that was neat. That was a good way to do it, wasn't it? What kind of logs were rafted down?

REID: Any kind that they came to. Of course, they would have to cut something like cypress to mix in with that to hold this other timber up; it would sink.

BENHAM: Oh, that's interesting to know about that. Did these logs have to be a certain length?

REID: Yes, ma'am, they had to be I'd say, fourteen (14), sixteen (16), in an even-number length.

BENHAM: Is that sixteen (16) feet or...?

REID: Sixteen (16) feet in length. Of course they could make them twenty (20) feet. Of course the mill always could cut them up in the lengths that they had orders for.

BENHAM: Was it always necessary to have someone with the logs as they floated down the river?

REID: Right, right. Yes, my Daddy and his crew would ride on those logs. Of course, they'd tie up at night and camp out on the river bank.

BENHAM: What is meant by "rafting the logs?"

REID: Rafting them? Well, whenever you're rafting them, that's tying them together.

BENHAM: Well, did you have to have any special rope that you tied them with or something?

REID: They had what you call a "chain dog."

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BENHAM: And what is that?

REID: That was something with a spike in it. In it, that you could drive in one log and drive in another to hold them together and you went on down and tied whatever they wanted to put in a raft.

BENHAM: I see. Well, about how many logs were usually to a raft?

REID: Oh, I'd say there's fifty (50) to sixty (60) at least to a raft. Maybe sometimes up to seventy-five (75) or eighty (80) according to how big a raft they wanted to fool with.

BENHAM: Well, what was really about the standard one that went down the river? I mean, what was the one that was the best raft that consisted of logs - was it sixty (60) logs? Was that about the standard raft?

REID: I would say that was about the standard, yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: Well, the persons that had to do the rafting, did they have to wear any special kind of clothes to do this in?

REID: No, no, ma'am. They just worked as a laborer up there. They snaked those logs together with oxen and rolled them together and tied them together there. And of course they had a rope they put on them too and when they wanted to tie up, why, they had to bore that thing into the bank. Somebody'd get out and go tie it to a tree.

BENHAM: You mean somebody had to jump off the raft and swim to the bank?

REID: That's right. Well, if they could get the raft to the bank where they wanted to, but if it hit the ground before, why, somebody had to hit the ground or the water and get on up there and tie that raft. And then they'd spend the night and then start back the next morning.

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BENHAM: I see.

REID: My father, he rafted a good many logs here and on down to Pearl River Station, after the mill burned.

BENHAM: What mill was this?

REID: This was the Robinson Mill that was here,

BENHAM: I see. All right, now let me ask you this. What kind of tools did the rafter need?

REID: Well, what he needed the most was the "chain dog," a cross-cut saw to cut them up, and then he needed a maul to drive those spikes into those logs. A regular maul.

BENHAM: All right. How were the logs put into the river and how were they taken out?

REID: Well, they were put in the river. They were rafted on dry land and of course, they stayed there until the river came up and then they floated them into the back water here and tide. And of course, they had a pulley down there, an engine that would pull them out of the river up to the mill there. See, the mill was right on the lake here.

BENHAM: What lake was this?

REID: This is what they called the Robinwood Lake then and finally the Wilson Lake and then the Robinwood Lake. The Wilsons owned that when they bought this land.

BENHAM: I see. Well, why were these logs sent to this particular place?

REID: Well, that was the closest place to get a sale for them.

BENHAM: Who hired your father to do the rafting?

REID: My father he, the man who owned the mill payed him by the thou-

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sand to do this. And so, if he didn't get the logs down there, he didn't get any pay. Prices or what he got, I don't know.

BENHAM: That's all right, because I was going to ask you that very thing. Well, you have already answered the question. If he didn't get the logs down there, he just simply didn't make it.

REID: Didn't make it, no.

BENHAM: What is your mother's maiden name?

REID: My mother's maiden name was a Townsend.

BENHAM: Well, what is her first and second name?

REID: Her first name is Alice Townsend Reid.

BENHAM: Oh, her maiden name was just Alice Townsend?

REID: Alice Townsend.

BENHAM: Did she have a middle name?

REID: I've never known it. No, ma'am.

BENHAM: All right. When and where was your mother born?

REID: She was born about five (5) miles south of Robinwood on Pearl River Road.

BENHAM: And do you remember when she was born?

REID: I remember when she was born. October 17, 1877.

BENHAM: All right. Did your mother work outside of the home?

REID: No, ma'am. She only helped to farm.

BENHAM: How old were you when you went to school?

REID: I was about five (5) years old.

BENHAM: Did your parents take you the first day to school like they do now or did you go by yourself?

REID: No, ma'am. I had three (3) older sisters that I started with.

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My parents didn't have to take me.

BENHAM: How did you get to school?

REID: We walked.

BENHAM: And how far were you from the school?

REID: We were about four (4) miles.

BENHAM: Were the schools consolidated when you started school?

REID: Wasn't, not when we went to what they called Bowman School up in Tilden, Mississippi. Of course, after we moved here, we went to school in Robinwood. The town school.

BENHAM: And what was the name of your school?

REID: Well, that was Bowman School there and when we came to Robinwood, it was Robinwood School. That was back in 1914 we started to school here.

BENHAM: How did the children dress when you first went to school.

Can you remember that?

REID: Well, they dressed with whatever they had, Boys mostly wore overalls. Of course, in the wintertime we'd wear jackets. We just wore a blue denim shirt and a pair of overalls. Back then we had what they call concerts.

BENHAM: Concerts? What is that?

REID: Well, they just give a program over there.

BENHAM: Oh yes, for music and that sort of thing. Is that what you're talking about?

REID: Put on a little show and the parents all would come in to see the children perform. And we'd also have box suppers,

BENHAM: Oh yes, I remember those, yes.

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REID: These girls would fix boxes and then they'd see what man was going to buy it. They auctioned them off.

BENHAM: I remember that. I remember reading about that a long time ago. In fact, I don't know whether that came in sixty-one (61) years ago or not, because that is how old I am, but I can't remember.

REID: Seems like.

BENHAM: Yes, it did.

REID: Right.

BENHAM: It came in, didn't it? Well, what did you do about eating at school? Where did you eat? Did you take your lunch or something?

REID: We carried our lunch. It might not be anything but a potato or a piece of meat or a piece of bread, but we carried it with us.

BENHAM: How many recesses did you have at school?

REID: We only had one in the morning and then dinner and we didn't have any in the evening.

BENHAM: How were the children punished at school?

REID: They were whipped or they'd make them get up on the stage and face the blackboard and stand on one foot.

BENHAM: Oh, that's really choice. Did they ever put a hat on them and call them a dunce or something like that?

REID: No, ma'am.

BENHAM: They didn't do that?

REID: No, ma'am.

BENHAM: Did you ever get punished, Mr. Reid?

REID: Yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: You had to stand on your foot for awhile?

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REID: Yes, I have and I got whipped too.

BENHAM: Well, do you believe in that sort of punishment?

REID: I certainly do. I certainly do. If children were more, what I call "disciplined," they'd obey it.

BENHAM: That's right. I think so too. Well, did children ever go behind the school and fight it out?

REID: Occasionally that would happen. Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: What were two (2) of your favorite games that you played at school?

REID: Well, basketball was one and then back when I was little, it was shooting marbles.

BENHAM: Yes, you are the first one to mention that and I know that people played a lot of marbles a long time ago. I know I did with my brothers.

REID: Yes, ma'am. We'd shoot marbles at school, get on our knees and wear our pants out at the knees and my mother would threaten to whip us sometimes. But she would patch it and we'd keep shooting.

BENHAM: Yes, that was a lot of fun, wasn't it?

REID: Was a lot of fun. Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: What holidays were celebrated at your school?

REID: There was Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays and of course, the first of the year.

BENHAM: All right. Now, how were they celebrated, say for the first of the year? How was that done?

REID: Well, of course we didn't have any way to go; we walked. We probably went squirrel hunting or rabbit hunting, us boys and of course,

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the girls had to help their mothers clean up and such as that. And occasionally we might go see some of our relatives close by.

BENHAM: Oh, I see.

REID: Spend the day or some came to see us.

BENHAM: Well, how far did you live from your school?

REID: We lived about a quarter of a mile. In the first school I went to, of course, we lived four (4) miles from it. Me starting and me five (5) years old.

BENHAM: And you walked over there the four (4) miles?

REID: That's right.

BENHAM: Walked there and walked back?

REID: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: Well, I don't know, years ago it was a lot of fun because you didn't have a, you didn't have the kind of roads and you didn't have cars that whizzed by.

REID: There wasn't any danger of getting run over, now.

BENHAM: And children played along the way and before you knew it, why, you were at home or you were at school, weren't you?

REID: Right.

BENHAM: Well, which of these holidays did you like the best?

REID: Well, of course, I liked them all because as I say, when I'd go on a holiday, I'd go squirrel hunting, regular.

BENHAM: Oh, I see, yes, that's the reason.

REID: Unless we had to cut wood or something. Get something to keep us warm.

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BENHAM: Did you ever go barefooted in the summertime or go to school barefooted?

REID: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. Many a time I went to school barefooted near about all winter and I went barefooted all the summer.

BENHAM: Yes, we did too.

REID: There weren't many folks had shoes. If you had some, you'd save them for some special occasion.

BENHAM: Yes, yes, I remember that too. When my children moved up here, when we moved up here to the country, the first three (3) of my children just loved to go bareffot. They would wear their shoes there and then they'd take them off and then they'd try to put them on and sometimes they just didn't put them on. But they loved that. I remember going to the little elementary school and seeing all the children's shoes outside of the door. Now they don't do that anymore. It's kind of sad in a way, isn't it? What subjects did you like best in school?

REID: Oh, I liked arithmetic and I liked history very much and I liked geography very much.

BENHAM: How long did you go to school?

REID: I finished the ninth grade.

BENHAM: What year was this, do you remember?

REID: This was in 1926.

BENHAM: And then what did you do?

REID: Well, I fooled around and got married.

BENHAM: Oh.

REID: But we consolidated our Robinwood School to Monticello back in

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'20, 1922, I believe. We rode a bus then to Monticello. That was five (5) miles away.

BENHAM: And that happened about 1922 when they had the bus?

REID: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: All right, let's see. You kind of jumped the gun there for a minute there because you jumped ahead of two (2) questions. When I said was it at this time that you met your future wife, but I thought maybe you might have had a job. Did you have a job before you met you wife?

REID: Hauling logs.

BENHAM: Hauling logs? All right. Well, that's a job.

REID: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: All right, what is your wife's maiden name?

REID: My maiden name?

BENHAM: Your wife's maiden name now?

REID: Yes, maiden name. Of course, she was a Davis. Ollie Evie Davis.

BENHAM: How do you spell that middle name?

REID: E-V-A, Eva, E-V-I-E.

BENHAM: When and where was she born?

REID: She was born out west of Monticello in Lawrence County about eight (8) miles.

BENHAM: And did you tell me when she was born?

REID: She was born on December the twenty-sixth (26), 1910.

BENHAM: How many children did you and your wife have?

REID: We have two (2). Two (2) daughters.

BENHAM: What are their first and second names?

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REID: The oldest one is named Sadie Mae but she married Hunter Butler.

You want me to tell that?

BENHAM: She married who?

REID: Hunter Butler, Jr.

BENHAM: That wasn't important to tell me that, just tell me what their first and second names of both. Have you told me of the children?

REID: And the baby girl is named Jane. It's just plain Jane Reid Lambert.

BENHAM: All right, now have you given me both of their names and their second names?

REID: Sadie Mae, that's the oldest girl, and the other one is Jane.

BENHAM: All right. Now, how did you or when did you become interested in being a supervisor? Did someone inspire you to go into this kind of work?

REID: I was asked to run for supervisor in 1947, thirty (30) years ago. And of course, I didn't think too much about it, but they kept encouraging me to run. Different folks then, after they found out I might run.

BENHAM: Well, would you be interested in telling us something about your campaign techniques?

REID: Well, back in my first campaign, I campaigned in an old wood truck. I was farming and I'd farm awhile and if it rained, why, I'd get in the old wood truck and go politicking.

BENHAM: Well, that's all right.

REID: That was my first campaign in '47.

BENHAM: Did you go to see everyone in the county and talk to them?

REID: I went to see everybody in the county whether he was at home or

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over in the fields.

BENHAM: Well, can you tell me about that time? How many people there were in this county?

REID: Well, of course, I just campaigned the beat, now. I didn't go all over.

BENHAM: Oh, oh, I see, your beat. Well, you know, I have always been curious about these beats. How much acreage or how many miles does each beat consist of?

REID: Well, of course, Beat One had about two hundred (200) miles of roads. Now the acreage, I can't tell you the square acreage.

BENHAM: Well, I was trying to say either acreage or miles, you know.

REID: And then of course, Beat Three below me had a little more mileage and Beat Two up around two hundred (200) miles and that's the way it happened all over the county.

BENHAM: I see.

REID: Some beats would have a little more mileage than the other.

BENHAM: And so each supervisor just went around in his beat. He never went beyond the beat?

REID: Never went beyond the beat unless he went to a gathering or something where people out of his beat went, like to a ball game or back then, we had picnics.

BENHAM: That's right, that's right.

REID: And I made several trips out of my beat going to these picnics and seeing a lot of my supporters there.

BENHAM: Yes, yes.

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REID: And voters.

BENHAM: Yes, all right. (Pause) Mr. Reid, what were your duties as a supervisor?

REID: Well, the supervisors, they'd levy taxes; they issued bonds if you, if the county borrowed money; they'd levy all taxes to pay all county expenses, such as teachers' salaries, sheriff, chancery clerk, circuit clerk, any courthouse expense, or any county expense, the supervisors had to provide for that. And they'd see after the road business too.

BENHAM: Do you think that the supervisors changed much from when you first started? Do they do anything any different today than they did when you first started out?

REID: Well, of course I did a little different there. Like helping folks get off of the road, getting them driveways, that they didn't do before I was supervisor. And I tried to help folks when I was elected supervisor.

BENHAM: All right. What do you mean by grading a road?

REID: Well, when you grade it up, smooth it up and then you put the gravel on it and smooth it up again for the traffic.

BENHAM: Has the way you did that job changed much over the years?

REID: Well, the equipment has been changed. We did a lot of digging with shovels then, like cleaning out culverts and ditches, that you couldn't get with the grader. But they made these back-hoes and loaders that you can get in places and clean them out with that machinery. Made a lot of difference.

BENHAM: Well, do you think it is better now than it was when you started?

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REID: Oh yes, yes, ma'am. One hundred (100) percent.

BENHAM: What did you have to do to the road after a flood?

REID: Well, if the flood over-flowed the road, it washed the gravel off, it washed holes in it, why, you'd have to go and fill them up and smooth them up. And of course, they'd wash out bridges a lot of times that you'd have to rebuild.

BENHAM: All right. Mr. Reid, did the supervisors have anything to do with the bridges in their beat?

REID: Yes, ma'am. They were responsible for all of them in their beat.

BENHAM: What did they do to the bridges?

REID: Well, they would...

BENHAM: How did they have to maintain the bridges?

REID: Well, if they were small bridges, why just, they'd get in there and build what they'd call a "mud sill."

BENHAM: And what's a "mud sill?"

REID: That's a mud sill to put your posts on to put your bridge on and then cut your posts up as high as you want your bridge. Of course, when the stream would log, you, why you drove piling. Get a pile driver and drive them in there and put your caps and then go from there.

BENHAM: Let me ask you this. Who built that big Fair River iron bridge over Fair River? You remember they finally got rid of it? Who built that?

REID: Same fellow built that built two (2) down this a way. Now I can't...

BENHAM: Well, that's all right.

REID: I can't, I saw the name. It used to have a plate on there. The

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supervisor's name...

BENHAM: I see.

REID: That was supervisor when that was built, but I don't know the company's name. I've heard some call them but I forget.

BENHAM: Now, did the county go along in helping the supervisors maintain these bridges?

REID: No, not, they would get what you'd call a surveyor. And this surveyor would survey out what they'd need there and would let the contract on these bigger bridges. Now, on these smaller bridges, why, the supervisors did that themselves. But when you let a contract, why, that's it. The contractor does all of it.

BENHAM: I see.

REID: He just gets it ready to travel.

BENHAM: Oh, I see. And the supervisors go ahead and do the rest of it?

REID: Go ahead and do the rest of it.

BENHAM: All right.

REID: Like this road right here. I let the contract on here for three (3) miles to build it up to specifications and blacktop it. Of course, the contractor did all of that. Only thing I did was, if somebody wanted to build a house on that road after they got away from here, I put him in a culvert and built him a driveway.

BENHAM: I see. How did you go about building a road? What were the best materials to use for road building?

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REID: Well, of course you just take the regular dirt you have here and shape it up. If you didn't have any, why, you hauled in dirt. These engineers would select the dirt that they wanted to go on the road.

BENHAM: Oh, I see. You had to have an engineer first and then...?

REID: That was a state-aid road, just ordinary road. You just get out, clean it off, and build it up. If you don't have enough dirt to build it, you haul it in from somewhere. Of course, good clay dirt for your foundation and then put your gravel on.

BENHAM: I see. Is there a certain type of soil necessary for a highway?

REID: Yes, ma'am, it certainly is. I mean, you take a good clay foundation, it's better than -- well, that's the best. And some of this sand and stuff isn't as good, but they build a lot of them out of it, but then they put the foundation heavy on it, like good clay dirt. And of course, they specify the state-aid roads, sand and then the right kind of gravel, they prefer.

BENHAM: What do you have the most of, say, in your beat or maybe in the county. Do you have more gravel roads or do you have more paved highways?

REID: We have more paved highways at the present. When I was elected, why, we had none, you might say. Excepting the state highways that went through.

BENHAM: And where is this gravel gotten from for the roads?

REID: It's gotten out of the woods here. We have a lot of gravel in Beat One here. Most of these beats. But you have to go out and bore for it.

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You can bore for it and find out which gravel or take a ...

BENHAM: Oh, you can do that?

REID: Oh yes, ma'am. Or take a back hoe and dig down. If you didn't have something to bore with.

BENHAM: I see.

REID: But the gravel you put on these blacktop roads, of course, they bore down and test that gravel.

BENHAM: Oh, they do?

REID: Yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: I see, that's interesting. Can you define these terms? What does it mean by the width of the surface? This is for roads.

REID: Well, if you want.

BENHAM: Does a road have to be a certain width?

REID: It certainly does. Of course, we started off with about a twenty-four (24) foot road, road bed. And then an eighteen (18) foot blacktop. But we got up to now, to make it a thirty (30) foot road bed and about twenty-two (22) foot of blacktop, which makes it a lot better.

BENHAM: What do you mean by a thirty (30) foot and a twenty-two (22) foot? What does that mean?

REID: I'm talking about the road bed, thirty (30) feet.

BENHAM: I see, wide?

REID: Wide. Thirty (30) feet wide. And then the blacktop you put on there is twenty-two (22) feet wide.

BENHAM: Oh, I see. Just a little bit less.

REID: A little bit less. Twenty-two (22) feet makes a good road,

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good passing.

BENHAM: I see.

REID: Where eighteen (18) at this time, it's bad.

BENHAM: What do they mean by "sight distance?"

(Begin Side Two of Tape)

REID: Just this. When you survey a road out, they make it as straight as possible so a fellow driving a car, driver in a car, can see his way. And of course, he can avoid accidents. Of course, you have these roads the right-of-way width won't go up to the road, but you can see your distance plenty far and stop it it's necessary.

BENHAM: Yes, that's what I mean. Well, did you have anything to do with "radius of curves?"

REID: Oh yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am. You certainly did. They would level it if the curve was a little steep. I don't know what they call it, only on the outside it would be a little higher than the inside where you could take the curve better.

BENHAM: Well, if it was not curved up on the side, what would happen?

REID: Well, it wouldn't anything happen, not necessarily. Of course, you could be traveling fast enough that you couldn't make that curve where if it was level, you could make it a lot better.

BENHAM: You could make it better if it was level or better if it was higher?

REID: Better if it was higher. For instance, you take over here at Silver Creek on that bridge they built over there. Have you been around there?

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BENHAM: Yes, yes, I noticed that.

REID: That's what it's for.

BENHAM: I see. All right, And what did the "grade" have to be?

You know what I mean by that?

REID: Well, the grade. Of course, would have to. When you say "grade," the engineer would survey this out and he would drive a stob up to this grade to be. The supervisor or contractor built that road up to that survey.

BENHAM: Do you know what percent that grade had to be?

REID: I don't know what you're talking about the percent, but from your road bed down, you could have a two to one slope or three to one slope. That would mean the slope coming from the road down to the bottom where it would, you know, taper down.

BENHAM: I see. And how many feet or percent should the shoulders be?

REID: The shoulder. Of course, that's what we were talking about awhile ago. The thirty (30) foot road and the twenty-two (22) foot, you need a four (4) or five (5) foot, in other words, five (5) foot shoulder, five (5) or six (6) shoulder. Help you protect the road a lot. The blacktop.

BENHAM: Oh yes, yes.

REID: Folks were running off of the blacktop and of course, if it's too narrow there, they like to get off on the...

BENHAM: Ditch or something, right?

REID: That's right, get off on the shoulder, it could turn over.

BENHAM: Yes, it could.

REID: But that protects your blacktop.

BENHAM: Well, that also took care of anybody that had to stop on the

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side of the road or something like that.

REID: Stop on the side, right. Have a flat or have trouble.

BENHAM: I see. Mr. Reid, you were telling me something about when the railroad came through and something about Robinwood. Would you tell us about it right now?

REID: Well, the railroad...

BENHAM: And tell me the name of the railroad, please.

REID: The railroad purchased land here coming through Robinwood in May 14, 1906, from W. D. Wilson.

BENHAM: W. E. who?

REID: W. D. Wilson. Two hundred (200) foot strip, one hundred (100) foot from the center line. And then later they came back and bought on July 17, 1907, bought three hundred (300) extra feet which made it two hundred (200) feet for the purpose of building a little town here. It was Riverside.

BENHAM: You mean "Riverside" was the name of the little town?

REID: They called it Riverside and later then, they changed it to Robinwood. The fellow Robinson built this big sawmill here. Long in about, I'd say, '07, '08, and '09, along there.

BENHAM: How do you mean? You mean about what?

REID: I'm going to say when they bought this. Of course, the mill probably was being built in 1907. And then they peddled Robinwood off in lots.

BENHAM: I see. And so "Robin" is a part of Robinson's name.

REID: Right.

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BENHAM: And he was a mill owner and so he dealt in wood and so they stuck the "wood" on to the "Robin." Is that it?

REID: He dealt in logs. He cut lumber.

BENHAM: All right, he cut wood, you know, lumber.

REID: Lumber.

BENHAM: What places did the railroad connect? Where did it come from and where did it go to?

REID: Well, it came from New Orleans. I think it started from Bogalusa first and then went on to New Orleans and then on to Jackson and then on into Chicago, I guess.

BENHAM: And what was the name of this railroad?

REID: This railroad was New Orleans Great Northern Railroad.

BENHAM: And is this railroad still in operation?

REID: Still in operation. It's changed hands a couple of times. Back, oh, I'd say twenty-five (25) years ago it was changed hands to G. M. & O. - Gulf, Mobile, and Ohio Railroad. But this sawmill employed a lot of folks. This got to be a pretty good little town.

BENHAM: Well, about how many people did it employ?

REID: Oh, I imagine it employed a hundred (100). Probably a hundred fifty (150) with the loggers and the employees around there. Of course, they had to haul their lumber off and stack it by hand for it to dry. They didn't have, they finally built a dryer down there. And a planer mill too. And the railroad company built the railroad down by it where they could just put the logs on down to the mill down there and when they loaded up a car just go in

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and pick them up and so that made, that was something then.

BENHAM: I guess it was. Well, tell me something about Robinwood a long time ago?

REID: Well, back when we came here in 1914, of course, it was already built up pretty good. We had our school here.

BENHAM: Well, did you hear some of the old-timers talk about what this town was, Robinwood was like a long time ago? Did you hear people talk about that?

REID: Of course.

BENHAM: Well, tell me. That is what we are mostly interested in.

REID: Well, the man I farmed with here after I came here and went to school in the fall of 1926 and 1927, was the son of the man that owned this place. This was all just farm land in here when this railroad came through.

BENHAM: I see. That must have been quite a sight.

REID: That was a sight. This was a big place here. They owned about six hundred (600) acres here and I imagine they had three hundred (300) acres of it open. Of course, they had a lot of tenant hands here.

BENHAM: Yes, I imagine this area in here was probably prominent in the slavery times or something.

REID: Well, it probably... No, ma'am, I doubt if any slave, because he bought this land in 1892.

BENHAM: 1892?

REID: Yes.

BENHAM: Mr. Robinson?

REID: No, Mr. W. D. Wilson.

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BENHAM: Oh, W. D. Wilson.

REID: Robinson bought this...

BENHAM: From him.

REID: The mill site from him.

BENHAM: Oh, the mill site from him. I see. Well, can you tell me something else about Robinwood? You were telling me a little bit about it just a little while ago.

REID: Of course, we had our school here and we had what they call "colored quarters" down here across the railroad. And they had their church down there and they had their school right here on the road.

BENHAM: And what was the name of their church and their school?

REID: I don't know what the name of their church was. I don't know.

BENHAM: All right. You told me something else. Did it have a post office here?

REID: Post office, right. Yes, sir.

BENHAM: And didn't you say they had a drug store?

REID: Had a drug store. They had a barber shop and they had other little stores here. They had a big commissary down here that the mill owned. Of course, they had their office, big office right by it. It was pretty big business there.

BENHAM: Well, why do you think everybody just left?

REID: Well, the mill burned up.

BENHAM: Oh, oh.

REID: The mill burned up about 1916 and then the folks began to move away from here. Had to get somewhere to make a living. Of course, when this

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railroad came through here and this mill came here, that eliminated a right smart of farming land here.

BENHAM: I see. About how fast could traffic go about thirty-five (35) years ago?

REID: Oh, thirty-five (35) years ago when I went in office, twenty-six (26) years ago, thirty-five (35), well, about thirty (30) miles an hour was pretty good speed.

BENHAM: Yes, it was, that's right.

REID: I'd say from twenty (20) to twenty-five (25). If you got up to thirty (30), it roded.

BENHAM: That was really bad. Well, did they have to have driver's licenses years ago to drive?

REID: Didn't, no, ma'am.

BENHAM: I know, because when I first came up here thirty-five (35) years ago, almost thirty-six (36) years ago, they did not have to have driver's license.

REID: No ma'am, no ma'am. When I started driving and hauling logs and wood around here, I had no driving license. We used to have to pay a road tax.

BENHAM: Yes, I remember that. Did you retire from being a supervisor?

REID: I retired in 1975.

BENHAM: Mr. Reid, how long were you a supervisor?

REID: I was supervisor twenty-four (24) years.

BENHAM: Did you retire from this job?

REID: I retired, yes, ma'am.

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BENHAM: And what do you do now?

REID: I fool with my cattle and piddle around here. And of course, make a garden. That's my hobbies. And I rest a lot.

BENHAM: Well, you said something about going fishing. Oh no, that comes under the heading of hobbies. Have you done much traveling in your lifetime?

REID: I have done a right smart. I mean, going off on conventions, like Houston, Texas; Peoria, Illinois, to Caterpillar meetings, Just supervisor's conventions and in different other organizations that they'd have big days or gatherings and they'd invite the supervisors. To the forestry, I went to New Orleans to a forestry meeting one time. Other than that I never did travel too much.

BENHAM: Well, did you ever go traveling with your family?

REID: Never traveled any, no. Sure didn't. Stayed at home. Went to church every Sunday.

BENHAM: Well, that's what we all need to do more of. What are some of your hobbies, Mr. Reid?

REID: Well, of course my biggest hobbies were hunting and fishing back when I was, after I was first married. Of course, I lived with Mr. Homer Wilson down there eight (8) years and we caught a lot of fish.

BENHAM: Well, tell me about some, don't you know a fish story?

REID: Oh, I know. Of course, we let a lot of big ones get away and we caught some big ones.

BENHAM: And what kind of fish did you all catch in the river?

REID: We caught all kinds, We caught white perch and bass out of the lake and then we would catch buffalo and catfish in nets and we'd catch catfish some on trot lines.

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BENHAM: Why did they call the fish a "buffalo" fish?

REID: I don't know. That fish has a scale on him. Of course, the catfish just has the regular catfish hide.

BENHAM: Yes.

REID: Of course, the white perch and the bass has scales on them. Why they call it buffalo, I don't know.

BENHAM: Well, I guess because it has a tough skin like a buffalo, maybe or something like that. Well, why did they call them "drums?"

REID: Well, that's a different species of fish and of course I don't know why their name was called "drum." I have no idea.

BENHAM: Do you know any Indian stories or anything like that you heard a long time ago?

REID: No, ma'am. I don't know any. Only thing, of course I drove oxen a lot in my boyhood days. The most exciting thing that happened to me, I killed an oxen.

BENHAM: You killed one?

REID: Killed one.

BENHAM: Did you all eat him?

REID: We ate him. We really did.

BENHAM: Well, where di you all get this oxen from?

REID: Well, I don't know where my daddy got him, He had sixteen (16) head. Eight (8) yoke, because we had two (2) teams. And I was driving to water them and these three (3) yoked oxen run around and this other one got behind the tree and throwed him over the tongue and broke his neck.

BENHAM: Good heavens.

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REID: Twelve, thirteen hundred (12-1300) pound ox; he was fat and we ate that buggar.

BENHAM: I bet you did. That's right, because meat was very, well, it was plentiful, but you couldn't waste it, could you?

→ REID: Counldn't waste it. Of course, that was some fifty (50) years ago.

BENHAM: Then you said you plowed with oxen?

REID: Plowed with oxen. The first plowing I ever did, why, me and my daddy's brother out there took two (2) yoke of oxe, my brother drove the oxen that harrowed the bed off. And of course, I was back with my father with an old dye log cotton planter planting the cotton. Of course, we made cotton and we picked it. And my first going to Monticello up here, there were no bridges; we forded the creek.

BENHAM: Oh, you did. You mean you just walked across? Swam across or what?

REID: Just waded across.

BENHAM: Just waded across.

REID: And that was my first trip to the cotton gin, was when we gathered the cotton that year. That must have been about the fall of 1917.

BENHAM: Well, now how did you drive the, how did you get your cotton over there to the gin?

REID: We taken a yoke of oxen and put it to a wagon. The wagon with a body on it and hauled it to the cotton gin, the old water gin.

BENHAM: Oh, you had to do that when the river was down, the creeks were down or something?

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REID: Well, that fall everything was down, yes, ma'am.

BENHAM: Because it would ruin the cotton if it got into the wagon.

REID: Well, we couldn't cross it. We forded the creek up here at the old water mill and went up.

BENHAM: Oh, water mill. Is this water mill still here?

REID: No, ma'am. It was right here where this bridge was, this last one.

BENHAM: I see. Now, why did you call it a water mill?

REID: Well, that was where we got our bread.

BENHAM: Oh.

REID: Where you ginned cotton.

BENHAM: Oh, is that where the grist mill was or something?

REID: That's where the grist mill was, right. That was my daily, every Saturday, daily job. Get some corn shucked and shelled and get on this old red mare and go up there and get some cornbread.

BENHAM: Is that mill still there?

REID: It's been gone. It's been gone. And I built a bridge there where the dam was. Concrete bridge, state-aid road. That was, oh, fifty-five (55) years ago, fifty-six (56). And we ginned that cotton.

BENHAM: That's a long time ago.

REID: And went on to Monticello and it taken us all day. Got back after night with those oxen.

BENHAM: Well, how long, you said that you lived about five (5) miles from Monticello. How long did it take you to go from your house to Monticello to gin the cotton with your oxen and come back?

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REID: It taken us about thirteen (13), fourteen (14) hours. We left before daylight and got back after night, That was in the fall of the year.

BENHAM: All right. What do you believe is a yardstick to measure someone by? What do you believe that stands out in anyone that you meet, even today or whenever, what do you believe is the measuring stick for someone? Do you believe that if he is honest that that's pretty good? Or is he is fair, if he tells the truth, or if he's a concerned citizen, that's what I mean. What do you believe is a measuring stick for someone?

REID: You talking about doing business with anybody? Best thing is to have it in writing with a witness. Used to, you could, if a man told you something, you could depend on it.

BENHAM: Yes.

REID: It's just not that way today.

BENHAM: That's right, no it isn't. But even that, you still have something that you can go back to and say, "Well, he's a pretty good person to deal with regardless." I don't care if it happened fifty (50) years ago or even today, there's still something that you can measure by.

REID: Well, you can get disappointed in people.

BENHAM: Yes, you can, you can be disappointed in people. I know that.

REID: And of course, there's some I could tell you tell me something I could trust.

BENHAM: Do you have to feel that you've got to know somebody thirty-five (35) years or can you sort of tell almost just within a very short while that you can depend on them?

REID: You can, it's according to what it is that you can risk them with.

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Like loaning money, why you, I'd have to know them a pretty good while. If a man just comes up and tells you something that so and so happened or I'll do so and so, why of course you can soon find out whether he is honest or not. But just to measure folks...

BENHAM: Well, do you think that honesty is the best policy, or do you think, or just someone that you know even?

REID: Well, honesty is a good policy, but I say if you're going to get out here and deal with folks, like loaning money or borrowing money, you better handcuff them, tie them, where they have to pay you.

BENHAM: All right. Well, can you think of any stories or anything that you would like else to tell about that is interesting that happened to you in your lifetime? Any kind of a funny story?

REID: No, ma'am. I don't know of anything. I can tell you this, Homer and Ms. Evelyn, we were fishing the boat turned over with us one morning there.

BENHAM: That's good. All right, then what did you all do? Did you have a lot of fish in the boat?

REID: We never did get our net up and the pirogue turned over with us and we swam out to the other side and then I swam back out in the river to catch the pirogue and get it for us and it was cold.

BENHAM: Oh, my goodness.

REID: That's about the most exciting thing. That and of course killing the ox, that was exciting. And then we liked to drowned down there, but we made it out. But that didn't stop us from fishing.

BENHAM: I know that river's great, but it can be very treacherous plenty

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of times. Did it ever snow here so badly years ago, say fifty (50) years ago? Did Pearl River just almost ice over?

REID: It did back in what? '38, '37?

BENHAM: I don't know.

REID: It iced over down here back in...

BENHAM: Wait, don't talk right now. Let's just wait until this truck passes. Now, what were you saying about the river icing over? Pearl River icing over?

REID: Pearl River iced over down here. And this thirty-five (35) acre lake out here iced over back that was in '37, '38.

BENHAM: See, that was before we came up here so I really don't know.

REID: But it sure did.

BENHAM: All right. Well, this is going to be the end of the interview, Mr. Reid. I want to thank you very much in behalf of the Oral History Program for talking with us and telling us something about how life was lived years ago.

REID: Well, I appreciate you picking me and I hope I gave you the right information.

BENHAM: Yes, you have.

REID: It's been very nice of you and thank you.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Evelyn Benham)