

B & B Cafe

Oxford, MS :: 1920s-late 1960s/early 1970s

[W]e [would go] there [to the B & B Café] several times, you know, on different occasions...I never shall forget a man—I forget his name. I sure hate I forget. But he was the one who...if you'd tell him your...birthday, he could tell you what day [of the week] it was...He was just a fortune teller.

--Susie Marshall

Photographer Martin J. Dain visited Oxford in the early 1960s to document William Faulkner's fabled Yoknapatawpha County. With many days spent wandering and photographing, Dain eventually stumbled upon the African-American-owned B & B Café that was tucked away in an alley on the northwest side of the town's square. Luckily, he snapped a few photographs while he was there. The picture here is one of the very few—if not the only—known images of the place. While long gone, the café is still part of the collective memory, and there are many locals who are quick to share their stories. Here, Mrs. Susie Marshall recounts tales of fortune tellers, fried pies and an Oxford that has all but disappeared.

Visit this website for more information on African-American history in Oxford, Mississippi:http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general_library/files/archives/exhibits/civilrights/aa/

What follows is a portion of the original interview that has been edited for length.

B & B CAFE

Subject: Susie Marshall, Freedmen's Town Historian

Date: August 24, 2004 @ 10:30am

Location: Mrs. Marshall's home – Oxford, MS

Interviewer: Amy Evans

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans on Tuesday, August twenty-fourth, two thousand and four. And I'm at the home of Mrs. Susie Marshall in Oxford, Mississippi, on Martin Luther King Junior Drive. And Mrs. Marshall, if you wouldn't mind introducing yourself for the record?

Susie Marshall: I'm Susie Marshall. Um, my birthday is December twenty-fourth, nineteen thirteen. I had my ninetieth—observed my ninetieth birthday Christmas Eve...two *thousand* three!

Before, I mentioned that we were going to talk about African-American... cafes in Oxford

Yeah!

And I wonder if we could start specifically with the B and B Café. Um—

The B and B.

Yeah. And Robert Boles...who had the shoe shop?

Yeah! I tell you, that wasn't called—I think the person who owned that café at that time was, uh, the first grade teacher, Lela Peterson's husband. It was called Pete's. He was called Pete. P-E-T-E.

So are you saying that they were the first owners...that had the café?

Um-hmm. You see, it was a—like you say, it was, uh, in front of—right there where Boles—I think they must own it—where—

Mr. Wiley is there now. Wiley's shoe shop.

Yeah, well, uh, Wiley's in the back now...Well, I think Peterson owned the front part...Well, it *was* the back part. It really was. Because the show shop was in the front part...And, uh, after Peterson, I guess, died, a young man called Butch. Butch Morgan...was the next owner...Yeah, I never shall forget for—when we were coming up, you know our parents didn't allow us to socialize much and to—going to places like that. They were real strict. But we remember go—going there several times, you know, on different occasions. Like when we have a club meeting or something, we'd meet there. I never shall forget a man—I forget his name. I sure hate I forget. But he was the one who could tell when your—if you'd tell him your—your birthday, he could tell you what date, uh, what date in the day it was. I for got now. He was just a fortune teller.

Oh, well I—let me show you this. I've heard that before. And I have these pictures. Martin J. Dain came to Oxford...in the early [nineteen] sixties.

Yes.

And he did that book *Faulkner's World*. And I have these pictures from that book. I wonder if –if this is who you're talking about [interviewer gets Dain photograph out of folder and places it in front of Mrs. Marshall. There is a man in the photograph, wearing a tattered sweater with newspapers in the pockets, and he is leaning against the counter of the café reading a magazine].

It surely is!

Because John Adams at the S and J Frame Shop [in Oxford]...told me that, um, people who have mentioned knowing or interacting with this man in this photograph, say that he was like a mathematician and could—

Right! Sure!

--do any kind of [math] problem.

Um-hmm, he could. And it was just amazing. And we would go there when we would have our parties. This sure is the place! The café.

Yeah? And is that Butch [Morgan] right there? [There is a man seated in a booth on the right side of the image, who is wearing a paper hat and smoking a cigarette]

That's Butch right there. Butch Morgan. Mmmm! I'm so glad you showed that. You say his name was—what? I've forgotten his name. [Pointing to the man reading and leaning against the counter in the photograph]

I don't know his name.

I can't remember his name. As well as we, uh, used to—well, he used to be sitting on the—not only in the cafes but in the street corners and it—all—all the...places around town. And we would always enjoy stopping and visiting with him because he could tell us so many things, you know?

Yeah? So you'd ask—you'd tell him your birthdate, and he would tell you what day of the week—

Yeah! Yeah, what day of the week. I—you know, that was something. [Laughs]...I thought it was amazing. [Laughing]

[Laughing] Well let me ask you about, um, the café a little bit more and try and get an idea of when it was operational and who had it. Because—do you remember it being here when you moved here as a child?

Well, I was eight years old. [Short pause] And I think I do remember it on the—being there on the corner. [Short pause] because on the, uh, also on that—in that same areas we had a—my friend's grandparents were—had a cleaners. Um-hmm. And who else—yeah, a cleaners. It sure was a cleaners. And then after that a Chinese, uh, m—one of the, uh, church members worked for a Chinaman. He had a t—the cleaners after the black people died. Because that's been a long time ago...I don't remember—every time—we came—when we moved to town in nineteen twenty-four...On to nineteen-thirty and they—yes, I remember the street mostly was just area of nothing but small houses and chicken coops and animals and all. [Short laugh] In the early nineteenth century that's how it looked until nineteen seventy-four. The city got a grant, you know, and they refurbished this area.

Well and so what was the rest of the—the square like when you were growing up in the—here in the twenties and thirties and—

Well, you know, it had hitching posts around—around the square, where they would come and—people from the country would bring their vegetables and they'd have a—sell whatever they had. And the hitching—that, uh—hitched their mules and horses around the square. And it seems like every—every occasion—maybe every year—they would have something like a—a giveaway. Like a car or something. You know, something big. And there would be a *lot* of people around town...During that time. And, uh, I remember when the square was—well, when they had plank walks from the square down to—down to this train station. The depot. Plank walks.

Like wooden walkways?

Yeah, [to] walk on. And that—the ex-slaves, they built—built those plank walks from the square down to the post office because—or right after—my grandfather said after freedom was declared, they, uh, could get money, you know. They—they were paid money to work, and they built those plank walks.

What was that period like when you were here in [nineteen] sixty-two, when James Meredith came [to Ole Miss]?

Well, it was, you know, um [short pause] Never shall forget. A caravan of soldiers came right along [points towards the front of her house and the street outside]. And you know, the street was—wasn't paved then. Nineteen—nineteen sixty-two. And, uh, went to church that Sunday night. Because I think this was like, uh, early Sunday morning. I—I think it was. And we went to church that Sunday night and after—we heard all this noise.

And we didn't know what was going to happen. So the preacher at our church, he said—it was about seven thirty, and he let church out. Because that's—that incident had taken place on, uh, the campus because of Meredith had—was there to be, uh, to be entered into school. To be registered for school the next morning. And it was just really something. We—I was teaching in—at Taylor at that time. And, uh, we couldn't go to school, you know. They—the marshals—well, the govern—government, I guess, had taken over—control of the govern—city government. And, uh, [it was] about a week before we could go to school.

What was going on in this community of Freedmen's Town, being so close to campus?

Well, everybody was—stayed close at home [short pause] during—at that period...The—the maids that worked for the white folk, they would have to come and get them. And they—you couldn't go through campus. I mean, the city part. They'd have to go around, you know, to get the people. Because it was just really controlled by the federal government.

Well and Butch Morgan's café was open in [nineteen] sixty-two because that' about, um—I think just before the James Meredith...integration of Ole Miss happened, that these [Martin J. Dain] pictures were taken.

Um-hmm. Right. Um-hmm.

[D]o have any memory of whether or not Butch's café stayed open during that time or if people...would meet there?

SM: No. It...it didn't—it wasn't open...The town was really just shut down...It was just a scary time for black folk. White folk too! [Laughs]

[W]ell if you don't mind, can we back up and talk about, um, the cafe again and—

Yeah. The b—Butch's café. And we had another man. He was a really rough black nigger. White folk were kind of scared of him, you know. Afraid of him. His name—Henry Logan. Boy, he was rough. He had a café...He had a café and a barbershop combined. I've forgotten now where it is. Over there where [short pause] mm, mm. In the gin area. You know where the old gin is?

Yes, ma'am.

I think he had a café and a, uh, and a barbershop.

Do you remember what kind of café it was?

It was just a corner—he sold sandwiches, you know. Not very big. It wasn't like—big like the Pete [Café or B & B]. He just sold sandwiches. Had somebody working in—in the back, I believe. And he—he'd have in the front—it was very small. Just a...sandwich place.

Do you know about what years it was there?

Let me see, what year was that there? [Short pause] His—his daughter—maybe about [nineteen] thirty-three...And then there was one down—called in Shirley Bar—Barker—Shirley Barker hollow. That was down in here near the railroad track. It was—I forget the name of the person who had the café. [Mrs. Marshall later explained that a white woman named Shirley Barker owned the land in that area, and that there was a place down a hill that was run by someone in the black community] But they used to have dances over there in—in that—and that was a kind of big place...In Shirley Barker hollow. I forgot the name of the person who had the café. That big—because it was kind of like a dance hall, you know...And they had—they sold food there.

Did they have church dances or school dances?

They'd have [laughs] what you call them? [Laughs] Juke dances!

Oh, yeah? Okay.

[Laughing] Yeah, because even at Christmastime, you know, they'd have Christmas dance after Christmas dance, and all those special days, they would have dances.

Well and you were talking about the square earlier and, um, spending time down there. And I wonder—I wonder with the café that was there in the, um, Boles' shoe shop building, Butch Morgan's café, and what it was like for an African-American business to be on the square for those many years during that time. From the thirties to the sixties. [Short pause] And how—what kind of interactions occurred with people—

Not very much, you know. Only the black folks would go to the places. No white. Um-mm. Not even the students, you know.

And that café was on that alley right there— [on the northwest side of the square] Was that a big hangout place? In the alley?

It surely was. A big hangout for African-Americans. Sure was. Um-hmm. You could always find whoever you wanted right in there. Right there. If they

were being—looked for you—you know, when people who come from out of town. Their relatives or whatever. Because a lot of people moved, uh, from—from around the area, you know. Because of, um, uh, taxes and----get to go. You know during that time, they'd all try to go to Chicago or someplace like that where they thought they would have a better living? You know?...But when they got there, they found out it wasn't any better. [Short laugh] [Not] much better, anyway.

Do you remember what this café—Butch's café—looked like on the outside? Was there a sign in the alley or anything for it?

Um-hmm, there was a sign: "Butch's Café." Or "Pete's Café."...That's as far back as I can remember—Pete. And then Wiley. [Herbert Wiley now owns the building. His family bought the shoe shop business from Robert Boles. Today, however, the shoe shop is in the back and a bar is in the front of the property]

Do you ever remember it being called the B and B Café? Because that's the way I've always heard it spoken of...From what I understand, um, it was--

Butch [Morgan] and—

The daughters, I think, of...Mr. Boles--I'm not sure...And they started the café, and then the Peterson's owned it, and then Butch Morgan owned it.

Yeah, maybe so. Yeah. Let me see. The daughters—

Do you—I found these notes in my notebook here. Do you remember the names Shirley and Shelby Boles?

Oh, yes!

Does that sound familiar?

That's the—Shirley—Shirley—must have been his daughter. Shirley and Shelby, that's the son.

Oh, okay. Because I spoke with Mr. [Herbert] Wiley briefly one day, and he just mentioned all of these names [as] kind of a short...lineage of the café. [Mr. Wiley did not want to be interviewed]...And so then, that was how it was explained to me, that they started the café, and then the Petersons owned it and.. .Butch Morgan.

Right. That's probably right.

And was it just a—a short-order kind of sandwich place?

Yeah. A short-order sandwich place. Um-hmm. As far as I can remember.

Um, and these pictures. [Interviewer puts the Dain photographs of the café in front of Mrs. Marshall again] Do you know anyone in this photograph? [This is a different photograph of the café that is a different view of the wall of booths and customers. The counter and the man reading the newspaper is in this image again but from the opposite side]

I sure do remember this man. [Points to the mathematician reading at the counter]...Let me see...Lord, I don't know these folks! [Laughs]

[Laughs] And there—there's a—looks like a jukebox in the back of those pictures there?

Yeah, a jukebox. Um-hmm.

Did you ever stop in there for just a soda or a candy or anything? [In the Dain photograph that shows Butch Morgan seated in a booth, a jar of candy and crates of empty soda bottles can be seen behind the counter in the back left of the image]

We stopped in there for a soda or sandwich for a short while. [Laughs]

Well, were [all of the African-America-owned cafes] just kind of quick take-away places or like little stores with candy and sandwiches and nothing really more than that?

Through—through the week. And then on the—on—they would have, uh, big crowds on the weekends. Saturday nights. Because I remember somebody got killed down in Shirley Barker [hollow]. A friend. He was having a—a dance.[Short pause] And, uh, Mr. Boles didn't allow nobody—I mean Mr., um, Logan didn't allow no—no, uh, violence around his place. He took care of his business himself. [Short laugh]...The policemen didn't have to. He—he was about—about as bad as, um, Molly Barr!...Shewould have picnics and things where—and—and the police men would ask her if she needed help, and she said, "No." She had her gun across her lap, and she took care of her business! [Laughs]

Well I sure do thank you, Mrs. Marshall[.]

Oh, you're welcome. I enjoyed...doing it...You made me think of a lot of things...I had forgotten.

Full Interview Transcription:

Susie Marshall, Freedmen's Town Historian

AFRICAN-AMERICAN-OWNED CAFES: B&B Café, Henry Logan's café, Crowe's Boarding House, Molly Barr's place, and an old jook.

DATE: August 24, 2004 @ 10:30am

LOCATION: Mrs. Marshall's home - Oxford, MS

INTERVIEWER: Amy Evans

LENGTH: Approx. 60 minutes

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans on Tuesday, August twenty-fourth, two thousand and four. And I'm at the home of Mrs. Susie Marshall in Oxford, Mississippi, on Martin Luther King Junior Drive. And Mrs. Marshall [sound of microphone being turned to face Mrs. Marshall], if you wouldn't mind introducing yourself for the record?

Susie Marshall: I'm Susie Marshall. Um, my birthday is December twenty-fourth, nineteen thirteen. I had my ninetieth—observed my ninetieth birthday Christmas Eve ninety-three.

AE: And congr--

SM: Two *thousand* three!

AE: Congratulations to you! I was just saying that you're quite an important keeper of history in this town. And, um, I wonder if you could briefly just discuss a little bit of your family's history in Oxford. You were born in here, correct?

SM: No.

AE: No?

SM: I was born in, uh, o—on Lafayette County [Oxford is in Lafayette County] on the—on the edge of Panola and Lafayette County [which would be to the west of Oxford]. My—my paternal grandfather—grandfather was born in Panola County. My paternal [gradfather]—well, I should say that he was a—uh, a sharecropper slave. He worked for a big plantation called—something. I've forgotten the name—in Panola County. And he married my mother They were going to the Harrisonville School in Lafayette County. Now, this is Burgess, Mississippi.

AE: Okay.

SM: And my grand—maternal grandfather came from, uh, Virginia, with his freedom papers in his pocket. And he settled in the area of Burgess and Lafayette County and Harrisonville Community. And he married—this is my mother's, uh, paternal grandfather—and he married a Choctaw woman, and he had four sons and three daughters. And my mother [Vergie Lee Fox Mitchell]. was the oldest of the----of the—my grandfather's siblings. About twelve or thirteen [years old]. And she, uh, went to the Harrisonville Community School and, of course, my father [William Mitchell] was living on the edge of Panola County, he went to that school too. And this is where they courted—sly—uh, they on the—on [laughs] on the sly they courted, you know, each other. And got married October the tenth, nineteen ten. No, uh, nineteen—uh, October third, nineteen ten. Mother said that, um, when they, um, got married, uh, revival—revival—or they had church once a moth I believe it was. In October they went down praying and—and they had a plan that when my aunt—my father's sister—would lay her hand up in the open window, that was a sign that my father was out there to—to carry her away to get married. So my aunt would always laugh, said that was the biggest hand she had ever seen in her life. And when they were down praying, my other slipped out and went in—out into the waiting in the one-horse sleigh—one-horse—whatever that was. Buggy. And wen to Panola County and got married. About thirteen—about thirteen miles away. Of course, Harrisonville was in Lafayette County. And that church where they got married, they just tore it down last year.

AE: Oh, no.

SM: Um-hmm. You could always see it on the highway to the dam [Sardis Dam], you know. For picnics and family reunions and all, they would always say, "This is where we got married." [Laughs] The cemetery is there. And, of course, they lived there for a while with—with my father on the pl—oh, well, it was extended—with the extended family in—in, uh, Panola County. And my mother didn't like—my mother's father didn't like that b—because he had a farm, you know. My mother's father had a farm. So they finally moved with my mother's father—my maternal grandfather—for a while. And my father was a good sharecropper, and they would move every other year to find the person who's the best landlord and would—and the best facilities for—for houses. Buildings for his family. So in nineteen twenty-three my—my mother and sisters and my father moved to Oxford, where her four children then—four of the seven of us—were—could go to school eight or nine months rather than two—five or six months. And then my father could get work. And so we moved to town—to oxford town, uh, from—well, I think it was to a....to a small farm right—that--that Doctor Phillip had. He was one of the physicians in town. He had a small t—farm right there where Bramlett [Elementary] School is. And we lived in a house right there. And, um, of course we got a chance to go to school. **[COUNTER: 05:16]** The first school we went to in nineteen sixteen was built by Walter Johnson.

AE: Okay.

SM: And he [Walter Johnson] had—he was working —his grandmother was working for Mr. Ben Price, and Ben Price was the richest man in town. The tallest tombstone in the—on that cemetery is Mr. Ben Price. And his mother—[Walter Johnson's] grandmother worked for him, and he—when he got to be—and he went with her to work too. He was a house boy. When he was about sixteen years old he got a job with the, um, railroad. He was a porter on the railroad from Memphis to Grenada, I believe, where it turn—where the turn around was. And he built a school here on this spot for us [in Freedmen's Town]. Of course, when we moved down[town], we went to that school because they were members of Second Baptist Church, he and his—he married this woman from—his wife from Cordova, Tennessee. And we went to school—their school. It was the first private school because black people didn't have a school then—public school. Um, and we went to this Del Mount Seminary School that he set up here, right here on the next block. And, um—

AE: Here on this street [Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard]?

SM: Um-hmm. On this street in Freedmen's Town.

AE: Okay.

SM: He built it in Freedmen Town. All the people that moved from Lafayette County and the surrounding area, they—and—and—Freedmen Town—you know, the railroad track? Freedmen Town consisted of the area from the railroad track, to Ninth Street over there on the, uh, southeast side, and then from Jackson—we called it Depot Street then—Jackson Avenue, down here, uh, to this street, uh—forgot the name of it.

AE: Jefferson?

SM: Price Street, I believe.

AE: Price. Yes, of course.

SM: And—that area's Freedmen Town. And so we lived in the area of Freedmen Town all the while—when we moved from--during the Depression, Doctor Philip didn't, you know—or landowners didn't—lost their slaves, you understand? Slaves. So they didn't have anybody to work for them. And the Depression—he didn't have any—he didn't need my father no more. So we lived—he moved in a house on Depot Street. Jackson Avenue over there [just a couple of blocks from where Mrs. Marshall lives now]—a house that's right—the very first one, coming from—on Depot Street from the cemetery. From the, uh, railroad track. That's where we lived until the house got burned. And we went to this school over here on—called Del Mount Seminary

that was established by Walter Johnson. His wife was a—was a head teacher at that school. And the—I was, uh, eight years old and couldn't read, so we would, uh, walkthrough the woods--there was just a wooded area from—from where the school is—Bramlett [Elementary] school is—across over here [points south toward Jackson Avenue]. We would walk through the woods and—and—in the morning. But in the afternoon we would—well, we would put on our long johns and, you know, and we would walk through town. But we would slip and take off the [laughs] those long stockings [short pause] because we didn't want the city children to laugh at us. And we'd walk through town, you know, and there was a variety store there. Little white girls, about three or four or five—about six—five and six years old—they would stop there and were just reading, you know. And I was wishing so bad that I could read, but I couldn't read. But I soon caught up. [Laughs] At—the—going to the school. We went to this Del Mar Seminary School until nineteen twenty-seven. That's when, uh, Rosenwald, you know, founded—they built—

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: --schools in the South. And, uh, we went to the Rosenwald School. And—where I got—oh—well, I went there until I finished, uh, well, high school. Nineteen thirty-eight, I believe it was. Um-hmm. And—

AE: And you went on to teach school.

SM: Yeah, I had to take—had to take an examination to get, uh, teaching license.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: And so I did that, and I taught at a school called Burt—Lafayette County Elementary School and, uh, for about five years. Then I went to Taylor [Mississippi]. Taylor had—had built up a—well, um, not a high school, but it was the tenth grade at that time. And I went there. That was where six teachers taught. And then from there I began at the—what did I do? I taught—what did I teach? I think they needed an English teacher. A literature teacher. And I like, uh, eng—English. Because—in the meantime I was going to Rust College [in Holly Springs, Mississippi] in the—in the summer. You know, summer session? And until—until I got, uh, a BS degree from Rust College. And I went to Taylor school and I taught that English and I was basketball coach. And, uh—uh, of course, I like piano music—wrote musi—my father was a—what you call that? Note singing? [Beats finger on table] Shape Note singing!

AE: Oh, really?

SM: Yeah. And he tried to teach us, but we were too dumb to learn. [Laughs]

AE: Ohhh. [Short laugh] **[COUNTER: 10:13]**

SM: I like that. And I taught that music class, um, wrote music, you know. And I was—well really I had—we organized the—well, high school—and I—chorus—I was the chorus teacher. And we enjoyed having field days, you know, and having contests and, um, singing—singing contests. What'd we—song fests! And basketball in the afternoon and other activities in the mrongin. And all the—the parents would meet at the—we had two—three high schools: Taylor, Liberty Hill and West Spring Hill. And they would meet—each year they would meet at one of those. With our activities and basketball games and contests. Uh, then—then I was hired as Jeane's Supervisor. Jeane's teacher? You might not know the Jeane's one?

AE: No, ma'am.

SM: It was a lady from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was a philanthropist. She gave a million dollars and—for the—for the Southern schools. Rural schools. To help the—the children. And the communities too. And my, uh, superintendent hired my to be the Jeane's teacher of the—of the Lafayette County. Of course, there had been three before me—three Jeane's teachers before me. And I did that for ten years. And I was—I was all the time going to summer school. My sisters and who--my sisters and my brother who were younger than me, they laughed at me because it took me fifteen years to get a BS degree! [Laughing]

AE: [Laughs]

SM: From Rust College. And when I started teaching at Lafayette High after integration, I taught at Lafayette, and I went to school also and got a Masters degree from Ole Miss in Elementary Education. And [short pause] that's my life. In the meantime, I got married when I was teaching at the Burt School [in Lafayette County]. [Sniffs] And I married Joe Marshall. He was from Jackson, Mississippi, and he worked at the university. We had three children: Edith Joann, Eric Ruben and Willie Leon. My youngest one [Willie Leon] died. He's the one that lived closest to me [short pause] in Memphis. He's a realtor. And my grand—my older daughter is a teacher in Chicago. Edith, she's retired. And my s—son was next. He's the principal of -of a two-thousand-one-hundred-student high school in San Francisco.

AE: I remember he was just visiting you here wasn't he?

SM: Yeah!

AE: Yeah.

SM: He was here. His daughter's got a master's degree—Erica—from Ole Miss. And she—he visits with her most of the time he's here. She lives in Atlanta. Works out from Emory University.

AE: A lot of educators in your family.

SM: Well, both of them, anyway.

AE: Isn't it interesting how things turn out?

SM: Yeah.

AE: What year did you get your master's [degree] from Ole Miss?

SM: Nineteen seventy-two.

AE: Seventy-two?

SM: And from Rust [College] in nineteen fifty-two. [Laughs]

AE: Okay.

SM: [Laughing] They laughed at that! Well, anyway. [Laughing] They didn't do as well after laughing at me.

AE: Yeah, you showed them; you got your degree.

SM: Um-hmm. Yeah.

AE: Well, there are a million things that I want to ask you.

SM: Okay.

AE: Um, but I want to kind of frame this conversation [Mrs. Marshall blows her nose] a little bit more. Before, I mentioned that we were going to talk about African-American—

SM: Yeah.

AE: --cafes in Oxford.

SM: Yeah!

AE: And I wonder if we could start specifically with the B and B Café. Um—

SM: The B and B.

AE: Yeah. And Robert Boles—

SM: Yeah! Right on—

AE: --who had the shoe shop?

SM: I tell you, that wasn't called—I think the person who owned that café at that time was, uh, the first grade teacher, Lela Peterson's husband.

AE: Okay.

SM: It was called Pete's. He was called Pete. P-E-T-E.

AE: Pete's Café?

SM: Peterson.

AE: Oh, okay.

SM: Um-hmm. She married a man named Peterson, and they had one son who was a judge in Chicago [short pause] when he died.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: He's—her daugh—her son was a—well, he was the father of, uh, uh, William Peterson, but she married him, uh, Peterson, who had the café, when he was a small child.

AE: Okay.

SM: She had one son, William Peterson. And he went to school at [Ala]bama State and then to Chicago, and he became—was a lawyer—and he got to be a judge in Chicago when he died [short pause] five years ago.

AE: Oh.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: So are you saying that they were the first owners—

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: --that had the café?

SM: Um-hmm. You see, it was a—like you say, it was, uh, in front of—right there where Boles—I think they must own it—where—

AE: Mr. Wiley is there now. Wiley's shoe shop.

SM: Yeah, well, uh, Wiley's in the back now.

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: Well, I think Peterson owned the front part.

AE: Okay.

SM: Well, it was the back part. It really was. Because the show shop was in the front part.

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: And, uh, after Peterson, I guess, died, a young man called Butch. Butch Morgan—

AE: Yeah.

SM: --was the next owner.

AE: Okay.

SM: You remember that name from me?

AE: I do.

SM: Yeah, I never shall forget for—when we were coming up, you know our parents didn't allow us to socialize much and to—going to places like that. They were real strict. But we remember go—going there several times, you know, on different occasions. Like when we have a club meeting or something, we'd meet there. I never shall forget a man—I forget his name. I sure hate I forget. But he was the one who could tell when your—if you'd tell him your—your birthday, he could tell you what date, uh, what date in the day it was. I for got now. He was just a fortune teller.

AE: Oh, well I—let me show you this. I've heard that before.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: And I have these pictures. Martin J. Dain came to Oxford—

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: --in the early [nineteen] sixties.

SM: Yes.

AE: And he did that book *Faulkner's World*. And I have these pictures from that book. I wonder if –if this is who you're talking about [interviewer gets Dain photograph out of folder and places it in front of Mrs. Marshall. There is a man in the photograph, wearing a tattered sweater with newspapers in the

pockets, and he is leaning against the counter of the café reading a magazine. It is a well-know image from the book *Faulkner's World*].

SM: It surely is!

AE: Because John Adams at the S and J Frame Shop [in Oxford]—

SM: Right.

AE: --told me that, um, people who have mentioned knowing or interacting with this man in this photograph, say that he was like a mathematician and could—

SM: Right! Sure!

AE: --do any kind of [math] problem.

SM: Um-hmm, he could. And it was just amazing. And we would go there when we would have our parties. This sure is the place! The café.

AE: Yeah? And is that Butch [Morgan] right there? [There is a man seated in a booth on the right side of the image, who is wearing a paper hat and smoking a cigarette]

[COUNTER: 16:39]

SM: That's Butch right there. Butch Morgan.

AE: Okay.

SM: Mmmm! I'm so glad you showed that.

AE: [Laughs]

SM: You say his name was—what? I've forgotten his name. [Pointing to the man reading and leaning against the counter in the photograph]

AE: I don't know his name. Um—

SM: I can't remember his name. As well as we, uh, used to—well, he used to be sitting on the—not only in the cafes but in the street corners and it—all—all the—

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: --places around town. And we would always enjoy stopping and visiting with him because he could tell us so many things, you know?

AE: Yeah? So you'd ask—you'd tell him your birthdate, and he would tell you what day of the week—

SM: Yeah! Yeah, what day of the week.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: I—you know, that was something. [Laughs]

AE: [Laughing]

SM: I thought it was amazing. [Laughing]

AE: [Laughing] Well let me ask you about, um, the café a little bit more and try and get an idea of when it was operational and who had it. Because—do you remember it being here when you moved here as a child?

SM: Well, I was eight years old. [Short pause] And I think I do remember it on the—being there on the corner. [Short pause] because on the, uh, also on that—in that same areas we had a—my friend's grandparents were—had a cleaners.

AE: Okay.

SM: Um-hmm. And who else—yeah, a cleaners. It sure was a cleaners. And then after that a Chinese, uh, m—one of the, uh, church members worked for a Chinaman. He had a t—the cleaners after the black people died. Because that's been a long time ago. [Short pause]

AE: Yeah?

SM: I don't remember—every time—we came—when we moved to town in nineteen twenty-four.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: On to nineteen-thirty and they—yes, I remember the street mostly was just area of nothing but small houses and chicken coops and animals and all. [Short laugh] In the early nineteenth century that's how it looked until nineteen seventy-four. The city got a grant, you know, and they refurbished this area. All of the--

AE: Oh.

SM: --small houses and chicken coops and animals and, uh, were done away with and they had an option there—on the property in this area—they had an option to either take the money and move somewhere else or remain here. Use the money to build houses—new houses—and this is where my family

lived. We on—we been here since nineteen—I think it must have been nineteen thirty when we moved down on Depot Street--[now] Jackson Avenue.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: And then we moved up in this area, uh, called—it was called North Seventh Street then [in Freedmen's Town]. Up on the hill. We called it Green Leaf Hill. And we lived there until my father, uh, bought this place from—a lawyer helped him to buy it—a small one in this—right here on this place [where Mrs. Marshall's house sits today]. And our old house was torn down, of course, and they got—they kept the money and built a new house that—that the government—that was given to them by the government and built a—not this one [house], but the one before this one. In this--

AE: Did you know—

SM: --same spot.

AE: Did you know Angelo Mistilis and his family that—

SM: Who?

AE: Angelo Mistilis and his father Tom Mistilis. They used to live—

SM: I sure did!

AE: --just up the street. [Angelo Mistilis was born in a house on Martin Luther King Junior Drive that is just a couple of blocks down from Mrs. Marshall's house]

SM: I sure did! And I know her. [Angelo's wife, Jo Dale Mistilis]

AE: Yeah?

SM: You know, she's been here several—I think she interviewed me one time a long time ago for something. I've forgotten what it was.

AE: [Short laugh] **[COUNTER: 20:12]**

SM: Sure do remember them.

AE: Well and so what was the rest of the—the square like when you were growing up in the—here in the twenties and thirties and—

SM: Well, you know, it had hitching posts around—around the square, where they would come and—people from the country would bring their vegetables and they'd have a—sell whatever they had. And the hitching—that,

uh—hitched their mules and horses around the square. And it seems like every—every occasion—maybe every year—they would have something like a—a giveaway. Like a car or something. You know, something big. And there would be a *lot* of people around town.

AE: Hmm.

SM: During that time. And, uh, I remember when the square was—well, when they had plank walks from the square down to—down to this train station. The depot. Plank walks.

AE: Like wooden walkways?

SM: Yeah, [to] walk on. And that—the ex-slaves, they built—built those plank walks from the square down to the post office because—or right after—my grandfather said after freedom was declared, they, uh, could get money, you know. They—they were paid money to work, and they built those plank walks. And also that, uh, what do they call that? But anyway, we'll get to that. [Laugh] My memory is not too good, now! And then, um, what do I remember about the square? [Short pause] During this time of year—in the fall of the year when school was starting, you know, everybody was so afraid of the students. Because my mother took me—took in washing and ironing. And they—my father was—had—he was a sharecropper as I mentioned, and he didn't have—didn't know anything else. But so he would bring the clothes from the, um, the university for—for my mother to wash. And for prominent families, you know, out there. I used to know a lot of those people who lived in town. Because my father, when we lived in the country, he would, uh, train their bird dogs for them. Like the professors, you know? The ones who were sportsmen? Uh, I never shall forget that. Uh, he'd go with them hunting. He would meet them killing the birds and [laughs]—but anyway, um, and we were—everybody was just so afraid. Well, I don't think we were aloud—we were afraid to go through the campus, anyway. People from the country, they would—everybody would stay at home when the [foot]ball season and all. I remember, uh, one of our older friends that lives at the end of the street, he's—Walter—Walter something. He said the students got him out and scared him so bad, they made him cut the jig—dance all kinds of things! [Laughs]

AE: Hmm.

SM: [Laughing] He said he's never danced as much I all his life. Well they, you know, the students would make pranks out of black people at that time. And so we would always, uh, be at home during this time of year. We didn't—we were even afraid to go to school, during the ball season. Because we were sc—we were afraid of the white students. And then too, you know, when we first moved to town, we use d to tell, uh, the black folks, you know, they had places—public places for water. White, you know, white only. So we didn't have anywhere to, uh, go to the bathroom or anything. We had to be

sure that we, uh, you know, would do what we had to do before we left home. And even when I was, uh, my first job of teaching was in the Delta [in the small community of Brazil, Mississippi at a C.M.E. church-related school, Mrs. Marshall later added]. My, uh, my mother's brother lived down there and he—they had a—I believe it was a church related school that he wanted me [for], so I worked there the first—first year of my forty-one years [of teaching]. My first year was down there. And the bus, you know, the buses—they had—on the busses they had a black curtain, and black folks couldn't go any further than that, you know, behind that black curtain—that curtain. And I remember [clears throat] I was going to summer school at Jackson College. Then it was called Jackson College, and I had my three year-old by the hand and my three month old in my hand getting—got the bus—my daughter—my sister [Ernestine] lived in Greenwood, and I guess I must have—my father must have—somebody must have took me that far. And I was going to summer school, and I went to—I went to summer school from Greenwood and got on—went to the bus station. And it was so hot. July, you know. I think it was the second session. And I had my three year old in my arm—in my arm—in my bas--and my three—three year old in my arm—by the hand. My three—one of them—Ruben, the one that's principal in this big school in California. And we had to stand up and push and part [the crowd] and push and push, and so I got on the—finally got on with my one and--my two—there was a white gentleman right in front of the black curtain and so—it was so crowded. And after everybody pushed and squeezed on—the whites in the front and the blacks in the back. And this white gentleman, you know, he says—he was asleep. Pretending he was asleep. So he moved over, and I was right behind the curtain, so I stepped in the front of it and sat down. And that--that bus driver just—just cursed me out! "You know better than this!" You know, and this--and I had to get up. And well, of course, as the people got to different stations and, uh, places and cities in between Greenwood and Jackson, you know, they got the—the, uh, place with, uh, vacant for me to sit down with the three [two kids and her sister]. But that was a nearly—that was another—what you call her? The woman that—that, uh, did the bus boycott in—in—

AE: Rosa Parks.

SM: --Alabama. Um-hmm. Rosa Parks. Um-hmm.

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: It was just like that. And then these—and then on the way, you know, we didn't have anywhere to—to go to get food, you know, and go to the restroom. That's all--all over Mississippi. I guess the South too.

AE: Um-hmm. **[COUNTER: 26:45]**

SM: And so I remember we had just then in the window, you know, at the bus stops, you know, and outside and the little hole where you get

sandwiches and a drink of water—a drink or something. And it was like that. You can't—in public places you couldn't get--drink water in the courthouse, you know. At the—said "White Only." And also, restaurants and whole—anywhere. You—I know you're [laughs]—how you were—you don't know anything about—

AE: I--I'm too young to remember or know firsthand but I—I definitely—

SM: Um-hmm. I know--

AE: --know what you speak of.

SM: --but it was just like that. So [the] integration of Ole Miss was just—made all the difference in the world.

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: You know, as far as education is concerned.

AE: What was the integration—what was that time period like, when you were living here in [nineteen] sixty-two?

SM: Hmm?

AE: What was that period like when you were here in [nineteen] sixty-two, when James Meredith came?

SM: Well, it was, you know, um [short pause] Never shall forget. A caravan of soldiers came right along [points towards the front of her house and the street outside]. And you know, the street was—wasn't paved then. Nineteen—nineteen sixty-two. And, uh, went to church that Sunday night. Because I think this was like, uh, early Sunday morning. I—I think it was. And we went to church that Sunday night and after—we heard all this noise. And we didn't know what was going to happen. So the preacher at our church, he said—it was about seven thirty, and he let church out. Because that's—that incident had taken place on, uh, the campus because of Meredith had—was there to be, uh, to be entered into school. To be registered for school the next morning. And it was just really something. We—I was teaching in—at Taylor at that time. And, uh, we couldn't go to school, you know. They—the marshalls—well, the govern—government, I guess, had taken over—control of the govern—city government. And, uh, [it was] about a week before we could go to school.

E: What was going on in this community of Freedmen's Town, being so close to campus?

SM: Well, everybody was—stayed close at home [short pause] during—at that period.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: The—the maids that worked for the white folk, they would have to come and get them. And they—you couldn't go through campus. I mean, the city part. They'd have to go around, you know, to get the people. Because it was just really controlled by the federal government.

AE: Well and Butch Morgan's café was open in [nineteen] sixty-two because that's about, um—I think just before the James Meredith—

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: --integration of Ole Miss happened, that these [Martin J. Dain] pictures were taken.

SM: Um-hmm. Right. Um-hmm.

AE: Um, do have any memory of whether or not Butch's café stayed open during that time or if people—

SM: No. It—

AE: --would meet there?

SM: --it didn't—it wasn't open.

AE: No?

SM: The town was really just shut down.

AE: Yeah?

SM: Um-hmm. Sure was. It was just a scary time for black folk. White folk too! [Laughs]

AE: Yeah.

SM: [Laughing] Thought they had—somewhere--they would put them in jail if they disobeyed the law—federal government. They had an area that they called—I've forgotten what they called it but—it was, uh, it sure changed the attitude, uh, of the town. Um-hmm. II got a write-up about that too. That [short pause] Mr. [Walter] Coffey gave me. And I'm going to give it to the library. **[COUNTER: 30:14]**

AE: Oh, yeah?

SM: Because I don't need it. Well I—

AE: What is it exactly now?

SM: Huh?

AE: What is it exactly?

SM: It was about the—how the change—how the attitude of the change—of the town changing and all. And—I would like to give it to you. And you can give it to the university if you want to.

AE: Well, I'd be happy to deliver it for you.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: I'd be happy to see it.

SM: Okay. Let me see, I think I can put my hands on it.

AE: Okay.

SM: Mm-hmm. [Mrs. Marshall gets up from her chair] Because I was going to give it to , uh, Mrs. Fitts, you know [sound of chair creaking] at—at the [Oxford Public] library. [Mrs' Marshall's voice fades as she walk into the other room]

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: But I think— [recording is paused for about three minutes, while Mrs. Marshall spends some time in the next room looking for the newspaper article]

[RECORDING STOPS: TRACK 1 – COUNTER: 30:34]

[RECORDING RESUMES – BEGIN TRACK 2]

[Recording resumes with the sound of Mrs. Marshall looking through a stack of papers back at the dining room table, where the interview is taking place]

SM: --about Taylor where I worked. Um-hmm. Mm, mm, mm. [Papers being shuffled]

AE: That's quite a box of—

SM: Yeah.

AE: --history you have there.

SM: Yeah. Here it is.

AE: Oh, my goodness.

SM: [Hands photocopy of article to interviewer] Seems like that's all about—[short pause]

AE: Okay. Well, we can take some time to look—look over this after a while. [Papers still being moved around]

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: Okay?

SM: [Papers being moved around on the table and hitting the microphone] Yeah, I think this is something else. [More noise]

AE: It's wonderful to hang on to all of these things.

SM: Oh, yeah. I've been—had them since—doctor, uh, what is—Mr. Coffey. You know—

AE: Cofield? [Interviewer misunderstood Mrs. Marshall. The man's name is Walker Coffey]

SM: You know, he was the town historian.

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: And I remember another man that—we had a—Mr. George Street.

AE: Mm-hmm.

SM: You know, we had a video done together. I don't know what became of it. Uh, what's his name? Moorehead took it. He said whenever he get enough money to have it done, he was going to, you know, make a—a film of it.

AE: Hmm. Well I know you've done a lot to support, um, documenting the history of —of Oxford and the African-American community here. So you've been very valuable in many ways here.

SM: Well, I'm so glad to give—give that to the university. Whatever—

AE: Well, I know—

SM: --whatever they can use--

AE: --it would be very much appreciated.

SM: --it for, they're welcome to it.

AE: Um, well if you don't mind, can we back up and talk about, um, the cafe again and—

SM: Yeah. The b—Butch's café. And we had another man. He was a really rough black nigger. White folk were kind of scared of him, you know. Afraid of him. His name—Henry Logan. Boy, he was rough. He had a café.

AE: What was his last name again?

SM: Logan. [Telephone rings] Henry Logan. Excuse me.

AE: Sure.

SM: Let me get this. [Mrs. Marshall gets up to answer the phone. Speaks for just a minute and is back to the interview]

[RECORDING STOPS: TRACK 2 – COUNTER: 01:53]

[RECORDING RESUMES – BEGIN TRACK 3]

[Track opens with a thud. Mrs. Marshall gets back in her chair. Sound of chair creaking]

AE: Okay. You were talking about Henry Logan?

SM: Oh, uh, He had a café and a barbershop combined. I've forgotten now where it is. Over there where [short pause] mm, mm. In the gin area. You know where the old gin is?

AE: Yes, ma'am. Down the hill—

SM: Huh?

AE: Down that his down from—

SM: Yeah, uh-huh.

AE: --the square a little bit?

SM: I think he had a café and a, uh, and a [short pause as she adjusts herself in her chair] and a barbershop.

AE: Okay. Do you remember what kind of café it was?

SM: It was just a corner—he sold sandwiches, you know.

AE: Okay.

SM: Not very big. It wasn't like—big like the Pete [B and B Café]. He just sold sandwiches. Had somebody working in—in the back, I believe. And he—he'd have in the front—it was very small. Just a—

AE: Do you know about—

SM: --sandwich place.

AE: Okay. Do you know about what years it was there?

SM: Let me see, what year was that there? [Short pause] His—his daughter—maybe about [nineteen] thirty-three.

AE: Okay.

SM: Um-hmm. Because his daughter was my friend. [Short pause] Yeah, about thirty—nineteen thirty-three. Yeah.

AE: And was it there for a while.

SM: Um-hmm. Way back. And then there was one down—called in Shirley Bar—Barker—Shirley Barker hollow. That was down in here near the railroad track. It was—I forget the name of the person who had the café. [Mrs. Marshall later explained that a white woman named Shirley Barker owned the land in that area, and that there was a place down a hill that was run by someone in the black community] But they used to have dances over there in—in that—and that was a kind of big place.

AE: Yeah.

SM: In Shirley Barker hollow. I forgot the name of the person who had the café. That big—because it was kind of like a dance hall, you know.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: And they had—they sold food there.

AE: Did they have church dances or school dances?

SM: They'd have [laughs] what you call them? [Laughs] Juke dances!

AE: Oh, yeah? Okay.

SM: [Laughing] Yeah, because even at Christmastime, you know, they'd have Christmas dance after Christmas dance, and all those special days, they would have dances. And the Elks, you know?

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: The Masonic Elks?

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: They would sponsor dances there. And after that area—I've forgotten what it was—they would—they were having—have them at the Masonic Hall there on, uh, what's the name of that street? Fourth Street, I believe.

AE: Okay.

SM: It's Fourth and Sixth Street right there, coming down the hill. That's where the Masonic Hall w—was for years. They would have dances there.

AE: Do you have some memories of going to a dance down at that place?

SM: Let me see. No, not really. [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs]

SM: [Laughing] Because we never did—I must have gone to my—one. But they had—would have them in different locations, you know. Like, uh, Tupelo, New Albany. And we would go out of town to the dances mostly. Um-hmm. Because we were school teachers and—let the—teachers—county school teachers. And one teacher—one room--school teacher in one room school [would] teach us about black trustees. And that was one of the things that we were supposed to be—teachers [were] supposed to go to church every Sunday [and not go out Saturday night]. [Laughs] Oh, yeah!

AE: [Short laugh] Well and you were talking about the square earlier and, um, spending time down there. And I wonder—I wonder with the café that was there in the, um, Boles' shoe shop building, Butch Morgan's café, and what it was like for an African-American business to be on the square for those many years during that time. From the thirties to the sixties. [Short pause] And how—what kind of interactions occurred with people—

SM: Not very much, you know.

AE: Yeah.

SM: Only the black folks would go to the places. No white. Um-mm.

AE: So—

SM: Not even the students, you know.

AE: And that café was on that alley right there— [on the northwest side of the square]

SM: Right.

AE: Was that a big hangout place? In the alley?

SM: It surely was. A big hangout for African-Americans.

AE: Yeah?

SM: Sure was. Um-hmm. You could always find whoever you wanted right in there. Right there. If they were being—looked for you—you know, when people who come from out of town. Their relatives or whatever. Because a lot of people moved, uh, from—from around the area, you know. Because of, um, uh, taxes and----get to go. You know during that time, they'd all try to go to Chicago or someplace like that where they thought they would have a better living? You know?

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: But when they got there, they found out it wasn't any better. [Short laugh] [Not] much better, anyway. They'd come to housing and—

AE: Do you remember what this café—Butch's café—looked like on the outside? Was there a sign in the alley or anything for it?

SM: Um-hmm, there was a sign: "Butch's Café." Or "Pete's Café."

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: That's as far back as I can remember—Pete. And then Wiley. [Herbert Wiley now owns the building. His family bought the shoe shop business from Robert Boles. Today, however, the shoe shop is in the back and a bar is in the front of the property]

AE: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

SM: That was the three. [Meaning Peterson, Morgan and then Wiley in the building]

AE: Do you ever remember it being called the B and B Café?

[COUNTER: TRACK 3 – 04:59]

SM: B and B?

AE: Because that's the way I've always heard it spoken of.

SM: Th--what was that? Man that what?

AE: B and B. From what I understand, um, it was [short pause]

SM: Butch [Morgan] and—

AE: The daughters, I think, of—

SM: What?

AE: --Mr. Boles--I'm not sure.

SM: Oh, yeah. Right.

AE: Does that sound tight?

SM: Okay. Daughters of—daughters?

AE: And they started the café, and then the Peterson's owned it, and then Butch—

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: --Morgan owned it.

SM: Yeah.

AE: But I don't—that's what I've heard.

SM: Yeah, maybe so. Yeah. Let me see. The daughters—

[Short pause]

AE: They were twins? Does that sound right?

SM: Let me see. Twins? Mr. Boles' twin daughters? Mm-mm. I remember he married—he married Jesse Boles. She was real light, but she was from out of West Spring Hill. Uh, some of her relatives, you know, might be still around. But anyway, I---I don't remember him having daughters—more than Sammy, and that's Jesse Boles' daughter. Might have been her.

AE: Well maybe it—they were his sisters or—

SM: His--his, uh—his, uh, son's wife.

AE: Okay. Maybe.

SM: See, he had—Robert Boles—he surely did have Robert Boles, Junior [short pause] and his sister, Clyde Boles. Clyde Boles Payne. Yeah, that was his sister.

AE: Okay.

SM: Mmm, I don't—I don't remember him having a daughter. I sure don't. Only Sammy, his, uh, stepdaughter.

AE: Do you—I found these notes in my notebook here. DO you remember the names Shirley and Shelby Boles?

SM: Oh, yes!

AE: Does that sound familiar?

SM: That's the—Shirley—Shirley—must have been his daughter. Shirley and Shelby, that's the son.

AE: Oh, okay.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: Because I spoke with Mr. [Herbert] Wiley briefly one day, and he just mentioned all of these names [as] kind of a short—

SM: Oh, okay.

AE: --lineage of the café. [Mr. Wiley did not want to be interviewed for this project]

SM: Yeah, well those—Mr. Boles—Shirley Boles was, uh [short pause] might have been his daughter. And Shelby was his son.

AE: Okay.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: Okay. [Short pause] And so then, that was how it was explained to me, that they started the café, and then the Petersons owned it and—

SM: Right. That's probably right.

AE: --Butch Morgan.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: And was it just a—a short-order kind of sandwich place?

SM: Yeah. A short-order sandwich place. Um-hmm. As far as I can remember.

AE: Um, and these pictures. [Interviewer puts the Dain photographs of the café in front of Mrs. Marshall again] Do you know anyone in this photograph? [This is a different photograph of the café that is a different view of the wall of booths and customers. The counter and the man reading the newspaper is in this image again but from the opposite side]

SM: I sure do remember this man. [Points to the mathematician reading at the counter]

AE: This is from the—

SM: Let me see. There he is again. [Points to him in the photograph]

AE: Uh-huh.

SM: Taking orders. Lord, I don't know these folks! [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs]

SM: I—I—if somebody would call their names, I'd probably remember something about them.

AE: And there—there's a—looks like a jukebox in the back of those pictures there?

SM: Yeah, a jukebox. Um-hmm.

AE: Did you ever stop in there for just a soda or a candy or anything? [In the Dain photograph that shows Butch Morgan seated in a booth, a jar of candy and crates of empty soda bottles can be seen behind the counter in the back left of the image]

SM: We stopped in there for a soda or sandwich for a short while. [Laughs]

AE: Yeah? What kind of soda did you drink back in those days?

SM: Let me see, what kind—C—was it Coke? I guess it must have been Coca-Cola.

AE: [Quiet laugh]

SM: I don't—not many—not much more than Coca-Cola.

AE: Yeah?

SM: Or strawberry or grape. You know those different kinds of, um, tastes that they have. Grapes and orange and—grape juice. Yeah. I can't remember the names of them. [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs] Like Nehi and—

SM: Yeah!

AE: --things like that.

SM: Nehi, right. Um-hmm. Hmm.

AE: So as far as the African-American cafes that—we were talking about Butch Morgan's café and a couple of little places that, um—

SM: Down in Shirley Barker—I can't remember the name of the people—I though—I know Alice McLaurin could tell me because she's a little older. Anyway, she was a person who could do—go to all of these places.

AE: Yeah?

SM: But we weren't allowed to when I was coming up.

AE: Yeah.

SM: My brother Lampton had to be with us and all. He was the oldest of the seven of us.

AE: Well, were they all just kind of quick take-away places or like little stores with candy and sandwiches and nothing really more than that?

SM: Through—through the week. And then on the—on—they would have, uh, big crowds on the weekends. Saturday nights. Because I remember somebody got killed down in Shirley Barker [hollow]. A friend. He was having a—a dance. [Short pause] And, uh, Mr. Boles didn't allow nobody—I mean Mr., um, Logan didn't allow no—no, uh, violence around his place. He took care of his business himself. [Short laugh]

AE: Yeah. **[COUNTER: TRACK 3 – 10:01]**

SM: [Laughing] The policemen didn't have to. He—he was about—about as bad as, um, Molly Barr. You know—

AE: [Short laugh]

SM: --she would have picnics and things where—and—and the police men would ask her if she needed help, and she said, "No." She had her gun across her lap, and she took care of her business! [Laughs]

AE: Well I—I'm glad that you mention her because I did some research for, uh, a scholar a couple of years ago and—and did some research into Molly Barr. And I understand she had, um, she entertained people—

SM: Yeah!

AE: --up on her property.

SM: She had picnics! Yeah.

AE: Yeah?

SM: Okay.

AE: And did she have a little store up there?

SM: Well, she had that, uh—yeah. Yeah, I believe it was a little store that she had up there. Right in that area. But it—it's so different now, you can never tell. I think one the sons—one of the younger sons still lives up there in that house.

AE: Really?

SM: But all the rest of them gone. Except, uh, Rachel. She lives out on, uh, Price Hill.

AE: Okay.

SM: There's two of them still living. A big family of them. I think one of the—the grandsons died not too long ago, and they had his funeral at the Second Baptist [Church]. He was—ran the ice plant. You know, the icehouse?

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: Yeah, he's the one that died not too long ago.

AE: Okay.

SM: James Barr, I believe it was. That was a grandson or great-grandson one.

AE: Huh. And I—I remember, uh, Molly Barr owned a lot of land up there—

SM: Yeah!

AE: --on the north side of town. And I think ended up selling some of it to the university over the years. But did she, um—and I don't know if this is true or not, but if she sold some moonshine or corn liquor or something else up there?

SM: Oh, yeah. She lied. Well, anyway, that's why she told the lawman that she'd take care of that business. [Laughs]

AE: Yeah.

SM: [Laughing]

AE: And keep them out of her business, huh?

SM: Yeah, but then she'd have that gun across her [laughing] lap! And they had to obey her rules and right—and you know, not get out of hand.

AE: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

SM: With fighting and all that kind of stuff.

AE: Was the African-American community here larger some decades ago than it is now?

SM: Well, no. I tell you what happened. Um, back in—when was that? [Short pause] Oh, well it was—anyway, um, Carlenna Pegues filed a lawsuit because the people in that area was paying taxes but they weren't getting their, uh, the—representing out of the city. You know, a lot of water and lights and stuff. They were paying their taxes, but they didn't have no water and lights out there. And she filed a suit an, uh, because, uh, that suit was the cause of African-Americans having that [short pause] swimming pool and those, uh, low-income housing. All in that area [on the north side of town].

AE: Really?

SM: All that—could—what's the name—that name—I can't think of this name that filed a suit. You know, he—I can't—but he was in Texas. What's his name? [Laughs] As well as I know him! But anyway, he was a lawyer. Sure was. And Carlenna Pegues and filed a suit because they had taxation without any representation. And that was back in—when was that? I was telling that to the—when they had an open house at the—this last low-income house. I forget the name of it. It's not—it's not the C. B. Williams. The one above C. B. Williams [Laurel Grove?]. They had an open house, and I was telling about the lawsuit that Carlenna Pegues filed that caused all of this—that caused the black people to get representation, you know, in city government.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: City facilities or whatever.

AE: Sure. That changed a lot.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: And you think the—what do you think of the African-American community here now. Is it, um—

SM: Hmm?

AE: --the African-American community here now, is—is it as big and thriving as you remember when you were growing up?

SM: Well, when they built the—I never shall forget. Willie B. Tankersley, you might not—might not have heard of him, but he was a person who would drive the senior citizen's bus, and take the people the—where their doctors and all those places. And I—his wife died not too long ago. And you know his family was so small. They—the university people that he worked for were his family—were at the funeral. And then he was—he was the one who worked at—I forget—that built the teen center? And that—the center was built for African-American teens. The teen center. Now I don't know where they went to. Teens don't go there anymore. I guess they—they outgrew them. You know, the people—teens who sued to go there.

AE: Yeah.

SM: they don't even go there anymore. But that's why that building was built, for African-American teens. And they got the swimming pool—all that as a result of the—that suit that Carlenna—I think it was nineteen seventy-seven when that suit was filed.

AE: Okay. Well, and I don't want to forget to ask you about, um, your mother. We were talking earlier before we started recording this conversation, about your mother having a boarding house and cooking for—

SM: Yeah. **[COUNTER: TRACK 3 – 15:20]**

AE: --the workers—

SM: I forgot that person's name. Mrs. Crowe? I believe it was Mrs. Crowe?

AE: I don't know.

SM: Yeah. [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs]

SM: Mrs. Crowe! She had a—she cooked for Mrs. Crowe. Was it the house—right—right before you get to the overhead bridge. A great big house right there in that place.

AE: Okay.

SM: My mother worked for Mrs. Crowe. And then she worked for another [short pause] boarding house person on this side of town after we moved. M—might have been the first one she—but I can't remember the name.

AE: Yeah?

SM: She worked for a boarding house. It—it was seven of us then, after we moved to town. And, uh, yeah, she would, uh, go early in the morning. And then she would—and maybe sometimes come back. And then she'd cook dinner—supper, you know, we called I then. Supper. Go back and cook supper at the Crowe's Boarding House. That's what it was. Crowe's boarding house.

AE: What kind of things did your mother cook?

SM; well—well she—Mother said she really learned how to cook a lot of things that she didn't know about because Mrs. Crowe, you know, she was a--probably one of the persons who was, uh, uh, head of the sorority houses and all. And then after Mother—after, um, was that after that? Yeah, after that. Might have been before. Mother had a boarding house of her own when we—when we moved to town. When they were building the—the dormitory—the w—the dormitory. Because, uh, the carpenters and bricklayers and all—the plumbers and all—would ride—come up from Jackson, around that area, on the old Bilbo train every Monday morning. And they'd go back to Jackson or wherever they were going on Friday on the old Bilbo that went from Jackson to—to Memphis I guess, or wherever it went to. [Laughs] Well—and, uh, she had about fifteen [boarders] she would cook meals for. And then the house was built—it was large. You know we lived in a house that was already built called the orange house. And she would, uh, room about four or five f them Yeah, in that big house. And she gr—and she would, uh, Mother would help her with boarding, fixing their meals for them. And in the summertime my oldest—I was the oldest sister, and my sisters would go and take the lunches over there [to campus] at noon. The ones that didn't get to get their lunch fixed there at the boarding house]. And we'd take a walk over there around—in fact, there used to be something under the railroad tracks that we'd go up the hill to the place and take the—go to the—their lunches. My sister and I.

AE: What kind of things would they have for lunch?

SM: Hmm?

AE: What kind of—

SM: Well they—they—Mother would—she was—she was good at making fried pies. That's one of the things. And then, uh,, something else that they liked. Mother's chicken salad or something. Something—chicken salad because Mother had chickens. We had chickens. And, uh, that was mostly whatever it was. And they, uh, some fruit. Maybe some fruit. Chicken sandwiches and fried pies and—and, uh, something else Mother was—I can't [laughs] remember it all. But anyway, three or four items that she would have. My sister [Bessie] and I would take them up there to them when—eating time. And my father—my father was a—helped them with the—with the—with the boarding house. You know, fixing the meals and getting the dishes and all that. But we had our part too. Tat was our part, to help them take—move their food at lunch time. But during the time that, uh—that was in nineteen thirty-three. Nineteen thirty to thirty-three, I believe that was. Nineteen thirty to nineteen thirty-three. And then when that was all over with—done, mostly my—meantime my father would—and his friend would, uh, was hired to take the coal off the train cars, you know? Because that's the kind of fuel people used, coal. And they would go and they would, uh, take their lunches with them. And so my daddy said when they—time—when lunch time comes, they'd work hard and be all dusty and—and blacked up with coal and so my father's friend was a real—a real dark man, and so they would—before—when lunch time would come they'd wash their hands and ge—their was a faucet not too far, and they'd wash their hands and face. Daddy said his friend would say, "Is the black off, Mitchell?" And he'd say, "Uh-uh. And he'd wash again." He'd say, "Is the black of Mitchell?" "Uh-uh." He caught the hint that he was black ad the black wasn't going to get off! [Laughing]

AE: [Laughing] Wasn't ever going to wash off!

SM: When they would tell us that would tickle us so badly. Because—but that was Daddy's real good friend, you know. He and his family were close—to the Mitchell's. [Mrs. Marshall's father's name was William Mitchell]

AE: Well do you remember what your parents would charge these boarders? And--and for lunches and things?

SM: Lord, let me see. What did they charge? You know, w e didn't know—know much about the business part.

AE: Yeah.

SM: But I do remember something about seven dollars.

AE: Okay. **[COUNTER: TRACK 3 – 20:51]**

SM: Um-hmm. Must have been. Seven dollars. And the one's that stayed, they'd have to pay more. About fifteen dollars, I think. Something like that.

AE: For like a—a week or—

SM: Yeah, um-hmm.

AE: Okay.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: And I wonder if you, um, happened to know Georgia Isaiah, who had the Busy Bee Café?

SM: I sure do remember Georgia Isaiah! That's why Mrs., uh, what's her name? Mm, Elizabeth—what's her name? Elizabeth—she has that, uh—mmm. And I'm a member too! [of Friends of the Museum at the University of Mississippi][Laughs] Anyway, she was the one who came with Willie B., you know the people that came--Willie B. had been working at the--for the chancellors down from them? The last two or three chancellors.

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: Willie B.—chancellors--Elizabeth. What's Elizabeth's name? Her husband was a chancellor. [Short pause]

AE: Um, I--I believe Mrs. Isaiah worked for J. D. Williams—

SM: Who?

AE: J. D. Williams.

SM: No, not him. She's—her husband got aAnyway, she has a building—that Walton-Young House. [The University of Mississippi Chancellor that Mrs. Marshall is speaking of is Porter L. Fortune and his wife Elizabeth. Mrs. Fortune contributed to the expansion of University Museums in memory of her late husband.]

AE: Okay.

SM: Yeah, that's where she's—that's where she's mostly interested—and owner, I guess, or something. But anyway, um, I remember when we first moved to town, the chancellor—no, the minister. Daddy was a—only—only work that he could find was, you know, bringing in coals and taking out the ashes and building fires for the prominent white people. And Mr. the mayor's—the mayor's great-great aunt lived in the area where we lived on Depot Street over on the next street. His—Mrs. Som—Mrs. Som—Mrs.

Sommerville. He would do hers. The [City of Oxford] Mayor's great aunt. And, uh, the minister that came to Ole—came to the Presbyterian Church, he lived in the Walton-Young House. You know where that is?

AE: Yes, ma'am. [The house is located at the corner of University Avenue and Fifth Street, adjacent to the University Museums.]

SM: Uh-huh. It was called the Manse at that time. The Manse is where the ministers lived.

AE: Okay.

SM: The minister of the Presbyterian Church lived. And so, uh, well, his name was Mr. Wallace. In nineteen twenty-four. Daddy was looking for work, and he had asked—my father—to take care of his Jersey cow. He had a, uh, a cow lot in the back of his house. And somehow he wanted my Daddy to take—asked him—paid him to take care of his Jersey cow. About milking—you know, feeding and milking the cow once a day in the afternoon. Feeding the cow. And milking it too, I guess. I don't know how often you milk cows. I've forgotten that. I used to do it myself! [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs]

SM: And his wife, Mrs.—Mrs. Walton—Wallace asked hi to bring me up there. I was about eight or nine years old at that time. Where I could—he wanted me to help him churn the butter. So when I—he would take me up there maybe once or twice a week. Maybe three times. And I'd churn the butter and help—help her—and she—she would give us the milk and butter because she didn't need it because [unintelligible phrase] and we didn't have any. My mother was taking in clothes, you know, washing. And so she helped us for—a real—they were there about twenty-something years. In that Mansion house. And so—anyway, they were there long enough for me to get married. And I told her I was going to get married, and she thought it was going to be a church marr—wedding because, you know, we went to church and all. And I didn't tell her it wasn't . So I got married at the Methodist Parsonage—black folk's Methodist Parsonage Church. And the lady brought the bouquet the next day, down to my house. She thought I was going to get married at the church. [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs]

SM: That was so sad. I hated that so bad.

AE: Aw.

SM: And so they were there for twenty-seven years. The Wallaces. They did a lot of good by helping the Mitchell's like nobody else. It was a real nice

family [short pause] of people. Um-hmm. And, uh, we were talking about what? Oh, yeah. My father. Yeah, he was a sharecropper and he didn't know anything else to do but just manual labor for different white people. And he knew a lot of these people because—he knew a lot of the professors. The Kincannons [University chancellor 1907-1914] and all those people. Because he had helped train their bird dogs you know, when we lived in the country. Um-hmm. So they knew him. So they gave him, you know, work to cut the yard, you know. Keep up the yards and things like that. And they lived—one of those people lived at the end of Jefferson—Jefferson?

AE: Yes, ma'am.

SM: Uh, going to the cemetery.

AE: Okay, yeah.

SM: Because you see, we lived out that way, and we knew them. One of them lived at that big house on the right before you get to the cemetery.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: I've forgotten the name of the person who lived there. But anyway, the bankers and all, my daddy knew. Because he had trained their bird dogs, you know. They were sportsmen. Hmmm, they were there.

AE: That's quite a history in this one little town--

SM: [Short laugh]

AE: --you have. [Short pause] Well, I won't take your whole day here. Um but I appreciate you visiting with me.

SM: Well, I didn't have anything else going this morning! [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs] Well, do you have any final thoughts or anything that comes to mind, um, to add about cafes—black-owned cafes in Oxford? Or any food-related memories you have?

SM: We enjoyed, uh, Butch because he was around our age, you know. Butch Morgan was about our age. And then William Peterson—Pete's step—well, his wife's son, he and—he went to the Army, so he wasn't around when he got [to be] eighteen or so.

AE: Oh, okay.

SM: Maybe not—yeah, because he went into the Army and after that he went to Tuskegee Institute, so he was away. But he was always such a good friend. A wonderful person.

AE: Yeah?

SM: Um-hmm. Married another—second wife. He told me when he was in the Army, he came back and he said he was going to name his first child Susie. That's why I remember—[Laughs]

AE: Uh-oh! [Laughs]

SM: Yeah, he's just about my age.

AE: Yeah?

SM: He died about five years ago. He was—he'd be about ninety now.

AE: Um-hmm.

SM: Um-hmm. A wonderful person.

AE: Yeah.

SM: Um-hmm.

AE: Well I sure do thank you, Mrs. Marshall--

SM: Oh, you're welcome. I enjoyed--

AE: --for spending your time with me.

SM:--doing it. Reviewing it. You made me think of a lot of things [laughs]--

AE: [Laughs]

SM: --I had forgotten.

AE: Well, good. And it's been lovely visiting with you, so thank you very much.

[COUNTER: TRACK 3 - 27:20]

[END]