

*Civil Rights History Project
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Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History & Culture
and the Library of Congress, 2015*

Interviewee[s]: Nathaniel Hawthorne Jones

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Location: Claiborne County, Mississippi

Interviewer: Emily Crosby

Videographer: John Bishop

Length: 1 file; approximately 1 hour. 54 minutes

START OF RECORDING

Female 1: From the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

EMILYE CROSBY: This is Emilye Crosby on December 3, 2015, with Mr. Nate Jones, Nathaniel Hawthorne Jones, in his home in Claiborne County, on his land, land where he was born. We're here with the Civil Rights History Project, which is co-sponsored by the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. John Bishop and Guha Shankar are also here with us this morning. Mr. Jones, thank you so much for doing the interview with us. Can you start by telling us when and where you were born?

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE JONES: April 17, 1914, right here in this community, right here where we are now, just a quarter mile east of where we are now.

EC: At that time you didn't own--your family didn't own the land then, did they?

NHJ: No, they moved in here from Lorman, Mississippi. I was the first child born back here. All the rest of them, see, there were three of us out of the ten were born back here. I was the first one born back here in 1914. He probably came in from, already left from, he left from Lorman and came on in here.

EC: And for people who aren't doing the math real quick, how old are you today?

NHJ: I'm 101. On April 17 in this year I'll be 102.

EC: So can you tell us about your family and growing up right here in this community?

NHJ: Yeah. My family, I grew up right here in this area. We was a farmer. Probably came in here as a sharecropper. That was our occupation. My mama, she passed on five years after I was born, and my stepmother stayed here in this house. This house still is number one. It was built in the 1800s. But anyway, this was where my stepmother stayed. My mother passed. Probably had all of those children, she left [ten]. The stepmother had five children. Somehow he married my stepmother, because she lived here in this house. The house that we lived in, it eventually burned down. But that's the way it was. After my mother died, I was five years old, he married.

EC: So that meant fifteen children all together?

NHJ: That made fifteen. Yeah, she had five, and my mother left ten. I don't know how they could raise that many children. [Laughter] I wonder some days, but I knew them. We all had something; a job to do.

EC: What was your chores?

NHNHJ: To get the calves, go and put up the calves every day. We had a place to put the calves, cows go in [pairs?] up at the house. I would always take care of the calves, when I was old enough to do it, yeah.

EC: What was your school like?

NHJ: Well, we had two schools. The first one, each of them national (). We all went there. You know, [5:00] we only had, was able to get six months schooling. That's all we had, six months. Until we--from the time I started school, I was six years old that's when I started school, until I got about nine years old, I didn't never get the six months schooling. You had to go to the fields. At that time I was a sharecropper. We had to go to the fields, and we had to keep the landlord, what they required, for that wonderful share. You had to be in the field, and you had to keep the crop. If we got, after I got nine years old they forgot the six months schooling. I never did get six months until after I got nine, but I started school at six, when I started school at six. I got six months school until I got about nine years old, big enough to go to the field. After that, every day, if it rained or anything like that, we could go to school. That's the way it was.

EC: So would you hope for the rainy days? Did you hope for the rainy days?

NHJ: Yeah, quite naturally. [Laughter] We hoped for the rainy days, (). What was so bad about it, sometimes it rained only one day, and we'd be caught over the creek. We had to cross a creek to go to school. We'd be caught over the creek, and when

it rained and the creek got up, we had to walk all the way around five miles to get back home. [Laughter] But you know, it didn't seem hard in those days. It was a joy just to get to go to school, to get out of that field and go to school every day. But anyway, after you got a certain age you never did get that six months schooling. But we was, had good instructors, good teachers, we'd call them in those days. My little sister, Emma, she got the full six months except the rains or anything. She would bring our assignment back from school every day. When it rained, we'd go to school, we would write our assignments and send it back. When it rained and we'd go to school, sometimes there would be eight or ten of us in one class. Those children were fortunate enough to go to school. You see, they were at the top of the class. Both times I would start at the foot of the class. There would be eight or ten in our class. Before that day was over, why, I'd be out ahead, because I'd (). The teacher would send my assignment back by my sister, little baby sister. I would study my assignments.

EC: What did you have to do to move from the back of the class to the front, from the end? How did you get to be at the front?

NHJ: They had two circuits: arithmetic and spelling. On arithmetic, you had to go to the board, let each child go to the board. The teacher put up the assignment. If you couldn't work that problem, you would wipe it out and then put it up there for me, but I would be the last one, and I'd go there and work that problem. Yeah, I would. Sometimes them other, in division, sometimes I'd have a long one. They'd put a problem on there, I couldn't (). I worked that problem until I worked. [5:00] Sometimes I'd cut down and around. Eight to ten was in our class. I'd be at the top, on the top list, room

for a leader. Soon as it fair up, I had to go back to the fields, of which we were sharecroppers.

EC: If you had owned your own land, would you have been able to go to school further?

NHJ: Yes, if we had I think two times a day, the teacher had. He was the only [thing?], and he had two children. One of them was in my class. There were two families in there that had their own. Little children went to school every day. They got their six months schooling. But those sharecroppers, we just didn't it.

EC: I think you told me once that because you didn't go the full time that you had to repeat a grade.

NHJ: Yeah. Sometime I had to repeat, but most times he would send my assignment by my baby sister, and that way I could keep up. But there was a lot of them didn't study like that. I always wanted to go to school. I wanted to go to college, but you know, it just wasn't, probably. () moved, and, oh, there were fifteen of us, I mean. One, it was just impossible. If you're still on the land, you have to be, you had to produce something. We had, they had cotton and corn and peas. They had three things that we had to raise, and they would get one-fourth of everything, one-fourth of cotton, one-fourth of corn, one-fourth of peas. After we, my daddy moved from here, my daddy married my stepmother here, after my mom passed. They stayed at--we had a big house by Winona. It's the same land, the converter land. When he married her, he moved out of here. All these four rooms, when we was um, farming, we'd fill them up with peas. When we lay by our corn, we would plant peas. Them peas run up on the corn. In the fall of the year we had to pick those peas. That's the reason I said they run forward, the

peas. Sometimes seventy-five, eighty, or a hundred bushels of peas we'd have, we had to pick that much peas. I could grab a hundred and some pounds of peas off of them corn fields. You plant peas in the corn, when you lay by the corn, you plant peas, and the peas grow up on the corn and just hang everywhere on them. That's why they charge so much, when you have to pay one-fourth of the pea, is you made two or three hundred bushes, and you didn't get but a fourth of it. Well, I mean the landowner got a fourth.

EC: [In your keeps?].

NHJ: The landowner got a fourth of everything, corn, cotton, everything you worked. That's why we was known as shareholder, sharecropper.

EC: I was going to say, some people it was half and half. If you were given a fourth, that meant you were--.

NHJ: Yeah, we had our own. We had our own horses and mule. If the landowner had to furnish these horses and everything, all the equipment, that's what we knew you had to work on half. () works on a fourth. We had our own team.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

EC: All right. We're pretty close to Alcorn here.

NHJ: Uh-huh.

EC: [15:00] Did you ever go to campus when you were a young man?

NHJ: I wanted to--I didn't go. I went over to campus regular, because I had Annie stayed over there. But anyway, we went to commencement, every commencement we would go. I always had in mind I wish I was able to go to Alcorn College. But we would go over there every time they would have some [event]. First with baseball, we

used to go to see them play baseball. They were just like real professional. Alcorn had the best team in the South at that time, so we used to go there when we were kids. We'd go to every commencement. I always wanted to go to Alcorn College, school. When I finished eighth grade, I had to go to work. I had to go logging. I wasn't fortunate enough to go to college at that time.

EC: You told me one time that when you were out on campus for one of the commencements you met somebody selling the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

NHJ: Yeah. I can't kind of remember, but I kept, I always had taken that paper after being there. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, I kept it for years after that. My wife used to send it to me when I was in the service, every year.

EC: Do you remember why you wanted to have the *Courier*, why you wanted the paper?

NHJ: Yeah, I wanted to keep up with it. I always wanted, was a baseball player. Alcorn had one of the best baseball teams at that time. Bill Foster, I imagine you heard talk of him, a left-handed pitcher. He went up from Alcorn to Chicago grade. They say, he was the first one I know from Alcorn went up in the big league. I used to watch him play all the time. I always wanted to be a baseball pitcher like Bill Foster.

EC: You were a pretty good player yourself.

NHJ: Well, I turned out to be a good, you know, but I won a lot of game. In Norfolk, when I was in, service after the war, and overseas outfield players, a lot of [Orientals?], I beat a lot of teams over there.

EC: I didn't know you played in the service.

NHJ: Yeah, I played over there after the war end.

EC: Can you tell me how you found out about the NAACP?

NHJ: Yeah, I found out that my--Let me tell you about I went to school in Egypt. That was the first school I went to. In that same school there was--we were had a church on the same. We would have school in the church house. That was a church, Egypt, we called it. The preacher there was Reverend Martin. We called him Reverend Martin. His wife was a teacher, and he was a minister. I used to go over to that Sunday school and to church. I believe that was on the second Sunday. Somehow after I got grown, I'd kind of left that school and come over to Beechland school here. I was just trying to think what age I was at that time. He was, Reverend Martin was a preacher; he was a minister of the Egypt Church at that time. [20:00] He worked on the underground, on civil rights. He wanted to get people, you know couldn't be out. When I got a certain age, eighteen, I wasn't going to school then. I was going to church over there, me and him. He was the one, the first one, trying to get me into the civil rights. But anyway. You couldn't be known. We always, before, become a member at the meeting on Saturday afternoon. It was in Port Gibson. We made sure; it wasn't but a few of us met.

EC: Is this after the war?

NHJ: What was that?

EC: Was this after World War II?

NHJ: This was before, well before World War. This was before the war.

EC: This was before the war?

NHJ: This was before I were old enough to go, I believe. I've been trying to think that age. I got a record of it, the age I was, when I become involved with civil rights, but I used to take that paper, knowing that ripped up later, at that time. They had a

lot in there about the civil rights. When I got in touch with a friend of mine, he was somehow connected, his family connected with Reverend Martin. I asked him, how could I get, be a member in this. He told me how to get in touch with Reverend Martin. Reverend Martin recorded underground. But anyway, we couldn't let it be known. If we meet, we had to meet, one place they had Port Gibson they had a church, at the Methodist church right across from M&M. See that old church there? That's where we met. It had to be on a Saturday afternoon. At that time, everybody was going to town in the wagon and everything. Port Gibson, the street up there would be that full, now --a friend of mine, a mister Charlie Cook, we called him. He was the one, he was related to Reverend Martin. That's-- he was the one, told me he'd take me down there, and I could join. I'd never--I'm trying to think what year that was.

EC: I think it might have been 1952. I got the charter, the list of the charter members, and he was from [19]52.

NHJ: But anyway, that's where we used to meet down there. Then finally, it was something, finally. It's got out. I don't know how it was, but, see, it got out that we were meeting there, and then we had to--. That's the last time I had been meeting like that. But I went on meeting now and then, but I had to keep my card hidden. If you didn't, if you were caught with a card like that, we didn't know what would happen to us, but some of my friends lost their card. At that time it was, the Ku Klux Klan was around at that time, too. You couldn't let it be known that you was a member.

EC: Were you afraid to join? Did you have any fear about it?

NHJ: No, I never did have any fear. I don't reckon I had sense enough--
[Laughter] didn't have any fear, I just wanted to be. I wanted, I heard talk about

freedom, I heard talk about freedom. [25:00] If you got enough freedom, if you could cross the Mason-Dixon line, I'd hear all that, they had all that at that time. I always liked to study a lot, when I was young. I wasn't able to go to school, but I could read, and I would subscribe for *Grit*. The paper would talk about the NAACP.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

EC: How did you get into the service, the military? Were you drafted?

NHJ: I was drafted. Drafted into the Navy, from Camp Shelby.

EC: Down in Hattiesburg?

NHJ: I went to Camp Shelby, enlisting. But I was really drafted. Somehow I was there in Jackson when I was drafted, and then they sent me. I was drafted into the service. I was nineteen, in [19]44, I believe.

EC: I think that sounds right.

NHJ: Yeah, yeah.

EC: What was that experience like?

NHJ: Well, that was a wonderful experience, and it was when I got in the boot camp, it was just fear, because we were--they would bring me mail, not too far. Or sometimes the siren would go off. That's the only time. [Laughter] That's the only time I would get scared. But anyway, I think it was five weeks there. We finished that course, I found my course. Then on the shipping out down to San Diego. I never--I stayed there a good while, a long time. And they shipped me out there to Hawai'i. From the state of Hawai'i, about three weeks, and they shipped me on out to Majuro. They had a... It was

a long time. We went by ship, aircraft carrier. That's the way they carried us. But in Hawai'i, that's where we got separated. I think it was a hundred and some odd left () together. I meant to say left from San Diego together. We went on this [ship].

The first ship was *Makin Island*. That was the first ship we went on. It was aircraft carrier and full of airplanes on top. We left. I was staying in Hawai'i three weeks, and when we left Hawai'i we left on the aircraft carrier carrying airplanes, went out to near where they were having the war. The war was going on then in Saipan. When we got to Majuro, I think it was right at four or five hundred miles difference. But of course the airbase was there on Majuro, and they were flying from there, bombing in Saipan, then coming back. I remember one soldier came back killed. I remember that as well as anything, to the airbase.

Of course, before I thought, they put me into my assignment was cooking and steward. I was a steward mate before I started cooking. I had to get a certificate from Washington, D.C., for me to be able to be a cook. I got my certificate. But anyway, that was our base. That's the only time I ever had an air raid, we had a ship raid. They would send, the *Aito*, they would send [bombers?]. [30:00] Many times we had to run out in the lagoon. We couldn't get in a foxhole, because, you know. But we had to go out in the lagoon, up to the water in my neck.

EC: Oh, did you?

NHJ: Up to my neck, yeah. We'd go that far, because they said the ship torpedoes, going in on the ship, come over there and sink us a little while. We had those air raids and ship raid, too. That thing would go off and I had to go in the ocean three times, I know. I remember three times I had to. The whole group had to go over in the

lagoon, instead of digging for our foxhole. You'd just go out in the water until it would get up to your waist.

EC: Did you tell me once that you were part of a protest when you were in the navy? That you had a protest while you were in the navy?

NHJ: That was in Hawai'i when, before, yeah. I was in the navy. We had a hunger strike.

EC: What was the hunger strike about?

NHJ: Well, they didn't want to feed us with the officers. See, we was officers' cook, and we was supposed to eat with the officer. We weren't supposed to eat in the general mess. Yeah.

EC: And you say "we." Who is this?

NHJ: That group, no, it was the steward mates and stewards.

EC: So those are all African Americans?

NHJ: Yeah.

EC: Yeah. Did the hunger strike work?

NHJ: Yeah, it worked. There's a reason it worked, for three days. You just hunger strike for three days, and it worked.

EC: So you were able to eat in the, with the officers after that?

NHJ: Yeah. Right after that they shipped us out. But I think it was a hundred and some of us left San Diego on that ship. That's when they started sending them different places. But I was with the group, twenty-nine of us. Out of the hundred something, twenty-nine of us went on down to Majuro and Marshall. It was a long way. Because it had taken us I think four or five days to get there. International date line, it

was taking us so long to get to the international date line. That's where we stayed all night. We left there. It takes so many days to get on out of there in Majuro and Marshall Islands. They're right near Australia.

EC: Did you think at all about voting while you were in the service?

NHJ: Well, I voted while I was in the service. [Laughter] They sent it back. You know they probably threw it in the trash pile.

EC: Is that an absentee ballot?

NHJ: Yeah.

EC: What about the poll tax?

NHJ: Well, I had paid the poll tax before I left, before I left and went in the service. I got twenty-one years old, I had to pay poll tax. That was before I went and served. I had to pay poll tax. But after I got out, then I had to pay. [Many?] had changed then. When I got out I wanted to try to get the vote, be eligible to vote. I had a hard time getting that done.

EC: What would happen when you would try to--when you were trying to register to vote, was anybody doing that with you, or were you doing it by yourself?

NHJ: It was three of us. There was only three of us trying, went in there to try. They would give us a--I'm trying to think of what did some of them do, some part of the Constitution there. They had that little book, but I forget what you call it.

EC: You told me that they gave you a copy of part of the Mississippi Constitution on eminent domain.

NHJ: Yeah, that's it, the Mississippi Constitution. I ain't as sharp as I was way back, was I? [Laughter] But anyway, they gave me a copy of that. Then they give me

that, and she's telling you, "You have to write down a copy of [it]." You write down the copy of it, everything. You had to sit up there. I was trying to think, [35:00] I'm old now, I can't remember. That Constitution looked like it was, mm-hmm. But I remember, way back, what it was. But anyway, I wrote it down and got everything straight. I was the last one to leave out. Mr. Allie Collins.

EC: Mr. Griffin?

NHJ: Mr. Griffin. Mr. Allie Collins. Allie, he had learned it. The reason I didn't have to learn it, I just had learned it. Then Griffin--in the sixth grade, I believe it was. But anyway, Mr. Collins, he went on and got through before anybody, and put it on down. I was the last one in there, and he never come by me then, and put mine down. I didn't know what she had done to Collins. But she looked over mine and everything, she said, "Well, you didn't make it this time. Maybe you'll do it the next time," and she just wrote void on that. She said, "You can come back and do it again." I went back the second time and I still didn't pass. I didn't pass. Then even when they started, I was given a literacy test and the other things, and this time I passed. I passed it.

EC: What made the three of you decide to try to register when nobody else was doing it?

NHJ: Well, I had got kind of, I learned a lot about that from the officers over there in the service, with my officer. He kind of, I don't know where he was from, some part of the North. But anyway, he wanted--he always encouraged us whenever we had, and we should vote. I voted when I went over there and sent it back, but they said they didn't do nothing but bothered. We had a good officer. He said I ought to vote, and I went on. He sent my mate with me. He was from Port Gibson. He said, "They aren't

doing nothing but throw it in the trash,” but I said, “Well, I’m going to do it, vote.” My officer, he encouraged us to go ahead on and vote. So that’s what happened. But I had to do it all over when I got out of the service.

EC: Were you afraid when you were trying to register? Were you afraid anything would happen to you or your family?

NHJ: No. I wasn’t afraid anything was going to happen. I don’t know why, I was never afraid. I always wanted to vote, because I used to get them papers, as I said, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the others papers I’d read, all where other people was voting and what happened up there in the North. But anyway, I always wanted to vote.

EC: You told me one time that when Reverend Smith was running for Congress, that you had somebody to come and do a class on the Constitution and voter registration. Do you remember that?

NHJ: () the Reverend?

EC: When Reverend Smith, R. L. T. Smith, when he was running for Congress, you said that there was a young man that came through and did some voter registration classes. Do you remember that?

NHJ: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I remember that as well as anything. Because they used to, I don’t know, the police and everything would be downstairs. It was a building there in Port Gibson, and we would be upstairs taking them tests and everything. When we come down, the police would be there. What broke that meeting up, you know, most of them got scared. I wasn’t so scared, because I reckon, I said all the time, it must have been when I was able to go to the service, stayed in the service, the two years and a half that I stayed in the service,[40:00] I wasn’t scared. But anyway, when we came, when

that class came, when we came from upstairs downstairs, all them police was out there waiting on us. They wasn't doing anything to us, but they, the other boys that were going for the meeting, that kind of made them scared, and that broke that meeting up. But we had several meetings, we tried to have civil rights, with the civil rights group. First you had them telling you we was trying to get ready to vote. Then that was part of it, too. We'd get our rights and everything. But anyway.

EC: Do you remember that young man's name that came?

NHJ: I can never say what that boy's name. My memory ain't as good as it used to be. But he was from New York.

M1: () pause.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

EC: Are we on?

M1: It's going again.

EC: You told me it was Bob Moses.

NHJ: Yeah. Yeah, it was Moses. Moses.

EC: I know. I remember you said the first meeting you came downstairs, and they started calling out the names. Then the next meeting it was only three of you that came back.

NHJ: Yes, only three of us. Allie Collins and Griffin and I.

EC: Can you--oh, you know what. Tell us about how you met Mrs. Jones and you all getting married.

NHJ: Well, first I met her, I lived around over here on () where she lived at that time. She was young, much younger than me, but she was at least five years

younger than me. My brother stayed in a house right down below here, and he had married. He had, his wife had their first child. My wife, she stayed right across the street from here. It's that house right, just a little distance down this way, and the creek is on across there. That's where. My wife was staying over there with her uncle. I come over to visit her uncle, and she come on and visit her uncle. My brothers were married then, and they had their first child. My wife's sister and then my wife's sister would nurse that child while the others would go in the field. But my wife was too young to do that kind of [work] because she (). I only meet my wife in five years. I mean, she--we stayed right around here [and other?]. They used to walk from right over there on over there to our house to get some things, like milk or something like that for the baby. She was just a little girl. But then you know what? I had never seen her before, but her sister was nursing my little nephew. But she would come over with her sister. They had come around to our house to get milk or supplies for the baby. There was a way I could try to cut them off, I'd always try to do that. [Laughter] She was a good looking little girl. I wanted to try and get close enough to see her and get acquainted with her or anything. But they could look through the woods and see me trying to cut them off, and they'd run, and I never--. [45:00] That's when I first got to know her. She was babysitting for my brother. She was just a kid. I mean, she must have been around nine years old, because I was nearly five years older than her when I married her. No, then she was eighteen, and I was twenty-two when we married. That's the way it was. But anyway, that (), I got acquainted with her early, really before she--I used to run and try to cut her off, [called to them?] and couldn't cut her off. She said, "I run better." [Laughter]

EC: Uh-oh.

NHJ: That was right in here.

EC: How long were you married before she passed away?

NHJ: Seventy-two years.

[Recorder is turned off and then turned back on]

EC: How did you and Mrs. Jones--you said when you first were on this land it was sharecropping. How did you come to buy this land?

NHJ: Well, when I was in the service I sent--she had an allowance, \$55 there, which the government pays her. After I got my rate I was getting \$109 a month. I sent all of that back. I'd get it. I would send my check back every month. She kept that money. We had planned, when I got in the service, to write her every day. I wrote her every day. She would write me back every day sometimes. Sometimes the mail would get delayed. Sometimes I would get thirteen letters, had been delayed. But anyway, we made that suggestion that we were going to save all we could get and buy land. That's where that started, when we were young, when I was in the service. She saved. My payday I would send her that \$100. Say I was getting \$109 after I got my rate, and I sent that \$100 back every month, and she put it in the bank. She used hers. She just used her money.

EC: She used her allotment?

NHJ: No, she was getting that--it was \$65 every month. But we wrote one another every day, and we told, had our plan. That's what we were going to do with that money that I saved from the navy.

EC: So when you came back you all were able to buy it?

NHJ: Oh, yeah.

EC: And then farm your own land?

NHJ: I never will forget that. We had \$1,600. It was in the bank. I'll never forget it. But we bought the land, 126 acres from the [corn brothers?]. I mis-said, 126 acres was, I believe, somewhere like \$1,400, something like that. That's what he charged us. It looked like to me I was paying \$60. I don't know. It was \$1,460 anyway. But anyway, that's the way we come by the 126 acres we bought when I got out of the service.

EC: When you were registering to vote, did it make a difference that you owned your own land?

NHJ: I don't think that had anything to do with it, because two or three people around here, my old professor Watkins, he owned his own land, Professor Whittington, he owned his own, there were quite a few blacks owned their land, owned their own land. Somehow they would let them to vote. I remember, Professor Watkins, and Professor Whittington, and Reverend Martin. I could name around eighteen people they let vote. But they all were kind of high up, we called them, and they had land, [50:00] all that they owned something. But anyway.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

NHJ: I remember, and I'm not as sharp as I have been, 101 years old.

M1: You sound pretty sharp to us.

EC: [Laughter] Well, he could run circles around us all. You said that-- So when did the movement get to, how did it get to picking up around this area?

NHJ: It's got picking up by Mr. Charles Evers, when Charles Evers come in here. We were scared to do anything. Charles Evers and Rudy Shields, when they came

in here, it was, well, they did everything they could. There was a biracial attempt, and they did, that group did everything they could to keep it from coming, and it was unnatural, we heard. The first thing that the new guys said, it was unnatural. They came on up to fed, and whites decided they'd have a biracial committee. They picked the group that they wanted to meet with, that biracial group. That was the preachers and teachers, which you know they were scared, scared of their jobs. But anyway, they picked who they wanted to meet with. Tried to prevent the Selma and them, when they were marching all this way, and here come the feds. Finally, they did come on to Port Gibson. When they came to Port Gibson that's when everything changed.

EC: You said that the whites got the biracial committee to try to stop the movement from coming.

NHJ: Yeah, from coming.

EC: How come they weren't successful?

NHJ: Well, we kind of like rebelled against that group, because we wanted to be free. We wanted to be able to march and protest about freedom. We wanted our rights and everything. So we decided--they came on anyway, yeah. Rudy Shields. I forget the other fellow's name, but anyway.

EC: Steve Marsaw?

NHJ: Charles Evers--yeah.

EC: Steve Marsaw?

NHJ: Marsaw, yeah. Yeah. Come in from Natchez, behind it. That's right. But anyway, that's when we got started.

EC: Can you tell us what Rudy Shields was like?

NHJ: Yeah. Rudy Shields was brave. We thought he was the bravest fellow that we ever seen. Yes, Rudy Shields was going around. He encouraged us to be, you know, encouraged them to go out and try to get people registered to vote. That's what, he was brave by that. There was a lot of plantations you couldn't go on, and that was where most of the voters were, on plantations. Rudy Shields and, I'm trying to think of the boy, he just passed on, worked with Rudy Shields.

EC: George Henry Walker?

NHJ: George Henry Walker. The girl, I'm trying--.

EC: Miss Guster?

NHJ: Guster.

EC: We're going to see her later today.

NHJ: Yeah. Yeah. You all are going to go see her? Yeah. But anyway, those are the ones that worked right with Rudy Shields to get the register, to get people to register to vote. Of course, I worked on that group, too. Of course, most of them were half scared to go on Alcorn campus. I was the one who went down and then transferred so many children to be voted, registered to vote in Port Gibson. I worked with that group, too. [55:00]

EC: What was Miss Guster like?

NHJ: Miss Guster?

EC: Yeah.

NHJ: Oh, she just worked with Rudy, worked with Rudy Shields. She did most of her work with Rudy Shields, her and George Henry, those two.

EC: When the movement started I know that the NAACP needed some officers, right?

NHJ: Mm-hmm.

EC: And you agreed to do that. How did your neighbors respond, your people living out here when you decided to do that?

NHJ: Well, they kind of like went along with me, because if they hadn't run along with me I couldn't have been so successful at all. They mostly had confidence in me. I don't know why, but they did. I don't know really why. The whites was on my side some kind of way. I don't know whether it was just by nature of who or what, but they did a lot, helped me out a lot, especially during those days it was hard. The Segrests, the Segrests.

EC: Uh-huh.

NHJ: And the school superintendent.

EC: Yeah. Was his name Robert, Robert Segrest.

NHJ: Yeah.

EC: OK.

NHJ: He was a friend of mine.

EC: Did he hunt with you?

NHJ: Yeah, he came right, just sit right in this house, ate, sat right at that table there eating. He'd go out there and kill him eight or ten squirrels. He hired, sitting right in there, hired my wife to work in the school system, and he hired me. [Laughter] Right in that, right there in that room right there. Yeah, I [was] needed to drive the school bus. He was part of the school superintendent. But anyway, he loved to hunt. He could go

hunting on my place. It had a lot of squirrels on it, this place. There wasn't none up there on his place. But anyway, he'd come down here, killing eight or ten squirrels. He'd sit down there and drink coffee and eat right there at that table, right. He hired me right, he was right in there. He hired my wife in this, that living room right there.

EC: So you were--.

NHJ: That don't look--it don't look like it, but I'd say, that's where I got my first job, driving the school bus right.

EC: So you were farming and driving the school bus?

NHJ: Oh, yeah.

EC: At the same time?

NHJ: Yeah. Yeah. At the same time. I'd get up. That's what's a friend and me, I count him as a real friend.

EC: Mr. Segrest?

NHJ: Yeah. I'd get up and make my run, and I could bring the bus back here. I didn't bring it in here, because it was too long to get in here. At that time the road wasn't fixed like it is now. I left it at that house up there at Brown, and I would get in the truck and come on back to the farm. I would put three or four hours on the farm, and then I had to get in my truck and go back. See, he hired my wife, too. My wife started teaching school.

EC: Did she teach at the Russum school?

NHJ: Near to there, she taught.

EC: And then she switched over to--.

NHJ: Port Gibson.

EC: OK. All of the whites weren't--not all the whites reacted the same way, right? Did you have any trouble?

NHJ: No, I didn't have any trouble. Somehow I had worked with whites pretty much ever since I got grown, I don't know, in them sawmills and different things. I would have known by being a timber cutter. Everybody wanted to hire me. Me and my brother worked together. That's the reason, I guess, that I was successful. Another because I didn't work for no outside-- [1:00:00] with all them brothers I had. One--there were two. One was the same age, my stepbrother. We worked together, and we logged together.

EC: Was that Mr. Duffin?

NHJ: Logged on these loggers together.

EC: Was that Mr. Duffin?

NHJ: Yeah.

EC: Eddie Duffin?

NHJ: You remember--. Eddie Duffin, yeah. Me and him were the same age, but Kelly was a little older. Mostly I worked with the older ones, than I did the one my age. But anyway, that's how it was. Everybody wanted to hire us. We didn't have to even think about wanting a job. The job hunt us.

EC: You were good workers.

NHJ: Yeah.

EC: What did Mr. Ellis say to you once you joined, when the movement got started? Remember Mr. Eli Ellis?

NHJ: Oh, yeah. He told me, he said, “Well, I heard that you joined that thing,” that’s what he calls it. He said, “Now, when we’ve been good to you, and we let you have anything that you wanted and lent money here at the bank.” I said, “Yeah, Mr. Ellis, I’ve been good to you all, I paid my bill.” [Laughter] He held paused for a long time. He burst out laughing, said, “You’re right. You’re right.” But anyway, that was him. But, see, he’d stand behind it, he was the vice president, but he had been right down here at home with me. That’s the reason he was saying he’d been so good to me. I told him I had been good to him. Of course, he’d come down and hunt on my place, hunt everywhere. I’d be with him hunting, kill those squirrels. He’s paused a long time. He burst out laughing. He said, “you’re right. Right.” But anyway, I had a lot of friends, a lot of white friends. The St. Johns were the same way, by me. He was my boss then, but they didn’t think nobody could cut as many logs as Nate and his brother.

EC: Who was that? Who was that you’re talking about?

NHJ: Them St. Johns. Do you remember any St. Johns?

EC: Uh-uh.

NHJ: The last one was dying. That was his mama had the light place.

EC: OK.

NHJ: Robert St. John.

EC: OK. Oh, yeah, I think I do know who you’re talking about.

NHJ: I’ll have you all remember, the other day.

EC: I’ve heard the name.

NHJ: Yeah.

EC: Yeah. What about Reverend Spencer? Was he the head of the human relations committee? Was he on the biracial committee?

NHJ: Yeah, Reverend Spencer. He was on the biracial. He was with the group that was scared, the scared group, and he didn't think it was time, he said. It just wasn't time for us to make all the protests that we was making. We already told him, "This is dishonest. We have waited too long. Time don't wait on us." I said, "The time? This is the time. Right now is the time." That's what we were telling. But finally he came, before he got disabled. He changed. He made a change.

EC: What did he say to you when you were--well, you told me once that some of your-- some of the people, some of the farmers you knew, didn't think you ought to go public with the NAACP and tried to talk you out of that.

NHJ: Yeah, they tried. Many, many of them tried and talked me out of it, but I just didn't never change, because--. Most of them had never been inducted in the service, they had never been with other people that had been free all their life. But anyway. No, I observed everything I could. I had wonderful officers in the navy. They thought a lot of me, because I would always follow the rules. [1:05:00] But anyway, I didn't think that--I always wanted to be free like the other person was. I just never did get in the way. They couldn't--. Sometimes they tried to talk me out of it. See, well, we had protests and everything. You remember all of them protests we had. Tear gas. They'd throw it on us at Alcorn. We just had a rough time in those days trying to get our freedom.

EC: What was the protest out at Alcorn? What was that about?

NHJ: That was mostly about the students, this is more about the students and the changes. They had so many grievances, I can't remember those grievances we carried in.

We carried in so many grievances, which was going on at Alcorn, faculty--not the faculty, the students' rights and everything they didn't have. The workers that worked on the campus, worked, you know, kept up all the workers, wasn't getting paid what they should have been paid. I just remember, see, I'm kind of older, but I know there were four or five grievances we carried in, and they wouldn't. I know it was, I can't name it now, but I know that they wasn't paying the labor what they were supposed to get, that's one of them.

EC: Yeah, yeah, that's right. That's right.

NHJ: But anyway, there were five. I used to know them all, but right now I'm kind of rusty. But that's what it was all about.

EC: What was the tear gas like? What was it like to have that happen?

NHJ: Oh, that was, it was really rough. I mean, they tear-gassed in the stores. Some of them was in the store, they tear-gassed that store. The man, before they tear-gassed, see, the students that done all got to Patton's store. The patrolman and everything, the students let them come around. I was with that group, and I just went--I was born in Alcorn, my GI Bill of Rights, you know. I used to ride over there and hook my horses. Now I know how to go around, and go around to Patton's and get to Patton's Store. Rudy Shields and there was one more other person and me, but I was the one that led that group. We were protesting around the back of the Patton's Store, on around to vet village and brought them in. And a patrolman, they got mad that I let all of the students got in there. That's when they started throwing that tear gas.

[Recording is turned off and then back on]

NHJ: I had to lead those students back out.

EC: What happened with the students if they were protesting? If somebody knew they were in the movement, what would happen to the students?

NHJ: I don't know if, if they had been able to catch them. I don't know what would have happened. [Laughter] It was--half of them I had taken my credit at Alcorn. I used to hook my horses. I'd usually ride from here over to Alcorn in the morning and take my GI Bill training. But anyway, I knew how to, I knew where I'd hook my horse. I knew I'd go around and then get back to [1:10:00] the place where the students stay. I led them, joined in the walking. I led those students back around. When that filling station, come around [Laughter], back, on back around. Then when the students got back to the dormitory they started shouting and hollering and singing again, and that made the patrolman mad then. That's when they--I was back on by the Patton's store, back with the movement.

That's when they started throwing this tear gas. They got mad then when I led those [students], then they knew how the students got back. But we had to carry them back, and I knew how to get back. They started tear gas, started tear gas, throw tear gas in the store and everywhere. More people got strangled, and they beat up. I know they beat up two of my friends and one preacher. He was just sitting on the side of a car. They passed by and hit him and beat him up and beat up another. There was a kid, couple to the hospital. But anyway, they tried to get Evers, that's the one, but Reverend Dorsey, Reverend Dorsey and I, caught Evers. They tear-gassed me, but, see, I had been used to the tear gas when I was in the service, when I first take my training in the service. It burned you. But anyway, this guy I was with put that towel over my nose. They didn't hit Evers, but they'd beat all the rest of them. This one of them said, "Don't hit him." I'd

go on one side of him, the Reverend Dorsey was on the other side of him. We led Evers out of there.

EC: Why do you think they didn't want to hit him?

NHJ: I don't know. I often wondered, but sometimes they don't hit a leader. Sometimes they don't hit a leader. You don't know what would happen. I don't know what reason why, but I heard him say that. Yeah. I had one side of him, and Reverend Dorsey had the other side of Evers. But anyway. We got Evers out of the way, and I went back and tried to help get those stranded women who was tear-gassed. A lot of them were down. Get them up. They beat up two people. We had to take them to a hospital.

EC: One of them was Mr. Warner's (), Julius Warner, his father?

NHJ: Yeah, he was one. That was Julius Warner's uncle.

EC: His uncle?

NHJ: Uh-huh.

EC: OK.

NHJ: Then a reverend from Hattiesburg, I forget his name now, but that was a preacher, they beat him up.

EC: He was from Hattiesburg?

NHJ: Yeah. He was from Hattiesburg.

EC: What were the mass media--.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

EC: You ready?

M1: We're back.

EC: When they had the marches out at Alcorn, you remember what year that was?

NHJ: Let me see. I was driving the school bus. Well, that was 1936, wasn't it, 19--.

EC: Sixty-six.

NHJ: Sixty-six.

EC: That's right. That's right. You got arrested on one of those Alcorn marches, didn't you? Did you get arrested?

NHJ: Yeah, I got arrested. I got arrested on the first march. They had another one, but with the first march it was on the south side as you're going toward Lorman, coming in. That was the first one. The second time, then when the tear gas, when it changed, they tear-gassed, and they came in from the west. They arrested all of us and put us in jail.

EC: Were you worried about that?

NHJ: No, I was driving the school bus at that time. That's the time my wife had to drive the school bus, and she had never been driving it, but she had been driving a car [1:15:00] all the time. But she had never driven, had never driven that big old bus. She had to pick up the children for me, because I was in jail. That's the time they arrested us there. But the time I was telling you about the tear gas, that was the second time. That was the first time when they put us in jail. Put all of us in a jail.

EC: Did you stay in jail long?

NHJ: Just overnight.

EC: Yeah.

NHJ: Yeah. You had to have something to bail you out.

EC: What were the mass meetings like?

NHJ: The mass meetings were good. A lot of singing and clapping and going on. Until Evers get up and tell what we had to do, where the next meeting would be. Finally, before we'd break up, he'd take a march around the town. We'd take a stroll, the whole group moving around, and march on the town. The town couldn't have been--. We was one time attacked. This is just one time. They attacked some of them. But most didn't, the police didn't bother us too much, if we stayed in line. Anybody get out of line, they'd attempt the one time, but sometimes they stopped it. We said we had a right to protest. Some whites was against the police, stopping it. One time we had a disturbance like that with the police. They soon thought they let us go and make that march. But the white merchants would mostly call, "you going to tip tonight?" [Laughter] He'd say, "You all going to tip tonight?" We didn't have one incident.

That's when I was telling you, the police kind of broke that up. Some of the police that started, you know, I didn't try and stop the march or something. The chief told them, "Let them march. Let them go on and make they're protest, as long as they didn't throw any rocks or do anything to the merchants, to the stores or anything. Had some peaceful marchers there, but didn't tear up nothing, didn't break a store window or nothing. Those other places where we heard, when they had them protests, they would break in stores and break everything, break in stores and things. We didn't have that in Port Gibson.

EC: Yeah. What was the boycott about, the Port Gibson boycott?

NHJ: It was about wages, you know, wasn't paying the workers fair, payment. I was trying to think of all them grievances we had. My memory ain't as sharp as it was back then. But I know the pay, I remember that. Because we were getting paid minimum wage where we shouldn't be getting paid. And the working conditions now, there was a lot of un-right that we wasn't having at that time.[1:20:00] The hours and everything, the working hours, anything. Most of it was the pay.

EC: Was it hard to organize the boycott?

NHJ: What did you say?

EC: Was it hard to organize the boycott?

NHJ: Yeah, well, it was pretty hard, because a lot of people was afraid. A lot of parents didn't let their children participate, because a lot of them didn't understand. A lot of them were just afraid to get involved. That's the way it was, those that was never changing and knew what it was all about, did it all right, but the parents mostly controlled the children. Most of us stayed on the plantation, like that, and they had control over you. Most, the majority of the people stayed on the plantation at that time. If they got, they started, the word got out they were participating, quite naturally their parents and everyone would stop their children, because they would have to move off of the place and everything like that. That was what they mostly feared, poor.

EC: Did your son participate in the school desegregation?

NHJ: Yeah, he was more than two years--he was young. Where we had to control him, he wanted to be in, that little group wanted to be just like Rudy Shields. They wanted to throw rocks at people's cars and things like that. We just wouldn't let him do that.

EC: Your son?

NHJ: We don't let him do that. We told him, we explained all that to him. We had a rough time getting him away from the other group. They broke that little group up, Evers' little group.

EC: They called them the Black Hats?

NHJ: Yeah. Went around throwing rocks or bricks at people's cars and things like that, had people was afraid with that Black Hat group.

EC: What were they, why would they, when they would throw rocks or something, why would they do that? What was their motivation?

NHJ: I don't know. They were saying, a lot of people didn't participate with the civil rights, family, on some of them, that had children. It wasn't about the children. It was mostly about the town wasn't letting their children participate. That's what that was all about. Of course, that's when all of that started, quite naturally. The law has to break up that and go on. That wasn't right. I never did go along with that either.

EC: What about--was it the same group that was doing self-defense?

NHJ: Well, they soon broke up that Black Hat group. That was the group that they knew were throwing rocks at cars and things, you see.

EC: Did you ever have to stand guard? Did you ever have to protect your house or anything, or anybody else?

NHJ: No, no. No, I didn't have to never do that. I didn't never do that. No.

EC: Reverend Dorsey, he had to have some protection at one time, didn't he?

NHJ: Yeah. Yeah. He was the only one. I don't know why. Reverend Walls didn't have to have protection. Reverend Walls, he wasn't as dedicated as Reverend Dorsey was.

EC: Yeah. When the schools started desegregating, when they started having freedom of choice, did your children go to freedom of choice?

NHJ: My children, they went around along with y'all. [1:25:00] Alonzo went along.

EC: He was a little older than us, wasn't he? Alonzo?

NHJ: Yeah, Alonzo is sixty-three.

EC: Yeah. He's a little older than me.

NHJ: Yeah, he was older than you. But you remember him. Yeah. He was older, much older than you. But anyway.

EC: Did he go over to PG?

NHJ: Yeah.

EC: What was his experience over at the white school?

NHJ: I don't know. He must have been pretty smart. He passed out of that. Yeah. Graduated out of that. He must have been pretty smart. He passed that. I don't think but three of them graduated at that time that was in his class.

EC: That's right.

NHJ: I'm trying to think, names, names of the other ones. But he was one. I know. There were three of them, and he was one of the three, the group that graduated that year.

EC: Yeah. With the voter registration, I know the voter registration started around, got very active after the Voting Rights Act. By the middle of 1966 it was a black majority. Was it hard to get people to run for office?

NHJ: It wasn't so... At first it was a scary time. It was hard to try to go. I know we had to try to run and try and find somebody that was brave enough to run. Yeah, it was pretty rough to find somebody wanted to run. That was in 1967, I believe, when we first couldn't get but two or three. We got Matt Ross, Allie Collins, had one other. There were three.

EC: Miss Collins got elected, too.

NHJ: Yeah, Miss Collins, Miss Collins. Yeah. But anyway, it was just hard to find somebody to run. Because I went out through the county trying to find somebody who would be able to run. They didn't. They said, "If I lose my job--you going to give me a job?" See I was going out and try and somebody, a candidate to run. Of course, I was on the committee. We had a rough time finding somebody to run. We got Matt Ross to run, I think Anna Collins, Miss Collins, and my wife. Seems like there was one more other person. I got the pictures up there, back of there somewhere. But anyway, they were the first.

EC: When your wife got elected, she was elected circuit clerk, right?

NHJ: Mm-hmm, yeah.

EC: In 1971?

NHJ: Nineteen seventy-one. But, see, we had had elections. Before then, that number three, the first time we had it, didn't but three blacks win. That was Mr., let's see, the supervisor, Matt Ross won. Then what were the--.

EC: Well, let's see.

NHJ: Sheriff?

EC: Dan McCay still won.

NHJ: Dan McCay was on then. Dan McCay was on there. Just had three run, I know. Three won. The first time we ran in [19]67, didn't but three people won.

EC: Yeah. How did you feel when Mrs. Jones got elected?

NHJ: Well, I wasn't, as I said, Mr. Segrest, the superintendent of education, was my friend. He hired her right here, right there in that kitchen there. Hired my wife. So it wasn't no fear, because they had been superintendent, and those in the bank and everything, they, where I had plenty of helpers, [1:30:00] but anyway. I wasn't afraid at all, ever, when she won.

EC: Did it feel good to have her in the circuit clerk?

NHJ: Yeah. I felt very good with her. Sure. I felt good. She served two years. Yeah.

M1: Let's pause for a second.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

EC: What was the singing like in the movement? The singing, the songs?

NHJ: Oh, yeah. "We Shall Overcome." You know, that was the song. Yeah, they played that. Them children could sing that song, too, though. And "Freedom," too. They sang that song, too. But anyway, we would have that every Tuesday. Tuesday night. Every month, there was that first Tuesday, we were going to have that movement.

EC: Who was leading the songs?

NHJ: I'm trying to think about that. I can't call the name now.

EC: Was it Miss Crowder? Thelma Crowder?

NHJ: No.

EC: No.

NHJ: Miss Crowder, she was the first, among the first ones leading them, but it was a young girl there. I'm trying to think of her name. She would. But Miss Crowder was with that group, the younger group. They had two groups were singing. She was one, Miss Crowder was one of them.

EC: Did they have a youth choir?

NHJ: Yeah, that's that youth choir, that's the one I was trying to call the name. Davee, we called her Dawn.

EC: Davee. It wasn't one of the Brandons?

NHJ: No. She was a--let me see. What? She stayed out there on Sugar Hill. I was trying to think of her name.

EC: OK. I'll try to think about it, who that could have been. I probably know. [Laughter] I should know.

NHJ: We called her Dawn, I know. We called her Dawn. She used to lead them some.

EC: All right. Do you remember a white lawyer named Fred Burger?

NHJ: Oh, yeah. Fred Burger. He, one, was my lawyer, when I got the place. Yeah. He was my lawyer. He was the one lawyer. I remember when I first bought the place. Yeah.

EC: OK. Can you tell us about Our Mart?

NHJ: Yeah. Our Mart, yeah. Our Mart came out of this movement. We had to buy shares, had to have shares and get Our Mart started. I forgot how many shares we had to have, as shareholder. We had I forgot how many shareholders. I know we were the leading shareholders, and we owned more shares than the rest of them, Mr. Alexander Collins, he, it took around five or six of us to get enough shares and get this store started. Somehow we had a good many shares. That's the way it got started, by being a shareholder. I forget how many shares we had to have when we got started. In 1969?

EC: I think it might have been [19]67.

NHJ: Sixty-seven was when I first, yeah.

EC: What was the motivation? Why did you all decide to organize the grocery store?

NHJ: Well, we wanted to have a grocery store of our own. [1:35:00] That's the way we got organized. We'd have a grocery store of our own. That was the first chain we had. The only way we could get it, you know, by shareholder, because there wasn't any of us able to go buy and have a store like that. We wanted an incorporated store. That's what we wanted. Because Matt Ross and them had a little store down there. But anyway, we wanted an incorporated store. That's when the competition really started in the community with the white stores. Then that was where they were \$25 per share. That's what it was. We had so many \$25 shareholders. Our standing shareholder, we didn't have but, let me see, three or four, shares. We had the Reverend, I forget his name, but anyway, he was the top shareholder. I think Alexander Collins was the second shareholder, and we was only third. We was only third, third in there. The others, we had quite a few. I think we had around about seventy some shareholders, but I think they

only had, most of them had \$25. Most of them were \$25, per share, and then they owned one share, and it was \$25 per share.

EC: What was your job with Our Mart?

NHJ: My job was, I was on the management group, but I was the one that managed them, Our Mart. I was the first manager.

EC: Who was on the board?

NHJ: Oh, we had seven on the board. We had Alexander Collins, the preacher from, what I was saying, was the top shareholder, Reverend--he wasn't Reverend Lewis. But anyway, the top shareholder was a preacher.

EC: It wasn't Reverend Dorsey?

NHJ: No.

EC: Reverend Doss?

NHJ: No, he was from Jackson.

EC: Oh, OK.

NHJ: Yeah.

EC: It wasn't Reverend Smith.

NHJ: Reverend Smith.

EC: Reverend R. L. T. Smith?

NHJ: R. L. T. Smith.

EC: He had a shop up in Jackson, didn't he?

NHJ: Yeah, he had a store up there. I used to go up there all the time to his store. He had two stores up there. He had one on Ninth Street and one up there on the other street, I was trying to say.

EC: So did he help you on how to run the store? Did he help you figure out how to do, how to put it together?

NHJ: Yeah. He helped a lot about that. He really helped a lot how to go about, how to get it established. Because we would have a meeting every month. Those times he would come down there and check on it.

EC: What--.

NHJ: But when we started, we started paying our shares. We paid shares at \$25 a share at a shareholder meeting. Every year we would pay our share. Noreen Summer was like Reverend Smith's and Allie Collins. We would never--we put our shares right back in the store, and our shares multiply. But anyway, that's the way it got started, with shareholder meeting. We did pretty well. We turned over a quarter million dollars a year. But we had a lot of overhead to pay. We had to pay our shareholders. They wanted their pay every year. But we tried, my wife and I,[1:40:00] and one other person tried to tell them, "Let the money stay in there, and let's go buy a store in another community." Where we have a chain store. But, no, everybody wanted their money, oh, no. Yeah.

EC: They want it now, they weren't going to wait?

NHJ: Yeah, they ain't going for that. See, we wanted to have a store in Port Gibson. We might have had one somewhere else, somewhere else that we was trying to get them to get it. You see, leaving money in there. There were quite a few of us tried to get them to do that, but the majority always wanted that. Yeah.

EC: What was Charles Evers like?

NHJ: Charles Evers, he was kind of a straightforward person. That was one person I loved. I was with him, was it this year?

EC: Was it?

NHJ: I believe I did here. Yeah. Here in Port Gibson.

EC: He came?

NHJ: Yeah. [Laughter] Sitting right with him. But anyway, he was a kind of straightforward person. He is, and he's still like that. He was the person. Not only just, me personally that loved him, the whole community loved him. They still love him. He was really a good person and a good leader.

EC: Yeah. What was the lawsuit about, Claiborne Hardware versus NAACP?

NHJ: That was a suit they brought against us about the boycott. You see, they brought that suit against us because they claimed that we, about putting them boycotts on, cut their income or what's the other one? Cut--. Yeah.

EC: Their profits?

NHJ: Their profit, cut their profit. That was what they sued us about. I had to go to court on that many times. Anyone where you had--it took a long time for us to win that suit, but we did win the suit. It was up in 1980, wasn't it?

EC: Eighty-two.

NHJ: Eighty-two. Yeah. Around 1982 was when we won that suit.

EC: Your property was tied up for a while, wasn't it?

NHJ: Yeah, my property was tied up.

EC: Did that make it more difficult to farm or anything?

NHJ: It didn't make no--it didn't make it difficult to farm, because, as I said, I had some white friends, that was Segrest, and they had Hastings at the bank. That's where I did my work. Had Eli Ellis in the bank. I had so many people on my side. [Laughter] They didn't-- I could get anything I wanted. I mean, they supported me, and they just didn't--I could go get anything I wanted. But anyway, I just would pay my bill.

EC: It worked out for them, too.

NHJ: Yeah, I worked hard, and I always was friendly with them, and they, some of them would come out here hunting on my place and hunt with me and be with me. Now, friendship means a lot. Yeah.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

EC: What do you want people to know about the civil rights movement?

NHJ: I wanted them to know how it brought us through and how it was before civil rights came in. It was something that we had hope. As I told you before, that during the 1930s I believe, in the early 1930s, [1:45:00] I always wanted to join the NAACP and didn't know how to get in touch with it, because we had that early, the later part, I said, in the 1930s I believe it was, that we got radios and things like that, that we would hear what was going on in the world by the civil rights. I wanted to join, and that's when I really got interested in it. We went on to join when we had a chance. But we had to take a chance to join. You just couldn't let it be known that you was a cardholder of the NAACP. You couldn't carry it on you, because you didn't know whether you were going to be held up with officers or not. Because I read that's what happened to a card

carrier right in Port Gibson, the time they--. Wasn't it on that boy got killed? I believe it was. They killed that boy about having that card, the NAACP card. That had a lot of fear on us about carrying one, when we ever got a card or anything like that. A lot of us would burn our card up. We would burn them up. We always would hide our card. It wasn't enough, and glad when we could get what was going on. Something about our rights, you know, we really knew how far to go. That organization always taught us something about freedom. We wanted to be free and everything, but we couldn't just be open about it. We had to be, do it underground. Yeah. I got my first card. I got the mail coming down the street, coming down the street just he, "Nate, here's your card." I had to hide the card. The first card we got, we was scared to carry it on us, scared to have that in the house, and I burned it. I burned the first card. But the second card we got, and we kept it. We wanted to burn that card, but what scared us, what happened in Port Gibson when they caught that boy with that card, that made us afraid to carry the card on us.

EC: But it didn't stop you from getting it.

NHJ: No, it didn't stop me. It didn't stop me from recruiting, and it didn't stop me from going to the meetings. Because we didn't--it was a preacher, Reverend Martin, and he taught us, well, he taught us what time we was supposed to go in meetings. He had it, always it would be at a church, that church I told you right across from M&M. We made sure to it would be on a Saturday after one o'clock. [Laughter] So the street had to be full.

EC: Nobody noticed you.

NHJ: Everybody was shopping. Everybody was shopping.

EC: Yeah. You'd blend in.

NHJ: In those days, I think, when I first got my card, I was trying to think when it was. Where did we--. At that time I had never bought me a car, a truck, or nothing. We would go in town in a wagon then. We'd wait to that time to go down into the [meeting]. We'd stay down there just about one hour. There would be over ten or twelve of us meeting.

EC: In the early years.

NHJ: On that Saturday evening. [1:50:00] That's when we would get those cards. And tell, you know, have that little meeting, telling about our rights and everything, hoping about our hopes and everything. That was in, I'm trying to think about, '30s, [19]38 I thought, or [19]42, somewhere along there. This is early, back then. That's the way it was in those days. We lived through it. But somehow, I just never was fearful. I don't know the reason why. There was a lot of my friends and everything really scared, but I don't know why I wasn't fearful then. But anyway, I guess it's a on the contents of my family. You're a large family, and they had the logging jobs and everything, and the tradition. We--the whole family would pick cotton on the plantation. Those people that owned the land and everything, they cared or had a lot of care from my family or something, because we were working. We was always in farming.

EC: People had respect for you?

NHJ: Yeah. We could pick cotton all the land, them big cotton planters and big plantations. There were three of us could pick well over two hundred pounds a day. They had a group here, and it was just a big family group. The younger group was here, be busy on the farm. We carried the farm on here. For the older group, my age and on a

little older, I think the, let me see, four of us, four of us would go out picking cotton. We could pick, we four could pick a bale a day in a big plantation where all that cotton. I guess my big family and the reason we had a pretty good time with landowners and storekeepers or whatnot, the white race, I said at that time. They had a lot of respect for us, and we had a lot of respect with them, because we wanted a job. [Laughter] Then we got them jobs. Yeah. They didn't pay much.

EC: Mr. Nate, Thank you so much for talking with us.

Female 1: This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

END OF RECORDING

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