

Multi-Generational African American Farmers of the Midwest
Anna-Lisa Cox
Library of Congress AFC Archie Green Fellowship

Date of interview: August 29, 2019

Names/s of those interviewed: Joyce Granger and Phyllis Morton

Primary Interviewer: Anna-Lisa Cox (ALC)

Secondary Interviewers: Stanley Madison

Interview Location: Home of Joyce Granger, Washington, Daviess County, Indiana.

Transcriber: Mabel Scroggins

Abstract: Phyllis Morton is the primary subject of this interview. She is renowned within the local African American farming community in southwestern Indiana for being an outstanding woman farmer. She and her husband ran a successful diversified farm in Daviess County, Indiana. Mrs. Morton's husband died a few years before this interview took place. Joyce Granger, a close friend of Phyllis Morton, hosted the interview in her home in Washington, Indiana. Joyce Granger passed away in early 2020. Stanley Madison, who arranged for the interview to occur, was also in attendance.

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[0:00] Introduction to Joyce and Phyllis.

[5:00] Details of where Joyce and Phyllis were raised, Joyce was raised by her grandparents, discussion of the Hawkins family.

[10:00] Details of Joyce's family farm growing up, Joyce describes the area surrounding her childhood home, details of food grown on their family farms.

[15:00] Details of preserving food, description of desserts made in Phyllis's family, the families slaughtered and cleaned their chickens, difficulties and details of quilting.

[20:00] Phyllis describes games they played as a child, Joyce helped her grandfather farm, details of farming and peddling melons.

[25:00] Joyce describes food her grandmother made, details of a typical morning for Joyce growing up, both describe bathing as children.

[30:00] Details of typical breakfasts, Phyllis describes her typical morning routine as a child, process of heating up water without electricity, both describe typical lunch meals.

[35:00] Joyce describes bittersweets, Joyce describes melon farming in detail, Phyllis describes a typical family supper.

[40:00] Joyce describes Sunday meals growing up, Phyllis had play time after dinner and Joyce had chores, both discuss watching television with their family.

[45:00] Joyce admires the appliances/furniture in her grandmother's house, Joyce describes pies made by her great-grandmother, Phyllis recalls details of her childhood home.

[50:00] Joyce's community has gone "downhill," Phyllis describes racial challenges she faced, Phyllis's grandparents had to go to Illinois for their interracial marriage because no one in Indiana would marry them. Joyce identifies as an African American, Phyllis identifies as Phyllis Morton.

[55:00] Phyllis recalls being called "yellow" by other kids, Joyce highlights her grandpa's farming, details of Phyllis's grandfather and blacksmithing.

[1:00:00] Phyllis recalls her grandfather talking about the Klan, discussion of the Klan's presence in Indiana.

[1:05:00] Phyllis describes her and her husband's farm, details of their livestock, Phyllis did every farm chore except driving the tractor.

[1:10:00] Phyllis appreciated the freedom of owning a farm, Phyllis and her husband both loved farming, Phyllis describes farm chores, details of caring for pigs.

[1:15:00] Phyllis describes grinding feed, details of her husband's injury, Phyllis describes farming in the winter, details of farrowing.

[1:20:00] Details of canning food, Phyllis describes foraging greens, picking blackberries.

[1:25:00] Joyce's encounters with snakes and "stick bugs," Phyllis's dogs protected her land, details of keeping coyotes and rats off the land.

[1:30:00] Details of hunting, Phyllis's husband didn't want her to be left with the farm when he passed, Phyllis never had a problem selling things.

[1:35:00] Discussion about watermelon doesn't grow the way it used to and big farmers taking over the small farmers.

[1:40:00] Phyllis's neighbors helped on her farm when needed, details of baptisms in the farm pond, details of buying used equipment, difficulties of receiving loans, determination and patience are needed to be a good farmer.