

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

Date of interview: July 23, 2019

Names/s of those interviewed: Dwight “Cap” Greer

Primary Interviewer: Anna-Lisa Cox (ALC)

Secondary Interviewers: N/A

Interview Location: Lyles Station Museum, Gibson County, Indiana

Transcriber: Mabel Scroggins

Abstract: Dwight “Cap” Greer is a farmer in Lyles Station, an historically Black farming community in Gibson County, Indiana. He is descended from members of the Lyles family, who moved to Indiana in the 1830s, a generation after the earlier African American homesteaders arrived. The Lyles were long-free people of color (originally from Virginia), who had homesteaded the Tennessee frontier in the 1810s before rising racism- including the loss of their right to vote or bear arms – forced them to leave Tennessee in the 1830s for Indiana. He discusses many details of farming and what it meant to be a person of color in southern Indiana. He also discusses details in changing farming techniques including his personal experience with the toxicity of certain herbicides and pesticides used in farming at the time.

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1 of 1 (combined)

[0:00] Introduction to Dwight “Cap” Greer.

[5:00] Details of flooding on the farm, crops and animals on the farm, Dwight’s time on the farm.

[10:00] A list of garden vegetables, details of milking the cows, Dwight describes the animals on their farm.

[15:00] Details of working with horses, Dwight describes his dad’s mule, details of the horses’ strength.

[20:00] Details of picking onions with his mother, Dwight’s mother was a Lyles.

[25:00] Details of his father helping homeless people, discussion of the Great Depression.

[30:00] Discussion of times during the war, details of his father’s barn burning down.

[35:00] Dwight describes his first job, his fear of farming due to debt, details of his current land, discussion of his family’s roots.

[40:00] Discussion of the Lyles roots, Dwight identifies as black, discussion of different races and ethnicities.

[45:00] Details of his father’s work ethic, farming in accordance to the almanac.

[50:00] Dwight’s brother didn’t talk about the war, details of his family in Michigan, Dwight takes pride in his upbringing, details of his time in Chicago, Dwight prefers country-living.

[55:00] Dwight describes race impacting jobs, the importance of staying busy, the importance of having another job while farming.

[1:00:00] Discussion of different tractors and tractor accidents.

[1:05:00] Dwight didn’t have grandparents, his father preached doing your own work, details of his parents helping others.

[1:10:00] Dwight discusses the Conner family, details of his mother churning butter, details of racial prejudice.

[1:15:00] His mother sold eggs, details of a typical Sunday dinner including “poor man’s pie.”

[1:20:00] His dad hunted, Dwight received his grandfather’s shotgun.

[1:25:00] Details of Dwight’s tractors, details of his father’s tractors, growing soybeans.

[1:30:00] Details of his mother's garden, Dwight describes games he played as a child.

[1:35:00] Details of after-school chores, Dwight describes food made by his mother, details of growing cane, discussion about the Stormont family.

[1:40:00] Dwight describes racial segregation, details of his dad's advice, details of racing horses.

[1:45:00] Details of being in different restaurants as an African American, Dwight describes his interracial marriage, challenges faced in an interracial marriage.

[1:50:00] Dwight tells stories of racial prejudice, Dwight avoided places with alcohol due to violence.

[1:55:00] Discussion of sundown towns, Black families protecting themselves in different areas, Dwight tells about his brother experiencing racism.

[2:00:00] Discussion of fear and Dwight's courage, Dwight discusses the Klan, presence of the Klan in his area.

[2:05:00] Details of Dwight's first car, Dwight describes the value of his cars.