

March 9, 1977

SAM HOLT

H: Most of my people ~~wor~~ resided and were born in Hardin County, Tennessee, the 8th Congressional district, Southwestern part of the state. ~~All of my life was spent there up until 1925~~ A large part of my life was ~~perx~~ spent there up until 1925 when I moved to Detroit, Michigan. My father, mother, sisters and brothers moved here after I did. My father used to belong to the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) as was my mother, too. In the early part of 1915, under the preaching of the State Evangelist of Tennessee for the Christian Church, W. P. Martin, we were persuaded to his teaching; from the New Testament that we had obeyed something the Scripture did not ~~teach~~. We children had been sprinkled in baptism, although ~~dad and~~ Dad and Mother were immersed. We came out of the Methodist Church and were baptized into the Christian Church in the fall of 1915. From; then on until we moved to Detroit we were members of the Christian Church. In ¹⁹¹⁶1916, I left home for ~~xxxxx~~ a school in Edwards, Mississippi which was sponsored by Christian Churches all over the brotherhood at that time. I was in school until June, 1919. The following year I attended ~~ix~~ what was called then A & I State Normal in Nashville, Tennessee. When I came back to the farm, I was married to my present wife in 1921 and we have been living together since. I recieved some good Bible training in Mississippi but I have never ceased to study the Bible seriously, not for ~~ag~~ argument's sake, but to see what I had missed or didn't know. I've often said, that is one book I hope I never graduate from. I want to be in there studying until I am called away, for I figure, there is no human mind that can contain the entire mind of God. We should study at all time to uncover our past mistakes and to avoid future ones.

B::: Talk more about your parents and the close relationship which existed between blacks and whites.

H: After my birth there was not much intermarriage but prior to that time, during the days of slavery was where there was so much mixing. On my dad's mother's side, and her mother before her, and her mother--for three generations, they were slaves. Each of the women had white fathers. My grandmother was born a slave. She never learned to read or writth until the day she died in August 1922., before our first child was born. She did not know her own name to see it written. It was not permitted to teach a ~~k~~ slave how to read and write. That was one of the things that helped to hold the slave in submission--keep them ignorant of what was going on. All they got was by word of mouth, what they heard from the living room or kitchen of their masters. My grandmother had two dauthers and they did her correspondence for her, but she did learn to count money and you couldn't ~~defraud~~ defraud her one way or another. My grandfather, on my dad's side, I have little knowledge of him, but since ~~living~~ reading "Roots", I have a possibility of where he came from. I was talking with a fellow yesterday in a barber shop who is from the same part of West Tennessee ~~that~~ where young Haley was born and is also a cousin of Haley's--he's from Ripley, Tennessee only about 4 or 5 ;miles from Henning--anyway, Haley's account of the migration of his people from North Carolina, the 29 families of ex-slaves that came from the North Central part of the state, from Graham, came all the way across the mountains past Knoxville and Nashville and settled in SW tennessee. In that 29 wagon loads there were Holts, Fitzpatricks, Murrys, etc. Only the ~~Murrays~~ Murry's, their last slave owners, decided to make that migration. But when they came, the others insisted on coming. Not all of them came to West Tennessee but some stopped off along the way. There are any number of ~~B~~ black Holts in Nashville

and whether this was the beginning of them or whether my grandfather sprang from that, I don't know. I also found out yesterday about my grandmother who was a Barnes--that was her slave name-- likely came from between Ripley and Memphis, Tennessee where the Barnes own much of that land. That's as far back as I can go back with my grandfather on my dad's side. One of granddad's brothers left this part where the rest of the family settled and has not been heard from since. He and my grandfather got into an argument, knowked my grandfather out, cut him up quite a bit, took what ~~the~~ money they had between them and skipped. But in Harden County where I was reared, there were three sets of Holts. Three men, all first cousins --John, Sam, which was my grandfather, and George. They ended up with farms all joined. That land which is Tennessee River-bottom, is in cultivation now. The major part of it ~~was~~ was cleared by these three ~~men~~ and their helpers. That dates back to shortly after the Civil War. That is as far back as I can go with the Holts.

On my mother's side, her father was an Irishman named Davies.

B: Was she on this man's plantation?

H.: No. There were a lot of things that continued to go on after the ~~day~~ days of freedom. As you saw in Roots, the African's daughter was sold and raped immediately and George was born. I don't know ~~w~~ how extensive it is in the South today, but when I left there and long after I left, it was a very, very common thing for influential and wealthy white men to have his own respectable family and one or two wenches on the side. But they were not being used in the same way in which they were during slavery, I mean by that, pure gratification. They paid for it. In my wife's hometown, Savannah, they had one very influential family, the DeFords, he's a member of the church and used to be a cotton buyer who went broke a couple of time and who played around in politics and finally got to be a state representative in Nashville--he didn't make anybones about it. Get me a good, clean black woman. He had his family, and one of his sons today is a doctor and the other is a lawyer, I believe. Anyway, he kept this woman ~~all the~~ all the time. Gave her a home and everything. ~~Wife~~ When he came there to visit her, if the husband was there, he simply took his hat and went elsewhere. If the husband was out and came back and saw the car parked there, he did not go in the house until the coast was clear. That went on all over the South so there was a lot of mixing of races between the Caucasian men and black women and they thought nothing about it. But let it be tried the other way around and it was lynching, death. If the women didn't come clean if caught in the act, she was usually ostracized and looked down on by the rest of the whites. She wasn't fit to be in "our" society. There ~~was~~ was much mixing, sexually, after the abolition of slavery but it was on a different basis--he paid ~~of~~ for his pleasure. During slavery when it was discovered the mixing brought a lighter skinned slave, it became a business. You could get more money for them especially around the house where they served the elite friends, it didn't look so bad. My grandmother told me some of these things. Since she was a third generation of mixing ~~white and black, you could not tell her from a~~ ~~black and white, you could not tell her from a~~ ~~white and black, you could not tell her from a~~ ~~black and white, you could not tell her from a~~ with a white father; you could not tell her from a thoroughbred Caucasian. She had long black hair and talked with a southern ~~drawl~~ drawl - a typical southerner. Her ^{mother's} daughter who ~~did~~ died a couple of years ago in Chicago was the same way. I have seen Aunt Anna sit down to comb her ~~hair~~ hair and it came down to here. But my grandfather, I never saw him in person for he died in September 1897 and I was born the following July. I have pictures of him. His hair was coal black and lay in big curls on his head. He was a mixture of both white black and Indian, the same as I am. Grandmother had been bleached out until ~~she~~ she was ~~an~~ almost

thoroughbred Irish; my mother's father was an Irishman and her mother was half black and half Indian. That's how the races were mixed up. There are a lot of people today, even among the black, that do not understand why there are so many shades of color in the black race. It all had its beginning; even before they got to these shores during the days of slavery. The women were raped on the ships and sold ~~to slaves~~ as slaves later. Some of them gave birth from having conceived while coming across from Africa.

B. Do you know of specific instances of Indian mixing or do you know it was just there.?

H: I remember when we were quite young and there was a group of Indians who would come through that part of the country every year, they were a nomadic type of people. They would go down along the river and get willow branches to weave as bric-a-brac which they would sell. They always camped on John Holt's property near his country store. They had covered wagons. They visited practically all the residents around there in the summer time begging for vegetables out of their gardens. Everytime they would come to our place they would look at my mother and exclaim "You have Indian blood in you." Mother told us, of course about her parentage. Just to show you how wide-spread this business of prostitution was--they didn't call it that back then--on my mother's side, she has two brothers--lets's see, there were four children. Her ~~father's~~ father, named ~~da~~ Davies, she had a sister who was as white as any white woman you have ever seen,--her father's name was Kincannon, a white man. My mother had a ~~white~~ half-brother not quite as fair as my mother was and his father's name was Linton, a white man, and the other half-brother was as black as black could be--his name was McKnight. Her grandmother had four children and each of a different father. I don't think grandma went out for prostitution but she was paid for it. It was a carry over from slavery. What I am saying is this: and the results were being felt not only on the big farms known as plantations then, in Mississippi and in various other places. I had three years experience in Hinds County where Jackson and the school was in Mississippi. This is where the civil rights struggle of recent years ~~occurred~~ occurred. There were 6 prosperous men who owned the greater part of that county and on every one of ~~these~~ their plantations the same thing that happened in slavery days--slighted altered, I would say-- was in existence down there. They called them ~~six~~ tennants; then, and they were renters. In the ~~town~~ town of Edwards they had a store for the public and a commissary for the tennants who were not permitted to buy in the regular store. For them would be issued rough clothing, staple foods and whatever was needed for that family and it was chalked up for ~~that~~ against that family ~~for~~ in the books. In the fall of the year when the cotton was harvested, the people would be called in for settlement. Most of the time the tennant was still in debt. He was not permitted to see any of the books. If the landlord wanted to know anything or wanted to make any deals ~~or arrangements~~ or arrangement, he always went to the woman. The man went out of the house for these business deals. Under those circumstances and over a long period of time, the woman became the boss in the home. This is not something I am ~~guessing~~ guessing about. I witnessed it. All the man was a father of the children, worked from early Monday morning until Saturday noon and he was as free as a bird for the rest of the day and Sunday. He could do as he pleased until Monday morning as long as he reported back to ~~work~~ work. The wife need not ask any questions for it was none of her business what he did. Thus the family life was disrupted during slavery and many of the overtones are still yet in many of the homes of the blacks.

The ~~man was~~ black man was educated away from his role in the home by a controlling woman who did the business, birthed and looked after the children out of necessity. My mother-in-law was a typical one of those and her husband danced to her. He was more like a brother to me than a father-in-law. There is just now becoming different and is the reason why there is so much dissatisfaction in young marriages. The whites are having the same thing now. The man wants to assert himself and the woman says I'm the boss. The blacks have had that a long time. It is a carry over from the old system.

B: How did you mother explain these differences in her brothers?

H: People in those days learned to live with it. It was everywhere. Sometimes it was whispered about and nobody seemed to place a stigma on one born in this manner. In my mother's case, they were all born out of wedlock. My grandmother was never married to any of those men. Her maiden name was Spears. She had her house and raised these children together. Each one with a different father. She never had a black husband as such. When I got old ~~enough~~ enough and began to ask questions, my mother told me everything. My mother and all of them took the name of Spears eventually. In the last few years, the families are beginning to come together with a present-day identity.

B: I'm told such uneducated people developed a greater sense of memory on which they relied.

H: That's true. As Haley says. Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee which he mentioned, evidently had its beginning shortly after Emancipation. Haley's father and mother met there. They were ~~ix~~ engaged to be married the same time my wife and I were. They married ahead of us. Young Haley, which is the oldest boy was a year and a half, maybe two years older ~~than~~ than my oldest boy that called last night. Anyway, education had become a more of an opportunity then. I am not trying to say that no slave learned, because there was many young daughters and sons that secretly taught the slaves to read and write. But God forbid if ~~Ma~~ Master found out, that slave was sold right away. If you keep people ignorant you can control them. But once they become enlightened, they are going to ask questions and they are going to do something about it. Many slaves learned music and things of that kind from mistresses daughter. That ~~was~~ was a mark in those days of sophistication. It was forbidden, however. I don't mean to imply ~~there~~ there were no sympathetic slave owners. The system decreed that ~~total~~ total submission to the owner be maintained under all conditions, and there were sincere Christian men ~~and~~ and women who ~~w~~ owned slaves. Even Paul, back in Bible times, told how to treat your slaves, so it was not an uncommon thing. These things were more or less accepted. I know on my grandfather's side I found out a couple of years ago from my cousins who live in Chicago about Aunt Lula. I did not know who Aunt Lula was and inquired about her. They said she lived in Savannah, Tennessee. It was one of my grandfather's daughters out of wedlock. Men did not deny it in those days. They did not live together and every now and then they would throw a little support to them on the side. It was rather loose in morals as compared to what we know today (from the Bible). In those days you were just male and female and whatever was produced was excepted. In some ways we are getting around to the true spirit in marriage. Names may be kept in line and families can be accounted for. In those days slaves ~~were~~ were chattel and listed only by their first name, and took the name of the owner. If sold, they took the new owner's name. Roots brings these things out.

When owners took liberties with women slaves, they didn't pay anything for they figured they owned their property--and the courts upheld that sort of stuff.

B: When you said your grandmother was paid by these different men who fathered the children, did they help support the raising of the children?

ironing.

H: No. She worked ~~was~~ by washing clothes. When the children got large enough their mother would hire them out. My mother was a hired servant in Saltillo, Tennessee. In Henderson, Tennessee she worked for some family in the gardening force. They grew some of the finest tomatoes on the market on Forked Deer River bottom. They don't grow; them as they do here--they staked them up to keep them clean. She worked in the tomato and Strawberry fields as a little girl to earn her keep. It was a tough, very hard life, but they existed. She married my dad at the age of 18 and moved with him on the farm of his father. They built a home and worked on the old home place until he bought a small farm of his own, but that wasn't productive enough because we children came along bang, bang, bang--not hardly ~~two~~ two years difference between us. He bought ~~the~~ the second farm on Tennessee River bottoms and later the house got too small and so he added a room on to that but that became too small. He then bought near by where a white family was moving out into the next county so Dad bought the house and 300 acre farm from them. It was very fertile. We existed there until we got big enough to branch out on our own. Finally, Dad sold the farm and moved here to Inkster. My ~~dad~~ Dad was a good farmer as he had done that all ~~his~~ his life. As a younger man, he was in charge of his Dad's place as they had a lot of help around there. Some were share-croppers and some were just hired people. My grandfather, ~~was~~ my Dad's father was a stock buyer of ~~and~~ hogs, cattle, etc. He was gone practically all the time to Louisville, Padukah etc. where he disposed of livestock. We were fortunate to have pretty good land there. Sometime in the late winter, like February or March, the Tennessee River would overflow and cover the place from hill to hill and we would get a new layer of topsoil from that muddy water coming down(--from my Dad's farm. It was further up the Tennessee *Bayd*) and renewed the soil every year.

B: Would you talk about race relations as to how the farmers would help one another.

H: There ~~was~~ a good community spirit which was instilled in me and I can't get away from it. We had ~~what~~ white and black farms adjoin each other and families reared up in the same community. We differed in race, religion and politics but when it came to outsiders coming in and interfering with anyone--no matter ~~who~~ whether black or white you had the whole community to deal with. They rushed to each other's rescue. Among the whites we had the Dodds, Blankenships, Allens and Fishers--all land owners. Dad bought his farm from one of the Allens. The Allen children and Dad and his brothers and sisters all grew up side-by-side. Played together, romped together and had a beautiful relationship even in adulthood. If one was sick like in the ~~spring~~ spring of the year when it was time to put in crops, then the others pitched in to see that the work was done. It did not matter black or white. And the women would come together at whoever's home the work was being done and the food supplies were prepared for the entire bunch. The locks on the doors was only to ~~hold~~ hold the door shut. Practically all of us had open fire places so the doors were shut to keep the wind from blowing the door open and ~~setting~~ blowing sparks which might set the house on fire. Everyone livestock was kept inside fences. If you saw a neighbor's cattle out, you rounded the cattle back into the right pasture and closed the gate. ~~We~~ The next time we ~~we~~ saw the neighbor we might tell what happened. We knew each other as human beings. ~~xxxx~~ Different races were discussed to be sure but when two people of different races ~~were~~ are interested in the welfare of the whole, we could forget these kinds of things. I am so glad I was brought up under that ~~a~~ sort of atmosphere. I can't bear any ill will toward anyone.

I know this was not the spirit in many parts of the country. I believe dissention was caused where there was poverty and illiteracy on both sides. In the part of the county just North of Savannah there was a town called ~~a~~ Nixon, Tennessee. ~~xxx~~ There was a large population of poor, illiterate whites and the same was true of blacks. They were always at it until finally the whites got ~~whx~~ help from others sections and drove the blacks out of there. I don't know if here are any there now or not. Bloody Nixon was what it used to be called. I think there was jealousy ~~sh~~ on both sides. The schools were almost nil. People in our area were industrious, ambitious and helped one another as they lived side by side. You see, in below Savannah, the Tennessee makes a big curve through a valley a few miles wide on each side. On our side of the river people owned their farms. On the other side, it was owned by some of the wealthier people of Savannah and they rented it out. My father-in-law drove out of Savannah to rent some of that land. But our side was black, white, black white scattered along the road. These farmers visited back and forth ~~and~~ as they met one another in the fields. No one was envious of the other for they all made their living in the same way, and in the fall of the year most everyone had something for market, usually Cotton, ~~xx~~ pigs calves or mule colts to sell. That was considered cash produce. You worked all summer and got your money in the fall. And before Prohibition came along, there was quite a market for corn wich went to Louisville and Paducah big distilleries. Some demanded the corn be shelled and put in bags and others wanted it bagged with husk on it. We always had a market for corn and that river bottom could really grow it. Later on when I was quite some size, the government introduced soy beans. We had never heard of it before and were leery of it. It didn't look like anything we had seen. The government furnished a free bushel to any farmer who would grow it and report on the results. Some did it and the ~~exp~~ output was very good so that got to be one of the stable crops. It was not only good for hay but for seed. They grew a lot of what they called ~~w~~ Whip-o-will peas, a brown and white speckled pea, a ~~xx~~ nutritious food for livestock as hay and the dried pea shelled out and brought a good price.

I was raised on the North side of the river about 12 miles from Savannah which is on the South side. The River there runs somewhat East and West. Out from the river bottoms were the hills and all the farming ~~k~~ there was in creek bottoms ~~x~~ from streams which emptied into the Tennessee. Sometimes they were ~~wixxxx~~ wide and fertile. Here potatoes and peanuts were grown and watermellons. The land is not heavy ~~ey~~ but is a light loam soil ~~whicn~~ lends itself to the growing of mellow ~~s~~.

B: You said DeFord helped to start the black church?

H: Yes. We had never heard of the Christian church but it had been called the Campbellite Church. Not knowing at the time ~~at that time~~ that a little farther North there were two or three Churches of Christ. The Christian Church called them the "anti's" because they were not known to be progressive. They were against everything. DeFord was a member there in Savannah of the Christian Church and had a knowledge of the Christian Church in Nashville and further East. He got in touch with someone who pointed out that the blacks had a State Evangelist whose ~~xxxx~~ territory included the whole state. He got him into Savannah by hiring a hall out of his own pocket and turned this man, W. P. Martin, to preach. His preaching caught on in a great way. When the work got started by leaps and bounds, they wanted to build a church building. Some of Dad's relations on his father's side who lived in Savannah communicated back and forth with him. He and his brother-in-law were leaders among the blacks in our community and confirmed that they wanted to hear Martin, too. He came over on our side of the river and it almost ~~wxxxx~~ wrecked the AME, CME and ~~a~~ the Baptist churches. It was in November, 1915 that I was ~~px~~ baptized in the Tennessee River. There were 25 of us that day. My sister who lives down there now, was the

first one ~~ot~~ to walk out and make the confession. So ~~when~~ the two communities cooperated more together and when they got ready to put up the church building, Martin did not mind working and knew how to make cement blocks--DeFord rented a block machine and materials were handy so that the only thing to buy was cement. They estimated how many were needed and Martin and the others made them. No one knew how to ~~how~~ lay blocks, so they sent down to Edwards, Mississippi--to the school where I later attended--and got hold of Mr. Lehman, the President and that was part of the training --farming, carpentry, electrical, etc., so one young man from Silver, Texas who was an expert ~~rocklayer~~; block layer and people boarded him free of charge and he built the building. Part of it is still standing there now. I gave a small, white New Testament which is sealed in it now if it has not decayed. ~~That~~ That 's the beginning of the work there.

Of course we used the school building to worship in on our side of the River without any problems. I understand that building has been torn down. I was down there in 1968 and it was still standing but I understand it has been torn down since then. My grandmother gave the land - one acre - for the school building to be built on for educational purposes. It was on her farm.

In 1968, I saw the Christian Church building in Savannah, which I gave the New Testament to, it is about in ruins now. It seemed that those of the Christian Church who remained there are not using it and it had deteriorated quite a bit, nevertheless, the front wall was still standing. As you face the building, the cornerstone was on the left side.

We were discussing the relationships between the Caucasian male and the black female and the conditions among the well-off whites, especially, and those of the black women who carried themselves a little above the ordinary in dress and things of that kind. These didn't fool around with just anybody among the blacks. That's the way DeFord was doing it, I know. And I noticed when I went to school in Mississippi, that seemed to be the trend there then. They had their own families, wives and children were respected in the community, but the side activity was a thing that was common among the more wealthy of the whites. Now the middle-class and under among the whites kept as far from the blacks as they could when it came to sexual relations. I don't know the reasons but I know it happened.

B: You never mentioned DeFord having children by that black woman. Contraceptives weren't all that common back then.

H: That is true. Whether contraceptives were used, I don't know, but she never had any children by him. "Mary, would you come here please. Do you know whether or not this woman Ed DeFord was playing around with, did he ever have any children by him?" "Un-huh." "Did she have any of her own?" "Un-huh" There's your answer. I never knew of her having any but she and my wife grew up together in the same community. I knew her well, but my wife knew her and her husband quite well.

B: All this blows my mind. All this was going on in the community and was quite open.

H. All this was in the teens - 1910 or 11 when I first knew the family. This went on until I left down there in 1925. I saw DeFord down there again in 1939 when we were visiting her mother and father who were still living at that time. My father-in-law had to go downtown for something on the court square, he didn't see me as he was talking to someone, I walked over and whacked him on the shoulder, "How are you

Mr. DeFord?" "Hi, Holt. How's your Pappy?" He knew that Mom and Dad had moved North and wanted to know how they were getting along. That's the last time I saw him alive.

B: In the Savannah, this is only one case that you knew of, right? You assume others?

H: Not like I am of this one. There was talk of others in such a way that I have reason to believe it happened. I've seen him go in there. After my wife and I were married in 1921 she and I lived with her mother and father for a while and I took a job with the sawmill in Savannah. Of course, I was through town and I was out in the three sections of the town. There was New Town, where the greatest percentage of blacks lived and this woman lived in that area. On my grandfather's side, he had relations living down in that section and quite often we visited with them and spent the night with them. This was a block and a half from where this woman lived. I have seen it with my own eyes. So that I know. Of course, I knew of cases when I was in Mississippi where it was happening among the wealthier people with the better grade of blacks as they were called. None of the blacks were well-off as far as that was concerned. Just above starvation, they were. In plain English, "clean Niggers" as they were called. A woman was a "clean wench."

This was an economic advantage to the blacks. What she couldn't bring in through washing and ironing she could get with her supplemental activities. In those small towns among the women, even though their husbands were farming and bringing in the bread as far as that was concerned, a lot of help was brought into the family through washing and ironing for the wealthier people. In fact, my wife's sister just stopped that a couple or three years ago. She had a big family and there was not enough money coming in and her husband was practically disabled several years ago. He had one leg damaged to where it had to be taken off. He was no more to be depended on to bring in the bacon so she was taking in washing and ironing for I don't know how many people each week. They would bring the clothes to her, she would laundry them and then pick them up. That was cash and of course it helped out. In the case with a DeFord, this extra-curricular activity brought in a little extra cash and she could do with it whatever she wanted it for. Whatever her desires were. She was known as "his woman."

B: I am trying to figure this out from the other side. The husband must have resented it.

H: Maybe he did but he didn't show it. I don't know what went on in his mind but you could read by his actions that he would just stay out of the way until they get finished. "When he's gone, I'll come in." This is not a false accusation, but how he reacted mentally, I don't know. He never expressed himself to me and I knew him better than I know you. He may have shared with other close friends, but I don't know. I testify only to what I saw.

B: I have been trying to understand the Black Power movement and much resentment must have been seething a long time over such injustices.

H: It's a smouldering flame. There is no denying that. It's still there. I do recall among the better-thinking blacks and my father-in-law was one of them, there were remarks made about "old Ed DeFord". They didn't say that to his face because he was a white man but among themselves they resented what was going on but nobody dared to face DeFord with it or to threaten the woman to try to get her to stop.

On the other side of the coin, that is one of the practices of the Caucasians, if they find a woman that is slipping around, crossing the fence they tell her to straighten up and fly right or else! She usually straightened up. Blacks didn't take things that far because we were powerless. It's a carry-over from the atrocities and cruelties of slavery when blacks were absolutely helpless. You had to stand by and see your own wife mutilated and misused and you had better not look like you are thinking different. You got the lash or else you got sold away from it. I don't hear so much of that now here in the North. You've got houses of prostitution and some of them are integrated. Both white and black are in there together and they are visited by both kinds of men. Now you take Downtown in that Brewster Center (housing project), whether it is true now or not, I don't know, but there is one couple I know who used to be members of the church in Lemay and the man still works in the Post Office, they were living in those towers down there, I think the wife is a member of the Westside congregation, anyway, she used to tell the wife how the big limosines would come in there after dark and black women would come down out of the building and be whisked away and be delivered back there later on that night. That was the Bon Tons, the sons and husbands of wealthy people. What happened one doesn't know but likely they were using them and the blacks were getting money for it. That got to be so bad that even the city was getting in on it. The black community in the area was getting up in arms against that. It was so obvious and right out in the open. But today the pot can't call the kettle black. It is just a social evil.

B: Well back to the church and your background. What was the specific encouragement for you to go to Edwards:

H: I don't know how to answer that other than from just a youngster, before I was sprinkled in the Methodist church and was supposed to be a Christian, I always had a liking for the Scriptures and I liked to hear preaching. In those days, I didn't know whether it was right or wrong. Preaching always intrigued me. So after the work of the Christian Church was started over in Holtsville, my home village, I began a sincere and concerted effort to learn as much about the Bible as I possibly could. I don't know whether my mother and father saw something in me that they wished to encourage, but they're the ones who approached me with the situation. I didn't ask to go to Edwards, but they wanted to know if I would consider going there. That was 1915, the year I was baptized and I was 16 years old, nearing 17. I went there in January of 1916. I hadn't quite finished the 8th grade which was as high as the rural school went. I was a little old for the 8th grade, as educational opportunities were at that time. Then you learned step by step and our school years were so short. Summer school was about 2 months after crops were planted and cultivated. When it got to large for cultivation, then you had to wait until harvest. Cotton-picking in an ordinary year started in the middle of September. So by the time of the laying by of the crops and the time harvest began we went to school. After crops were gathered in, we would have fall and winter term, which was about three months. All told, we might have gotten six months education in a year. So that slowed down one's education. It was the run of the mill for others to be in the 8th grade and be 15 or 16. Some were even older than that. I know some down there now who were in school the same time as was I that can barely read and write their name. It depended on the ability of the individual as to how fast one traveled with the time he had to cover the material.

DeFord got someone from Edwards to come and help build the Savannah building before I went to Edwards. So he must have known about the school. I am sure my father heard about the school through him. After the Savannah building was put up and the cornerstone

laid, Martin got in touch with Preston Taylor, Minister for the Lee Avenue Christian Church and mortician, and he came down for the cornerstone laying and dedication of the building. Then Martin began to solicit in Savannah and Holtsville for students to go to Edwards. So that is how my parents began to think of sending me there. He had been laboring and continued to work in that area for quite some time. So he knew some of the youngsters who had an inclination to build a church on. They approached me one day in the cotton field. I knew they had been discussing the qualities of the school and what it had to offer in regard to Bible training. Naturally, that was pleasing to me for I had already begun such under Martin's preaching. I said "Fine" when they asked me, not knowing they had already made preparations to send me. So after the harvest in January 1916, Mr. Lehmann, President of the school had been contacted. This man was a second generation out of Germany, and could speak the German or English languages fluently. He and his wife were from Illinois or Ohio, had just gotten married and had been sent down there to start the school in its infancy. They had no children at the time. A cousin and I were chosen from Holtsville as the first two prospective students from that part of the country- my dad's brother-in-law, his youngest sister's husband went down to enroll.

Well in two weeks after I was there, I was left alone because my cousin became dissatisfied, caught a train and went home. That meant I was the only Tennessean there. He was single, restless and that wasn't for him. Too many restrictions. The girls had to wear uniforms; there were some things to do and some things you had better not attempt to do. In 1917, there was quite an influx of students from Savannah and Holtsville. My brother, John, my sister who lives in Idlewild, and my mother's half-sister's oldest daughter, Bertha, and even my public school teacher decided he wanted to go back to school and came there. There were quite a few boys but no girls that came from Savannah. Martin did a fine job in recruiting in our area. He was a very aggressive man and persuasive.

That lasted up until WWI. I had a cousin who was drafted from the school. He went overseas and did service. That's the one I told you about in Memphis. He came back and as the result of his being a veteran they gave him a job in the post office in Memphis. Others began to move out from there little by little. John, my brother became dissatisfied and came home. My cousin, my sister and I remained only. At the end of 1919 after the commencement exercises we all came back to Holtsville. In the meantime, Martin had sent his son, Bill, and his daughter from Jonesville, down there. They returned home about the same time as did we. The following year, instead of returning to Edwards, we went to A and I in Nashville. A whole flock of us relations from Holtsville went up there. It got to be a joke in class as they called roll. They would just drag out the word "H-o-l-t" and the whole bunch of us would answer. And because of the visit by Taylor at the dedication in Savannah, we worshipped with him when we went to Nashville. He was still the preacher there and I guess was until he died. His undertaker establishment was downtown near Cedar and something, I forget. That was the Southeastern side of Nashville. It was near Jefferson Avenue. He built the church and controlled it with an iron hand. He wouldn't go anywhere else and wouldn't allow anyone else to come in there.

(end of tape II -A)

B: We were talking about sex education in the early days and I don't often get a chance to talk to some one of an older generation about such matters and I am curious, when did contraceptive techniques come in to general use? When did you hear about them?

H: I guess I was about 13 or 14 and it came about in a haphazard way. It was first made known to me by one of my school teachers. In a casual way this man was trying to encourage me to have sexual affairs with some of the girls in school. That's the kind of a teacher he was--not very becoming to a man. I told him I wasn't interested in that kind of a thing and he replied "You don't have to have a baby." I said, "What are you talking about?" "You do this and that"--he told me of this tube-like affair that was in use at those times. How far back they were in use I don't know. "Why don't you use that?" He was kind of a man or boy-spoiler. I found out later that he would probably be classified as a homosexual. He went with girls but never would marry them. He didn't fit as a female and he was not fitting as a male. That was the way he conducted himself. Anyway, he's the one that told me about this. It didn't interest me at all as I had no reason to use contraceptives. I wasn't leading that kind of a life and it was not on my mind at all. I found out later that it was being used. It was the only thing that I knew of. Later on I became aware of various devices which were being used to prevent pregnancy and also to insure abortion. Then when WW I came on and men began to return at the end of the war from France I was given a full picture. France has been known as a dying nation because of their contraceptives. The society there demanded such. Soldiers said you could go into a store and buy every kind possible and the women clerks would show you how to use it. Their system called for a woman to have a dowery before she could get married, before the man would accept her as a wife. That (sex) was the easiest way to get it. They were licensed and inspected by the government health department to make sure that no disease was spread. But once a woman was married then she became as straight as a shingle with nothing to do with anybody but her husband. In order to get her money she had to make sure she didn't become pregnant. So all the devices were the result of this trade that was going on. There was this white fellow who came back who had married a German girl and brought her back with him. He said he did not like the French women because they were too loose. He and two cousins who were over there and a colonel here in Inkster--they all said the same story. So during the war there were a lot of brown babies born because the men refused to use it. The woman, in order to get the money took the chance. One guy in Inkster said he was a door-keeper for a place once for all French women and the soldiers were lined up just like for pay-day. He was collecting the money on his days off. So this social demand of the woman gave rise to the traffic in contraceptives. That was France in those days. I don't know whether it is that way or not at the present time.

B: Back to spiritual matters, tell me about your contact with the church here in Detroit.

H: The first contact I had with any church was at Allendale and Grand River, where there was a congregation of the Christian Church at that time, all white. My brother John and I worshipped there quite regularly and it went on fine until my brother's father-in-law, young Haley's uncle, decided he wanted to go along with us. We went