

4B
ORIGINAL
HAZEL STAPLETON TAPE #2 (4-B) JUNE 24, 1980

DO YOU REMEMBER, DO YOU REMEMBER HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AT ALL, HAZEL?

Well,...

LIKE CHRISTMAS,...

Well, Christmas, ah, people just have that in their own homes. But on the 4th of July, there would be picnics. And sometimes they would serve us in town.

WHAT WERE THE HOLIDAYS THAT WERE MOST IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE THERE IN BUXTON?

The 4th of July, and I think the 5th of August, and Labor Day.

WHAT WAS THE FIFTH OF AUGUST? (ES)

I forgot what...the eman--, the emancipation somethin', like that day.

Oh, (both ES and Hazel talking at once)...

SO THERE WOULD BE A BIG PICNIC ON THE FIFTH OF AUGUST. (ES)

Oh, yes.

WERE MANY OF THE PEOPLE THERE IN BUXTON, HAD THEY BEEN SLAVES? EX... WERE THEY EX-SLAVES?

Well, I'm sure, cause my father's mother was.

DID YOU HEAR MANY STORIES? WAS THERE MUCH TALK ABOUT SLAVERY?

Oh, yes. My grandmother used to tell us lots of little things.

WHAT DID SHE HAVE TO SAY, HAZEL, ABOUT SLAVERY?

Well, I'll tell ya. It's, It's just a shame, but we had a box. ^{her} when

Her master, when her master turned her loose, for her to go for herself, And my sister went ahead and gave it to, gave it away to my brother's wife. The little box they packed with her little lunch in it. And she used to tell us some things, how, ah, how said that ~~her~~ master was good to her. Kind to her. Good and kind to her.

WAS SHE IN...THIS WAS IN VIRGINIA?

Yes, uh-huh.

OKAY.

SO WHEN THEY WERE FREED, THEY PACKED A LITTLE LUNCH AND SAID YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN... (ES)

Yes, packed a little bucket, ^{that was her} packed a little lunch box. And my sister gave it to my brother's wife, you know. I don't know what they done with it.

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MAYBE LOST IT.

Yes, oh, she probably, she must have gave it to her daughter. She would have taken that, too. It was something worth keeping.

SHE DIDN'T SAY..IT WAS ONLY FROM THIS ONE WOMAN THAT YOU HEARD STORIES OF SLAVERY, IS THAT RIGHT?

Yes, well, now my father's mother. She was a little different. Seemed like, well, she was raised in the big house, what's my...

Your grandmother. (sister ?)

My grandmother, yes, well that was mamma's mother. Yes, my grandmother, my mother's mother. Yes.

SO SHE SPENT MOST OF HER TIME IN THE BIG HOUSE.

Yes, where ever it was, I don't know...I didn't hear them say that.

OKAY.

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT BUXTON, WHAT WAS THE HAPPIEST EXPERIENCE THAT YOU REMEMBER? (ES)

Well,...

WAS IT A PICNIC OR SOMETHING? (ES)

Well, yes, all of my days there, we just had happy days. Cause mamma never did allow us to spat with each other, we just had lots of fun. Like in the summer time, every Sunday, we would go hunting flowers, the boys would go goose berry huntin', and with fall in the air, we'd go, we didn't have very far to go, to gather walnuts. Just had lots of fun.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THAT COMPARED TO YOUR TIME IN CHICAGO, HAZEL, AH..?

Well, of course, as you get older, your pleasure changes. The things that I'd do when I'm grown, and after the things I did then wouldn't interest me.

BUT, BUT THE AH, THE TIME IN BUXTON, EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE A CHILD, DO YOU YOU THINK THAT WAS A BETTER TIME OF YOUR LIFE THAN THE TIME IN CHICAGO?

Well, the onliest thing there, we were happy, we didn't have no responsibility, and you don't, you don't miss the things that you never had. Now to go back there now, I wouldn't like to live in nobody's country now. Course the country like now, so Marvin tells me, there's a big difference. Yes.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN ELECTRICITY CAME, OR DID THEY ALREADY HAVE IT? (ES)

Well, I don't...they had it in town, but we didn't have it, we had lamp lights.

AND TELEPHONES? (ES)

WE didn't have no telephone.

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DID THEY HAVE TELEPHONE IN TOWN, THOUGH? (ES)

Yes, they had them funny looking telephones. Uh-huh.
In Central Station. (sister)

IN CENTRAL STATION, THE TELEPHONES. (JH)

YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH, THERE WOULD BE AN OPERATOR. (ES)

(two talking at once.)

DID THEY HAVE ANY KINDS OF TRANSPORTATION AROUND BUXTON, LIKE A HACK OR A BUGGY? (ES)

Yes, they had hacks when you were going out of town, going to Albia. Going to Hamilton, why they had, well they had, they used to call them rigs. But no transportation in town, I think everybody, You used to have to walk.

DID A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE HORSES? (ES)

Oh, yes, they had horse and buggies, ^{yes} lots of people had horse and buggies.

DID YOU HAVE ONE OUT TO THE FARM? (ES)

No, we didn't. We didn't have no horse and buggy.
We had horses. (sister)
But no buggy. Uh-huh.

NO BUGGY. THEN EVERY TIME YOU WANTED TO GET TO CHURCH, OR BACK AND FORTH, YOU WALKED.

We walked. We were little and young, and it takes no time to get here. Run all the way. (laughs)

DO YOU EVER REMEMBER ^{ANY} CONVERSATIONS WITH EITHER OF YOUR PARENTS ABOUT, ABOUT HOW TO LIVE LIFE? (JH)

No.

ABOUT THE VALUES OF LIFE...AH, NO?

HARD WORK. (ES)

That's right. Of course now after we got a certain age, I ^{did hear} remember my mother saying, now well, we'll have to do something, and we'll have to move to Des Moines, so's the kids can go to school, cause the meantime, my brother's been ready for high school, and the high school's ^{there} burnt down. And my mother had been here to Des Moines, to visit her mother; lived here in Des Moines. And she was talking about the school's here. And for a while, my sister, Jeanette, she came here and went to school. So...

LIVING WITH...

Grandmother.

UH-HUH. I SEE.

Yeah, my mother knew it was time. Time for her, for them to get out of the country so we could go to school.

YEAH...DID YOUR MOTHER EVER TALK TO YOU GIRLS ABOUT SEX?

NO.

NO TALK WHATSOEVER?

No talk whatsoever. We knew things was bad, something was going on, somewheres, but she didn't tell us nothin'.

SHE LET YOU FIGURE IT OUT ON YOUR OWN, HUH? (ES)

Yes, we didn't know anything... (laughs)

WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS TRUE OF FAMILIES OF YOUR SCHOOLMATES, TOO, THAT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE TALK ABOUT THAT?

Well, that I don't know. But I know when I was a little kid, other little kids would try to draw bad pictures, and write out little bad words, and I didn't know what it was, and gettin' to me to take home to my mother to read, and then my mother would find them, and say where'd you get this, and I'd say, well, mamma, _____ told me to give this to you. She'd say "don't you play no more with this mess back here! Back here. If you do, I'm going to whip you." And then when _____ and them would try to give me something, I was scared to take it.

(Laughing)

Oh, they had me so busy for a while, carrying notes back.

DID YOU, DID YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND HAVE ANY CHILDREN?

No. No.

DO YOU REMEMBER ANY... DO YOU REMEMBER ANYBODY GETTING PREGNANT BEFORE THEY ~~WERE~~ MARRIED? (ES)

I remember once there when I was a kid, but I don't remember the family name. A little girl _____, and she died and I heard people, you know spoke about it. What was wrong. But I can't think of her name. I didn't really know 'em very well.

IM JUST WONDERING IF THE MOST OF THE TIME THAT HAPPENED, THEY MARRIED THE...(ES)

Well, I never heard too much of that. Cause we lived in the country where lots of that could have been going on and we didn't know it, see.

→ another speaking here (Lizell's sister Jeanette?) yes it is

This picture here is a picture of my grandmother, she told me when I was about 16 years old, she knew then that I could understand it, and she told me this herself, she said that she was the daughter of, of a slaveowner. And that he would not let her go out of the home, she had to stay at home in what she called the big house. And that's where she got her education. And she was pretty well educated, for a woman of her background in slavery. So we know that. She told me that

NOW MUCH EDUCATION? (JH)
COULD SHE READ AND WRITE? (ES)

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Yes, she wrote a nice hand. Oh, yes she could read. She was a wonderful reader. Yes she could read all of the papers, books. She was a wonderful reader. And she wrote a very legible hand. So, ah, so she told me that on her own, uh-huh.

SO THIS WAS YOUR GRANDMOTHER ON WHICH, THE MATERNAL OR PATERNAL SIDE?

This is on my mother's side.

MOTHER'S SIDE.

Mother's side. This is my mother's mother.

DO YOU KNOW , DO EITHER OF YOU KNOW ANYTHING MORE ABOUT EXPERIENCES OF YOUR OTHER THREE GRANDPARENTS?

Now my grandfather, he was a, he came from Virginia, to Mucha Kanak, and I think he lived there for a while, but I think they separated and he went back east. So that's _____ pictures of them. 107

THIS WOMAN'S HUSBAND.

This woman's husband. Yes, uh-huh. That's my mother's, my mother's father.

AND THEY SEPARATED.

Yes, they separated. And he went back, that's when he disappeared. He went off on some boat, or something. And he disappeared.

HE BECAME A SEAMAN, OR...

Yes, yes, a seaman. He was never heard from anymore. I don't know if he drowned, on this boat or what. But now, my father's mother, she stayed with the Slaves, lived with the slaves, and she didn't get the education that my mother's mother did. Cause then she was finally turned out into the world. And all she had was a little small tin box. Ah, that she had her lunch in/. Now that's as far as I know. Of her slavery days.

DID, DID ANY OF THESE WOMEN EVER COMPARE THEIR LIFE IN BUXTON WITH WHAT THEY KNEW DURING SLAVERY?

Oh, my, yes, it was heaven.

WHICH ONE WAS HEAVEN?

Buxton. Buxton was heaven. Ah, my grandmother on my father's side used to tell us funny stories. And so I can't remember too much about what she had to do. But I can remember some of the little things. They weren't allowed to entertain or anything like that. And I remember once she told me a little funny story. That, ah, that they were having a party, and the masters were supposed to have gone away and left the house to them, and they were having a party, and they were having a wonderful time, and someone on the top of the hill had saw them come in. And I can't remember what she told me what they said, but, what did they say/ But anyway they got out.

Do you want me to say it? (Hazel)

Yes.

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He said
Yes, that's right, he said well, stop your dancing and singing.

But I don't know what punishment he gave them, I think they got out of it. I think they got out of it. But they told some terrible stories, of slavery days, but as years go on, I forget. But they were told, and those were some of the entertaining hours with our grandparents.

THESE WERE FAMILY TIMES. (JH) WHERE YOU'D SIT DOWN AND TALK...

Family times where we would sit down and talk about it. So the family life in Buxton was a life different from when they were young, as slaves. So I say Buxton was a place TO bring us together.

#218 to 221 several people talking at once.

I'd like to say this, when you were talking, as I remember, telling them today, one of the main things that we had things that we played with were dolls. But one of the main things in the summer was Annie, annie over (?).

annie over?

ANNIE OVER. (ES) ANNIE OVER THE BARN WITH THE BALL.

Yes, Annie over the barn with the ball.
And gathering handkerchiefs and things like that. (Hazel)

(Background noise)

OKAY.
Just something I wanted to...

WERE THERE EVER...IN THE SCHOOL, WERE THERE PLAYS THAT YOU PUT ON AS A CLASS, OR ACTIVITIES LIKE THAT? DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING?

Well, we would start at Christmas time. But then we would practice and at Christ...well, we had just ordinary little programs. But where we had a big program was at church. We had a big program on commencement exercises and different things like that. Was at the YMCA auditorium. Cause I remember once, I was supposed to be Mary. Anyway, the cross was built, I remember that, and I was supposed to be under the cross. I can't remember it all, but I remember being the girl who had been under the cross. And I can't remember, but I can see that. We used to have some wonderful programs, wonderful programs. But we was in lots of church plays. (both sisters)

THEN YOU LEARNED THE...THERE APPARENTLY WERE PEOPLE THERE TO TEACH YOU HOW TO PLAY THE PIANO AND THIS KIND OF THING. (ES)

Oh, yes.

NOW DID, NOW DID YOU PAY FOR LESSONS? (ES) SUPPOSE YOUR MOTHER WANTED YOU TO LEARN TO PLAY THE PIANO?

Well, now, I never did take any music lessons. I didn't take any. But we had a organ, I could get on that just by ear, and do pretty good.
Our mother taught us some on the organ.
Yes, uh-huh.

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And I had a, and my father's brother, when he, before he moved to Buxton, he was in Muchy (?) he was totally blind. And they used to have them big books that they'd have to...you know the letter teller, and I think we had, oh, that's ^{maybe} arond 70 years ago, I imagine, and we have some of those books now. Out and around up in the attic. And, and he was ~~totally~~ blind. And being blind in those days, thats been many years ago... ^{why they used to.}

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The Metho... the Baptist church. But I, oh yes, I remember, I went, they took me, I went with my mother., with my aunt. You had to get down on your knees and pray, you know...and I was down on my knees, praying, trying to get religion, and I don't, can't remember what it was, but I always, sometimes a little, little devilish, how kids are, and I remember I got so tired down ~~there~~ on my knees, I was- n't praying, I was just wasting time. And all at once I jumped up, and I said "Mamma, I got it, I got it." (laughs) I ain't had nothin', but I got tired gettin' down on my knees!

Luaghing and inaudible comments.

EVERY SUNDAY. CHARLOTTE'S BIBLE STUDY. NOW SHE WAS NOT AN AUNT. (?) THIS WAS A PUBLICATION. DO YOU EVER REMEMBER, YOU TALKED ABOUT PLAYS. I'M NOT, OF COURSE EVERYBODY'S HEARD ABOUT IT, BUT NOT A VERY ~~GOOD~~ GOOD PLAY IN MANY WAYS, WAS UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. DID THAT EVER GET PUT ON, OR THOSE KINDS OF...? (ES)

No, I never did see nothin' like that. I don't think Uncle Tom's Cabin ever appeared ~~here~~ in Buxton. No, I don't remember, and if it did, back during my days, I could remember it.

~~OKAY~~ OKAY.

THERE Were a lot of plays.
Yes, I dont... ^{remember that.}

NOW, WHEN, WHEN YOU WERE NOT IN SCHOOL, WHICH MEAL OF THE DAY WAS THE HEAVIEST MEAL? WAS IT THE NOON MEAL, OR THE...

Well, always in the evenings, cause that was when my, my father would come home from work, or even if he was home, he would, hwe would be up in the garden working, see. We had a certain time to eat.

UH-HUH. HOW ABOUT ON SUNDAY? WHAT, WHAT WAS THE EHAVY MEAL ON SUNDAY?

Well, I'll say dinner. Well maybe around, ^{oh} say...around 2 or 3 o'clock, something like that.

2 or 3 IN THE AFTERNNOON.

But we had this good heavy breakfast, you know. And then, we were kids, and if we got hungry between meals, we wanted a bread and butter sandwich, we'd get it.

WHAT WOULD BE FIXED, YOU SAID A REAL HEAVY BREAKFAST, WHAT WOULD THE BREAKFAST CONSISTOF?

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Well, sometime be ham, mostly say ham and eggs, cause we had plenty of ham, big ham up in our box.

DID YOU HAVE ANY POTATOES WITH THAT?

Yes, we had potatoes, and then sometimes, we, we would raise onions, grow about that high. And we'd take the onion tops, and cut them up with the white part of the onion, and it was delicious. Back in those days. And we have, we'd have bacon, and my mother was great for having hot biscuits, and Sunday morning sometimes, we'd have mackeral.

MACKERAL?

Yes, it's a piece of fish. You'd get it in a big buckets like that. And they'd come about that long. And a course, you have to take 'em out and soak, em. But I never did care for it, but that's what the rest of em did.

HOW WOULD THEY FIX IT, FRY IT?

Mamma, I think she would boil it. And put butter on it. And boil all the salt out of it. And then put it in the oven, put a little butter on it.

Real batter, not...
Real butter.

YOU MADE YOUR OWN BUTTER. (ES)

We amde our own butter, we'd churn it.

YOU MADE YOUR OWN CHEESE. (ES)

We'd churn our milk, had a little churn about that high. I'd be churning, churnin', churnin', then maybe Jeanette, she'd take over She'd churn, take turnabout. Then my mother would churn. Then when it'd begin to get hard, we could look down and see butter on it about that thick. Then when we got through, when we could hardly churn, she'd take it out and put it in a big crock. And she had a paddle, and she'd just work it, work all the white out of it, she worked it, worked it until it just get right down.

DO YOU REMEMBER MAKING HOMEMADE ICE CREAM? (ES)

Oh, yes! Make it...MMMMM!

AND STRAWBERRY PATCH, AND RASPBERRY.

Yes, we had a lovely strawberry patch, and we had lovely gooseberry bushes, and blackberries, and raspberries. Then we had a few plum trees. Few apple trees and cherry trees, on the place. Uh-huh.

DID YOU EVER SENT OUT INTO THE WOODS TO PICK BLUEBERRIES?

No, but my brothers went out there, and they used to go berry hunting. Go for miles. And sometimes bring a couple gallons home. Big tin gallons.

AND EAT HALF OF THEM ON THE WAY HOME, TOO. (ES)

Well, ^{time} if they weren't eating them while they were picking them.

When they got home, that was all. They would be so hungry. Yes, indeed. Oh, I just think of the woods I used to go in. And it wasn't a bit...the only thing we used to be afraid of would be wild animals or snakes. The snakes, they were awful bad. They didn't have no garter snakes. They had blue racers, black snakes, spread head (?) moccasins, and they had a whip snake, oh, all kinds of snakes.

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WEPP?

AND YOU COULD TELL THEM, YOU...(ES)

Well, and then there's a, there's one snake I didn't, you could smell them, oh, they smelled so sweet. You'd know they were there. But a rattlesnake will warn you. And the black snakes, ah, ah, when you're out, you always look for them. And they had ones they would shhhhhh! shhhhhh!, and you'd know they was near. You'd just have to get out the way. Oh, I, I've seen some awful snakes.

ARE YOU AFRAID OF SNAKES? (JH)

Oh, my word...and you know, they're bad here/? Not those kind, but garter snakes? They're terrible! Oh, my sister's next door, and we got 'em over here!

got snakes

YOU'VE GOT EM HERE? (JH)

Yes! One day I think we found five or s...I haven't seen 'em cause I don't look at em. And my sister see em over, but, I won't, I don't want to see em cause I'm scared of em. And next door there, they terrible over there.

ARE THEY, ARE THEY AROUND OUT IN THE YARD, ~~DEE~~ YOU SAY, OR IS THAT..?

Yes, well, we keep my grass cut all the time, but next door they don't and you can see them over there trying to get in the basement sometimes. And my sister next door, she did live next door, at least they over there now. They bad. But we had a fella put down some lines out back and kind of got them thinned out. But they awful bad around. The darndest thing is here they don't bite you but, oh boy, they scare you to death.

OH, YES THEY DO THAT. ANY SNAKE SCARES ME. (ES)

Yes.

DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING LIKE BEE BITES OR STINGS? DID MOM HAVE ANYTHING SPECIAL SHE PUT ON A BEE BITE? TO TAKE THE STING OUT, OR..? (ES)

I don't remember getting a sting in Buxton, but I remember getting a sting here. I remember on the place here. I was climbing a tree, and a snake, asnake bit me right there. But my mother just took a chicken and put it, cut, ah, split this chicken, and laid this chicken on it. Cause it was so far from the doctor's office, and then it didn't, it get, we took the chicken's neck, and cut the, took it's neck off first and then split him and lay him on there. And then it would get better.

DID THAT, DID THAT HELP? (JH)

It didn't bother me a bit.

AND THAT DREW THE...(ES)

Yes, uh-huh. I don't know what kind of snake it was. Just like ~~the~~ (somebody wanted to ????)
I was walking up on the tree, this tree was about this tall, oh, about this tall, and I was walking up on this.

(Hazel's sister commenting; can't understand)
DO YOU REMEMBER, AH, AH, DID YOU GO TO ALL PLACES IN BUXTON, OR WAS THERE ONLY A PART OF BUXTON THAT YOU WERE IN, THAT YOU PASSED THROUGH? (JH)

Now there's another place that they called Number 10 junction. That was way north of our house, I think, but anyway, we'd go round this road, and cross the bridge and go up a hill, it was just almost straight up, and then go way back over Number 10 junction.

DID YOUR PARENTS FORBID YOU TO GO TO ANY PART OF BUXTON? (JH)

Oh, yes, yes. She didn't allow us...just didn't let us go there, in fact we didn't want to go.

WHAT PLACES WERE YOU FORBIDDEN TO GO TO? (JH)

Well, we just didn't go into the camp much, we'd go to visit our, our, our aunt, but we just didn't want, in fact, we, we . It was just too dangerous, for kids you know, and being out after dark. Cause snakes were bad, and wild... there was a few wild animals. But we had so much fun out there in the country, until we just, we didn't want to go into town. Didn't go into Buxton. So lots of things probably went on there that we don't know nothin'about. Cause we didn't, cause mamma didn't allow us mix with everybody.

DO YOU REMEMBER ANY NEWSPAPERS AT ALL?

Yeah, there was, there was a newspaper, I can't think of the name of that, Newspaper. The Chicago Record-Herald. that was it

THEN THERE WAS A NEWSPAPER THAT WAS PUBLISHED SOMEWHERE ELSE, BUT THEY ALWAYS HAD NEWS ABOUT BUXTON. I CAN'T REMEMBER...(ES)

Was it ~~published~~ here in Des Moines?

IT COULD HAVE BEEN?

Was it the Bystander?
THE BYSTANDER.

Yeah. That's a Des Moines Paper.

YES, THAT'S A DES MOINES PAPER AT THE TIME BUXTON WAS RUNNING. (ES)
Maybe so, I don't know, there used to be an old paper here.
WE'VE GOT SOME COPIES...

And, and there used to be the Pittsburg Carrier, too. ^{cause} Pappa used to read, used to get that. Buy that downtown. Always made me buy the Pittsburg Carrier, that was another one.

DO YOU REMEMBER, DID YOU HAVE A crystal SET OR ANY KIND OF A RADIO?

No, nothin but an organ. And we had some harps that we played with our ~~mamma~~
mouth

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MOUTH HARPS. (ES)

Uh-huh, mouth harps. That the only thing I remember...And we had a good old time. (laughs)

WELL I THINK WE HAVE TALKED TO YOU FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS. (ES)

Are you satisfied, have I...?

WELL YOU'VE DONE A MARVELOUS JOB, I THINK MARVELOUS QUESTIONS, WITH
OUT TIRING YOU OUT...

Well, that's okay, anything else you want to ask me?

END OF TAPE.