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**Transcript of DARE Interview (1970): Jackson, Mississippi; Primary Informant
MS081 (Tape 0776-S1)**

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INTRODUCTION: The following was recorded from Dictionary of American Regional English, tape zero seven seven six, side one.

5 FIELDWORKER: This is a tape made of Mr. Robert B. [beep] in Jackson, Mississippi, on July eighth, by [beep]. All right Mr. [beep], you said you were with the Mississippi Agricultural Extension Service for twenty years as a state 4-H specialist, right?

INFORMANT: That's right.

FIELDWORKER: All right, would you describe the extent of the nature of your work?

INFORMANT: Well, the extension service is, is a federal service, it's a corporate extension service, part federal and part state.

10 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Cooperating in, in teaching (diffuse) and useful and practical information, uh, pertaining to agriculture and home economics to the people of the United States.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Um, and what did you have to do? And where did your work carry you?

15 INFORMANT: Well, the work carries out in the communities.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Uh, we work to develop communities, and there was not a classroom program, it was a program to carry the classroom to the people.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

20 INFORMANT: Out on the farms and in the communities and in the house.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. And you, you said that many of the responses that were listed there, you're trying to get the farmer not to use, you're trying to get him to use the, um, standard term, why is that?

25 INFORMANT: Well, we, uh, modern, uh, farming and agriculture is a business. And uh, in order to get a better profit, better standard of living, higher income is to adopt the practical experiences that uh, will help him grow a better crop with less prices. And uh, have a higher standard of living.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

30 INFORMANT: So they work to, we work to uh, to give them through demonstrations and through uh, uh examples to, to teach them to use the practical methods and, and modern methods of farming and agriculture and home economics.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. And before farmers, uh, used modern methods, uh, what were some of the obstacles that they would run into as far as their farming and, uh, animals were concerned?

35 INFORMANT: Well, uh, they couldn't produce a large number uh, of um [background speaker] quality— quantity—neither could they produce a real good quality, using, uh, using, oh, say a mule one man could, the labor was of such that the one man could not produce very much.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

40 INFORMANT: Because of his crude labor and the time it would take him to do it. Automation come in and therefore they can use a tractor and they can do twice as much work. The individual person can do s-several times as much work and he can work several more acres than he could when he just had to do it with the, the crude type of cultivation, crude type of uh, producing crops and so forth.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. And, uh, before they learned these modern methods, what would they do if the animals got sick or something?

45 INFORMANT: Well, many times they would watch the animal die, lose the animal, uh, they did not uh, uh, solicit the help of, uh, veterinarians, they would, uh, just watch the animal die. This would be a loss of income to them. But they would just say, well this is the way of, to eliminate, nature have of eliminating, uh, you know.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Animals.

50 FIELDWORKER: Uh, you say you worked in Greenville and Starksville [sic].

INFORMANT: Yes, I worked as a county agent in Greenville, and then at this time I was directly connected with the, uh, uh, farm people, with the people on the farm, the community people I worked directly with them through demonstrations, uh, modern methods of, uh, of agriculture and home economics. Uh, and we have in the state of Mississippi and each county, uh several

55 county agents and I was, uh, called a county agent at that time. And uh, uh later on I was promoted to, to a, a state specialist and therefore, I, I was a supervisor of those county agents out at the county.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: So (there), I would not, did not, uh, come in contact with these people, uh, directly
60 anymore, but uh, through the agents in the counties, I worked as a supervisor with these agents in the counties and as a program supervisor.

FIELDWORKER: Did the farmers, uh, appreciate this type of work or did they any, any way resent what you were doing?

INFORMANT: Well, this is, we have problems to this extent, uh, in that in some cases, uh, the
65 farmers would uh, accept it, in other cases uh, uh, you would have to uh, try to sell the program to the farmers, uh, by doing uh, what we call uh, method demonstrations. A method demonstration is where we would have uh, uh, these people use fertilizer on a certain portion of their crop and the other portion without fertilizer, or say use this type of chemical on one—weed control or something like that—on one part of the crop and the other part without it. And to see
70 uh the results, this was a result demonstration. And uh, these people would sometimes see this grow and we would have them put on result demonstrations themselves.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And actually when they participate themselves they would uh, they would uh, uh, get the feeling that this was part of their doing. Rather than somebody to come in and tell them
75 how to farm, and they have been farming, uh, uh, fifty years and their ancestors have been farming, and you gonna come in and tell them to use another method?

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: So you had to go by it, by using a s-, uh, result demonstration method to teach them how.

80 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Learning to do by doing is part of the slogan and this is what you have to try to teach these people because they don't have to come to classes, it's a volunteer program. And uh, to get people to accept a volunteer program, you will have to have something to offer different from saying we going to push this down your throat, so to speak.

85 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Uh, I believe you said you own a farm yourself.

INFORMANT: Yes, there is property, about a hundred acres of land down in Copiah County that my, well my mother still lives on this land.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

90 INFORMANT: And it's uh, six children in the family we will, we divided uh, each one of us own, or rent, a share of this farm.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: But right now I am administrator for my mother so I uh, uh operate the farm right now. Indirectly.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

95 INFORMANT: We're growing livestock and hay down on this farm.

FIELDWORKER: Livestock and hay. Uh, do the farm-, how, how are the farmers paid for? What they grow around here, do uh, does the government pay them not to grow certain crops, or...?

100 INFORMANT: Yeah, we have this parity program in cotton and grain uh, we have cotton acres allotment and so forth and the part that's paid by the government for, um, growing or not growing certain amounts of cotton, you rent it back to the government, or lease it to the government. So we've been in all of these programs, uh, uh, the grain in this part of the country is not too important because we don't grow very much grain. Only enough to feed the livestock that's on the farm.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

105 INFORMANT: Uh, it requires quite a bit of work in this area that I'm from, Covich County, it w-, it was a highly known vegetable section.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

110 INFORMANT: And it takes a lot of work to grow vegetables, uh, uh a lot of (xx) with the vegetables, so forth, a lot of hours of labor to, to grow vegetables. So uh, we didn't have the labor supply.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

115 INFORMANT: Uh, they have a, some fresh vegetable plants in (Crystal Springs), uh, in Covich county where they were to take these vegetables and, and can them or freeze them or something like that. But uh, with the labor shortage nowadays, uh, people are moving into industry and into the urban areas, and you usually will have to go into something with less labor, so this is the case of ours. We uh, uh converted our farm into a livestock hay farm with a little grain. And a garden of course. For food purposes at home.

FIELDWORKER: Is, uh, the life of a modern farmer uh, very profitable?

120 INFORMANT: I think it is, it's a business. Like any other business. Uh, uh, with the uh, input and output uh, uh, used to balance your budget. You make money, uh, the larger your uh, quantity, uh, the more money you make, because it's quite expensive to carry on a crop too.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

125 INFORMANT: Uh, you can make a living if you got a large enough acreage, uh, to handle now, but I think that the plantation system, the old plantation system, is, is usually what a farmer has to go back to in order to, to make money as a farmer.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

130 INFORMANT: He has to produce a large amount, and you can produce more now with uh, with uh, with automation, with the same type of labor, not as, not as much labor. With the cost of labor and costs of machinery, uh, you would have to grow a large number of acres to produce, to, to make, to make money.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: But as far as the modern facilities is concerned, like a home living, it's just as modern as the urban area now. Telephones, lights, gas, running water, everything.

FIELDWORKER: Um, tell me this, what type of livestock do you grow on your farm?

135 INFORMANT: Beef cattle.

FIELDWORKER: Beef cattle.

140 INFORMANT: Beef cattle, this, is this is very common in this section of the state because, uh, dairy, dairying requires a lot of labor also because the cows have to be milked and processed, and so forth and so on. It requires a lot of work beef, beef ca-, you do a few tests and you give him some hay and put him on the pastures, and he'll end up, uh, producing quite a bit of return for the investment that you put in.

FIELDWORKER: Uh, do you, you sell these cows?

INFORMANT: Yes.

FIELDWORKER: How much uh, are they?

145 INFORMANT: Well, it depends on the time of year and it also depends on the condition of the livestock you have. If you feed out a cow real good and you get a sort of premium t-, um, type livestock, you can get high prices. Now they sell by the pound and you can get uh, as high as for a thousand pound uh, calf, which is, which is normally the size that you would sell a steer.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

150 INFORMANT: The best sale price is about a thousand-pound steer, and you can uh, get somewhere around a hundred eighty to two hundred dollars for, on a calf like that.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Sounds like good money. How many do you have?

INFORMANT: I only have about twenty head.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

155 INFORMANT: Uh, uh, of old stock but uh, I got uh, uh most of them calving this time of year so I got quite a few calves, I haven't checked lately to see how many I got, but uh, I guess about uh, seventy-five percent.

FIELDWORKER: What are some of the diseases that you have to look out for? And how do you treat them in your animals?

160 INFORMANT: Well, we vaccinate for anthrax and we vaccinate for, we don't have too much uh, shipping fever and disease like that but we treat the cows, the calves for blacklegs, we vaccinate for blackleg, we, and we, we uh, vaccinate for Bang and we, and we vaccinate for anthrax. But uh, we don't uh have shipping fever, we don't keep the calves too long, or some of the calves we keep uh, uh, as uh, breed cows, in the future, but uh, right now with the, with the male stock we
165 have, the bulls we have on the lot, uh, we got to keep these, we got to sell off these calves until we decide to get uh a new bull or get some new cows.

FIELDWORKER: What is Bang's disease?

INFORMANT: Well it's a infection, uh, related to, uh, I guess in the human being it's related to uh, uh, gonorrhoea or or maybe syphilis.

170 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Uh, it's a, it's a disease passed on from the male animal to the, to the, uh, female animal, uh, through the calves, and the calves will be born blind or with no hair or dead or something like that.

FIELDWORKER: How do they get, how do these male, um, animals get Bang's?

175 INFORMANT: Well, they get it from perhaps some cows that uh, had Bang disease, because the cow could have Bang disease and, and in mating, uh, they get it from the cow.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And uh, they will hold this, this, this virus w-w-would stay within a male animal they're tested for this Bang disease, constantly, and the main way that you, only way you can
180 destroy it I guess is to, is to uh, sell the bull off or kill the bull or something like that, for market purposes.

FIELDWORKER: Well if you sell a bull like that, uh, wouldn't it be um, a defective bull, I mean they wouldn't use it for food.

INFORMANT: Yes, but they wouldn't use for breeding but they can use it for food. Most animals
185 can be used for food, regardless of the disease they have. Uh, so uh, they don't hardly destroy animals. Uh, most beef animals can be used for food uh, uh, I read an article where they were talking about some of these animals had some type, the beef had some type of cancer-producing,

uh, some tests was being made by the food administration to check on this meat and so forth. It's tested by the government and it is something that you're finding out every day about it.

190 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: People still, usually they don't put this meat on, on the market like they used to do long years ago, they used to just kill a beef and peddle him down the road, you know, put him on a block of ice and drive the truck up and down the road. But they don't do that anymore, they, they sell this and it's, it's government-inspected.

195 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Well that's interesting. And uh, what type of hay do you grow?

INFORMANT: Well, we grow, uh, for beef animal we grow lespedeza hay and Johnson grass hay and soybean hay and for dairy animal they usually try to grow silage, which is a, a sorghum uh, uh, millet and it grows to a certain height and they grind it up, up corn, young corn, they grind it up and uh, and feed it, put it in a silo and feed it to the cows like (that), dairy cows mostly because
200 it's a mil-, milk-producing uh, uh, feed.

FIELDWORKER: And y-, that's all, you just h-, grow hay and, uh, hay for your livestock?

INFORMANT: Yes.

FIELDWORKER: And the livestock you, uh, {get—

INFORMANT: beef} cattle.

205 FIELDWORKER: —pretty nice profit off of them.

INFORMANT: Yes, yes you can uh, each year it bring you back through y-, so you sell your hay really through the livestock.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Uh, I sell a little hay, few, few hundred bales, but uh, not enough to get any profit
210 or anything, you get profit through your livestock. You grow the grain and hay and feed it back to your livestock and sell your livestock so you make your profit through the feeding of livestock.

FIELDWORKER: And while you're away from your farm, who administers the farm?

INFORMANT: Well, I have a, a couple people down there that's taking care of it, um, laborers do that work there on the farm for me now, because I don't have too much of a chance to go down,
215 just every now and then I get a chance to go by. And since growing hay and livestock is not uh, too tremendous uh, labor problem or responsibilities is not that much, you get a good fence and good pasture growing and that's about it. Disk your land, you plant your hay, and you harvest your hay, and you usually get that done by piece work and so forth, you yet a contractor to do that for you.

220 FIELDWORKER: I suppose being a modern farmer and knowing as much about farming as you do, you have quite a bit of automation on your farm.

INFORMANT: Yes, we do.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

225 INFORMANT: Most of it, almost all of it, uh, because uh, now you don't, i-individual work like weeding with a hoe, you don't do that.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: You don't have that worry about when you're not growing (in a) row crops and I don't grow (in a) row crops.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Well, and what else do you do, uh, in your spare time?

230 INFORMANT: Oh, I like to fish and hunt, it's the most thing I do is uh, outdoor life because I grew up in the country, Mississippi, I'm a country boy, so I like to go hunting and fishing, and boat-riding, and so forth. We got a nice reservoir here, so we uh, go fishing, it's s-s-, quite a bit of fishing. I like to fly fish mostly because i-it, it's a technique that uh, will keep your mind busy all the time because uh, you, you're continuously busy, it's not like a pole fishing where you just sit there and wait for the fish to bite. You sort of, you sort of have to study the habits of a fish and
235 try to outsmart him in fly fishing, and this is the thing, different flies you use and so forth so.

FIELDWORKER: What type of, um, fish are most common here?

INFORMANT: Well, you got the, the crappies, which is just commonly called a white perch.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

240 INFORMANT: That's a really nice fishing reservoir. Uh, you fish for them with jigs and so forth and so on, a-and you can fish for them with (real good) live minnows [=minnows] (without a) fishing bait. Then you have the uh, bream that we talked about, the blue gill, as well as the chinquapin, we call it. Uh, so we call it red, some people call it a red gill. And blue gill, but it's the chinquapin and then also the blue gill bream.

245 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: And uh, then we have catfish of course, (for) people that like to fish for catfish and they don't bite flies, however you fish for them in the rivers and so forth. And we have the buffalo, and we have gars and all type of fish, but uh, mostly game fish is the, um crappies and the bream. And the bass. The black bass as well as the striped bass.

250 FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm. Where do you go to hunt?

INFORMANT: Well, we have what we call a swamp down in South Mississippi where the uh, Strong River runs into the Pearl River.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

255 INFORMANT: And in this triangle, it, they f-, it forms a triangle when they come into each other, so wha-, in this triangle it's about uh, I guess several thousand acres of woodland.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

260 INFORMANT: This is where I do most of the hunting because of my happen, my people happen to be uh, homeowners down in this section. And uh, we do a lot of squirrel hunting and, and uh, w-, in the woods there, and deer hunting, and uh, quail hunting and so forth. (So) I'm a fanatic at quail hunting, I got several guns, all kinds, and a whole rack of them, and so we just uh try to get a gun for every, every s-, type of sport we hunt and every type of game we hunt, so uh, it's quite expensive, hunting and fishing all this stuff,

FIELDWORKER: Well, sounds very interesting. Um, I gave you this story here to read, the story of Arthur the Rat, would you read that for me?

265 INFORMANT: I'll try. Once upon a time, there was a young rat who couldn't make up his mind. Whenever the other rats ask him if he would like to come out hunting with them, he would answer in a hoarse voice, "I don't know." And when they said, "Would you rather stay inside?" he wouldn't say yes, or no either. He'd always shirk making a choice. One fine day, his Aunt Josephine said to him, "Now look here. No one will ever care for you if you carry on like this. You have no more mind of your own than a greasy old blade of grass." The young rat coughed and
270 looked wise as usual, but said nothing. "Don't you think so?" said his aunt, stamping with her feet, for she couldn't bear to see the young rat so cold-blooded. "I don't know," was all he ever answered, and then he'd walk off to think for an hour or more, whether he should stay in his hole in the ground or go out into the loft. One night, the rat heard a loud noise in the loft. It was a very
275 dreary old place. The roof let the rain come washing in, the beams and rafters had all rotted through, so that the whole thing was quite unsafe. At last, one of the joists gave way, and the beams fell with one edge on the floor. The walls shook, the cupola fell off, and all the rats' hair stood on ends with fear and horror. "This won't do," said their leader. "We can't stay here cooped up here any longer." So they sent out scouts to search for a new home. A little later on the
280 evening, the scouts came back and said they had found an old-fashioned horse barn where there would be room and board for all of them. The leader gave the order at once, "Company, fall in," and the rats crawled out of their holes right away and stood on the floor in a long line. Just then, the old rat caught sight of young Arthur—that was the name of the shirker. He wasn't in the line, and he wasn't exactly outside it, he stood just by it. "Come on, get in line," growled the old rat coarsely. "Of course you're coming too?" "I don't know," said Arthur calmly. "Why the idea of it. You don't think it's safe here anymore, do you?" "I'm not certain," said Arthur, undaunted. "The roof may not fall in yet." "Well," said the old rat, "we can't wait for you to join us." Then he turned to the others and shouted, "Right about face, and march," and the long line marched out of the barn while the young rat watched them. "I think I'll go tomorrow," he said to himself. "But then
285 again, perhaps I won't. It's so nice and snug here. I guess I'll go back to my hole under the log for

a while, just to make up my mind." But during the night, there was a big crash. Down came the beam, rafters, joists, and the whole business. Next morning—it was a foggy day—some men came to look over the damage. It seemed odd to them that the old building was not haunted by rats. But at least [sic], one of them happened to move a board, and he caught sight of a young
295 rat, quite dead, half in and half out of his hole. Thus the shirker got his due, and there was no mourning for him.