

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Chattanooga - Hamilton County Public Library

Chattanooga, Tennessee

An Interview With

COLUMBIA JARRELL

By

Grey Gundaker

May 9, 1990

PREFACE

This manuscript is a transcript of an interview conducted for the Oral History Project of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Public Library. The purpose of the project is to capture the first-hand accounts of the social history of the Chattanooga area in the twentieth century.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that the transcript reflects the patterns of the spoken, rather than the written, word. The information is presented as it was recalled by the interviewee at the occasion of the interview and has been edited only for clarity.

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Two indexes have been prepared for locating specific information from either the transcript or the tape. The page index to the transcript is located at the end of this volume. A meter count number has been given in the left margin of the text for locating a section on the tape. It should be noted that this number will vary depending on the equipment used.

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

PERSONAL DATA SHEET

Date May 9, 1990

1. Full name (include maiden name and married name, where applies):

Miss Columbia Jarrell

2. Current address and phone number:

351 North Hawthorne Street
Chattanooga, TN

3. Date and Place of Birth:

December 28, 1908 Athens, GA

4. Mother's maiden name:

Lottie M. Turner

Place of Birth:

Athens, GA

5. Father's name:

Allen A. Jarrell

Place of Birth:

Jackson, GA

6. Spouse's name:

7. Children's names and addresses (if possible). Indicate daughters married names:

Gundaker: Tell me who you are and --

Jarrell: I'm Columbia Jarrell. I was born in Athens, Georgia, and
022 here. I went to the seventh grade. My family had a lot of
children, and I had to go to work, and I have been working
ever since.

Gundaker: How old were you when you moved to Chattanooga?

Jarrell: I was fourteen.

Gundaker: Fourteen years old? Do you remember anything about seeing
the city when you first came?

Jarrell: Yes. This part of the city was very dark; there wasn't any
lights out here. East Third Street was a mudhole. It had
029 two streetcar tracks that ran up and down -- the Boyce
streetcar. Finally, they put some lights out here. My
father went around and asked people to sign up to ask them
to put some lights out here, and they put lights to Orchard
Knob Avenue. Then, finally, they went on down to Kelley
Street.

He helped pave East Third. My father was a concrete
man, and he helped do the finishing on East Third Street.
At the time, there was not a viaduct on East Third; it was
a railroad crossing up there. Finally, they put the viaduct
there. My father was a stonemason. He helped build just
about all of these bungalow houses out in Glenwood. He
even did the stone work on Glenwood School. At that time,
people dug basements by hand. All of those little houses
up there had basements. The first house built up there was
on the left-hand side of East Third Street going out toward
Dodds Avenue, and they built that for a Mr. Wade. He also
044 did the stone work on the YMCA up in town; he did that.
His handwork is all over the city. He helped build the
tower out at the airport.

Gundaker: Did he ever tell you how he got into stone work or how he
mastered the craft?

Jarrell: I guess I took after him. He just decided to do that. He
did work in a foundry, and the doctor told him he didn't
050 need to work inside. He just decided he'd do stone work
and that's how he got started doing it.

Gundaker: He watched and --

- Jarrell: No, he just took it up; he just decided to do it. Everything I know how to do, except making hats, I [just] took up. I started crocheting and knitting. I don't guess you know anything about that, but everybody used to have coal-oil lamps. You live in the modern age. We had coal-oil lamps, and I used to take two broom straws and knit lamp-wicks to put in the lamps.
- Gundaker: Now did you have to do something to the broom straws to soften them to do that? Or -- how do you knit a straw?
- Jarrell: I knitted thread but I used the broom straws as my knitting needle.
- Gundaker: That must have been such fine work to use thin straws. How
060 wide were the wicks?
- Jarrell: We called them broom straws. They weren't the broom straws that they make these manufactured brooms out of. I guess it was a weed or something that -- they would go down near the creek and cut them. My father would take the branches and
065 put them together, wrap them with a cord, and we swept the floors with them. There was so many of us my father couldn't afford to buy brooms.
- Gundaker: How many of you were there?
- Jarrell: Originally, eleven. But [only] nine lived to get grown.
- Gundaker: When you were a young lady, was it the custom to sweep the yard and sweep all of the grass out of the yard?
- Jarrell: Yes, we swept the yard. There wouldn't any grass grow in
070 our yard, anyway, because there was enough of us to keep it trampled down.
- Gundaker: I've heard that people, though, would sweep it for Sunday.
- Jarrell: Yes, we swept the yards for Sunday and kept all the paper picked up. Everybody now wants grass in the yard, but we kept the yard clean swept. Everybody did.
- Gundaker: When did people change over from swept to grass in the style of yards?
- Jarrell: I don't remember the year. I can't remember that far back.
075
- Gundaker: Was it before World War II?

Jarrell: Oh yes, that was before World War II.

Gundaker: It was? Sometimes I still see that. Occasionally yards are swept, but not very many any more. Did you have flowers around?

Jarrell: Oh yes, we had plenty of flowers.

Gundaker: What kind of flowers were popular then?

Jarrell: Well, the same flowers that are popular now. My father
080 always had a big garden. He had to [in order] to feed us. Therefore, he would order his seed from Atlanta from H. J. Hasting, and they would always send a lot of free flower seed. My mother had the most beautiful flowers. You see, people don't give you anything free now.

Gundaker: No, they don't. Not unless they overcharge you in the first place. You have lived in this same Orchard Knob?

Jarrell: In this same portion. I haven't ever lived anywhere [else].
086

Gundaker: Would you say that the neighborhood has built up a lot? Were the houses arranged the same?

Jarrell: No, it hasn't built up, not in this neighborhood, because they've torn down. Every little crack [used to have] a house in it. See, [pointing] there used to be a house up there on that lot. They say [that the lot] is too small now. Between
092 here and the corner, [there] was either two or three more houses. That church was right on the corner, and when they built this new church, they put it back off the corner.* After they widened East Third Street, the sidewalk came almost up to the door. That's an old church. It was across East Third Street down there on Hawthorne, and finally they came up here and built it. When they built this church, there was a church over in Highland Park named Orchard Knob Baptist,

*Orchard Knob Baptist Church, established in 1887, was originally located on a lot on Hawthorne St., between East Third and Garfield Avenue. In 1909, a brick building was erected on the corner of Hawthorne and East Third. The present church was opened for services in July, 1977, on the same site, but is located more centrally on the block front.

- (Jarrell): and they went over there and asked them if they would
100 exchange names because this church was the closest. They
were nice enough to do it. That's where Highland Park
Baptist came in. [It was] in that old building there on
the corner of Union and Orchard Knob. I used to work for
the pastor there next door to that church. That was before
Lee Roberson* went over there and made a -- I said, a
"kingdom' out of it.
- Gundaker: My grandmother lived right near that church at Vance and
Hickory.
- Jarrell: I know where Vance Avenue is. I worked there for Dr. J. B.
Phillips**, next door to that church building. They still
have that there.
- Gundaker: Tell me about where you went to school.
- Jarrell: I went to school in Georgia; I didn't go to school here.
The name of the school is Summer Hill.
- Gundaker: Summer Hill. Wonder if it is still there?
- Jarrell: I don't know. I don't know anything about Georgia. I haven't
been down there but half a dozen times since I moved from
there.
- Gundaker: When you came up here to go to work, what was the first
sort of work that you did?
- Jarrell: I worked in private homes for fifty cents a day.
116
- Gundaker: How old were you before you got a pay raise?
- Jarrell: Well, I tell you, people didn't get a pay raise, as I can
see, until President Roosevelt was elected. Because Hoover
liked to have starved all of us to death. I don't know
whether you remember that or not?
- Gundaker: I think that was before my time.

*Pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church, 1942-1983.

**Rev. John Bernard Phillips (-1934), pastor of
Highland Park Baptist Church, 1921/2-1929/30.

Jarrell: 123 People worked from dawn to dark. I remember my father used to work over at the foundry. When he was working at the foundry, he would get up a four o'clock in the morning and make a fire in the stove. Mama would get up and cook his breakfast and he'd go to work and he didn't get back home until dark. After President Roosevelt was elected -- he's the first one that started shorter hours. I was working on a public job. I worked over at Milne Chair Company. I worked ten hours a day -- well, I was there ten-
130 and-a-half hours a day -- but we didn't get paid for our lunch period which was thirty minutes. I worked for a dollar and a quarter a day.

Gundaker: What did they have you do at the chair place? What kind of work did they have you all do for that money?

Jarrell: Everything. I hand-sanded. I ran band-saw. I upholstered. I sprayed. I varnished. I put designs on furniture. I dipped furniture. You name it, we did it.

Gundaker: So you learned everything about making furniture, just about.

Jarrell: 145 Yes. I can finish a piece of wood all the way out. And, at the time, they finished furniture beautifully. They didn't use this polyurethane. They used varnish and shellac and made beautiful furniture. This furniture with this polyurethane on it, I don't care for it; and, furthermore, it has too much gloss. That's why I like antique furniture. I know how to upholster and do everything; I would upholster this sofa if it wasn't so heavy.

Gundaker: This sofa has a lot of buttons.

Jarrell: Well, I know how to put those in.

Gundaker: How did you learn to do the upholstering? Did they teach you on the job?

Jarrell: Yes, they taught me on the job.

Gundaker: When did the chair company go out of business, or is it still --

Jarrell: 150 It's out of business.* You know where Orchard Park is up

*Milne Chair Co., established 1893; up for auction, 1951.

(Jarrell): here on Orchard Knob Avenue, right off to the left? Now, that chair factory was back there. It's built on the chair factory property. And I don't know why they didn't name it "Milne's Park." They had a strike over there after they got a union in there, and that's what caused it to close down.

Gundaker: Did you work there at the time?

Jarrell: Yes, I did.

Gundaker: How did you feel about the union? Did you feel that was something that it needed?

Jarrell: No, I wasn't in the union. It was open shop. We didn't
158 have to belong to the union but, you see, just about everybody there did. They walked out and they never did come to an agreement, and it just closed down.

Gundaker: That happens a lot.

Jarrell: Oh, it was terrible. They did everything over there. They threatened us and they came by the house one night and threw a brick through our window.

Gundaker: Now, who were these organizers? Did they come from out of
165 town or were they local people?

Jarrell: Out of town. I was so disinterested in it [that] I don't know what the name of that union was. I didn't get in it because I didn't want any part. The people that we had been friends with --after they got in the union -- wouldn't have anything else to do with us because we were not in the union. I didn't care. You know, I was just friendly on the job with them. It didn't bother us.

Gundaker: Would that have been then in Roosevelt's day when the union was coming in?

Jarrell: No, it was after Roosevelt's day. You see, one of the
175 reasons they were so bitter toward us was because when they got a raise, we got one. They said we were thriving off their benefits. When they walked out, they never came to an agreement, and so it just closed down.

Gundaker: What other kinds of work have you done after the chair place closed down? Did you work for individuals?

Jarrell: Yes, I worked for James S. Fowler. You've heard of
183 Fowler's Furniture?

Gundaker: Yes.

Jarrell: Mr. [John O., Sr.] was the owner. He was the beginning
of Fowler Furniture. I worked for his baby son. When I
first started working for them, they lived on Lookout
Mountain, not far from the Incline, on Watkins Street.

Gundaker: We used to live down the street at West Brow and --

Jarrell: I worked there on Watkins Street. They hadn't been long
married then. The next year they moved to Nashville.
After [they] moved to Nashville,* they begged me to come
with them, and I told them I'd go and stay until they set
up housekeeping and got everything. So they conned me into
staying over there. (laughter) And I stayed over there
thirty-five years.

Gundaker: Just a short trip turned into thirty-five years.

Jarrell: But they were nice; very, very nice. And, they're still
200 nice to me. When I left them over there, they told me that
I wasn't supposed to ever suffer. The children are nice --
I love the children. They have three children, two daugh-
ters and a son. Truly, I didn't mean to work for them
because after the chair factory closed down, I said I was
going to sit down a year, and then I was going to Cali-
fornia. I had a friend working up on the mountain for the
Navarres, and she kept begging me to come up there and
work. She said, "Oh, come up here on the mountain and
work; you don't need to sit down. All going out and none
coming in. You can at least make your bread money." I
didn't want to go.

213 Finally Mrs. Fowler wanted someone to work for her.
She heard about it and she called me and told me to come up
there. And I went. So when I came back home, my mother
asked me, "Well, did you get the job?" I said, "Yes."
She said, "How old is she?" I said, "Oh, looks like about
fifteen. She's got a little baby about as long as your
hand." She said, "Well, you know you're not going to stay

* Chattanooga city directories list James S. Fowler at
132 Watkins St., c. 1948-9; moved to Nashville, c. 1950.

(Jarrell): 220 up there. I said, "I didn't promise her I was going to stay." I said, "I told her I'd be back tomorrow, and I'm going." And I went. I wouldn't have told her a tale. I had said I'd work until March, and then I was going -- that was in October -- I said, "I'll work until March and then I'm going to California." Well, they liked me and I liked them and we just got along and I stayed with them thirty-five years. That baby was six weeks old!

Gundaker: You've been with that baby its whole lifetime.

Jarrell: 226 I sure have. She's good to me, she's so sweet. Mrs. Fowler has two daughters and one son, and they're very nice to me. I go over there a lot. They send for me to come over and I go and enjoy being there so much.

Gundaker: Since somebody may be listening to this fifty years in the future, tell us what kind of responsibilities that you had in a job like that. Did you do cooking and keep the house?

Jarrell: 240 Yes, I did cooking and I took care of her bedroom, powder room, and bath. She had a house man, had a butler. She had another lady that came in two days a week and cleaned and [who] worked at the store, too. [Mr. Fowler] had the period furniture store at the time and she was the maid down there. If they needed her out to the house, she could come out there. See, she was in the fulltime employment of the family. That's the way we ran the house. I cooked. And cooked for the servants. Oh, yes, I did run the washing machine. When I first started working for her, I told her if she wanted a laundry lady, I didn't iron. And I can't. She told me at that time that she had a laundry lady. She did, she took it down there [garbled]. I ran the clothes in the washing machine but she had somebody to iron them. At that time you had to iron everything. I enjoyed working there.

256 For seventeen years I was there alone with the house servant because they moved to Arizona. They tried to get me to go, [but] I wouldn't go. They moved out there, and he said that was "God's country." "Come on out here, this--" Oh, he'd do everything; he'd come up there and he'd say, "Columbia, come on and go home." I'd say, "I don't want to go down there, it's too hot." Finally, they left there and went to La Jolla, California, and he got out there and that was "God's country." So now they're back in Nashville and that's "God's country." They say they are going to stay there. You see, he would have given up Nashville

(Jarrell): completely, but his wife wouldn't. You see, she's a Nashvillian from her birth. Her family, on her mother's side, started National Life Insurance. It has sold out now.

Gundaker: Did you all go to church here in the neighborhood?
268

Jarrell: Oh yes. We would go to Orchard Knob Church right there on the corner.

Gundaker: Could you tell me a little bit about the history of the church? Was it a big church when you moved here?

Jarrell: It wasn't as large as it is now. It was more or less like the Highland Park Baptist Church over there. You know, one of those big brick churches with tall steps, high steps to go up in it. It finally deteriorated. When they fixed Hawthorne Hill, all that blasting and everything, it just messed it up. It was condemned; they condemned it themselves, and they moved up there on the corner. There used to be a skating rink up there on East Third Street between here and Holly.
281

Then they got this new minister, very young. He was still going to school in Atlanta to Gammon Theological [Seminary]. He came in and he was very energetic, and we got that church. I wish you could see it inside. It is most beautiful.

Gundaker: Tell us a little bit about what the inside is like.

Jarrell: When you go into the sanctuary they have unusual stained glass windows. On one side in each window is a verse of the Lord's Prayer, and on the other side is the Twenty-third Psalm. In the kitchen the stained glass windows have some pots and pans on [them], and the scripture under them that tells about the pots and pans. It's very, very odd and beautiful in there. I wish you could see it.
297

Gundaker: How did they get the idea for the windows? Did they come from the congregation or a designer?

Jarrell: The architect. He drew that church. He made that plan a long time [ago], but he never could get anyone to build it because it was too expensive. He showed the plan to the building committee down there when they started out trying to find a contractor. He showed them the plan and they took him up on it -- and with no money, you might as well say. They didn't have any money. But they begged and borrowed and did everything
306

(Jarrell): until they finally got the money. You see, people gave money into this that you wouldn't think had a penny. They came up with thousands of dollars. And then they had so many private donations. So many of them would give big money -- these big executives. And it would be anonymous. They gave a lot of money. [The architect] told them he wasn't going to stick the shovel in the ground until they got the
319 money. His name was Mr. [Frank] Gibson. All his life he told his mother that he was dedicating himself to building churches. And that's what he did.

Gundaker: Is he from Chattanooga?

Jarrell: I don't know where Mr. Gibson is from, but I know he would be there at every meeting they had. Every once in a great while he comes back out there. That's his dream church.

Gundaker: I know churches were kind of the neighborhood center, and they still are. Did they have any kind of special picnics and holidays and things connected with the church?

Jarrell: They don't have picnics like they once did when we were girls growing up. We had Sunday School picnics and things like that, but they don't have many of them now. It's just something of
333 the past. They have so many other things that children like to go to. When I was a girl, a picnic was a great thing, but now they're not. They have everything to go to. They have television and radio, whereas we didn't have anything. Therefore, that was our outing -- going on picnics, and sometimes going to the park, and going up on Orchard Knob Hill. That was wonderful up there! We'd go up there on Sunday afternoon
340 and take our little dollar cameras and make pictures and eat popcorn. That's where little boys and girls went to "court." They sat up there. It's pretty up there.

Gundaker: There was popcorn and stuff up there, did they --?

Jarrell: No, we took it.

Gundaker: What all was up on the hill? Did it have benches or just trees or --?

Jarrell: No, that's it there [pointing towards hill].

Gundaker: Just like it is now.

Jarrell: It has monuments up there. It had a bunch of cannon balls,

(Jarrell): but somebody has stolen them all. And there are some
351 cannons. It's pretty if you would go up there; it's beautiful up there.

Gundaker: I just thought maybe they had it different back then.

Jarrell: It's a government park. It's pretty going up on the other
side. They had a caretaker and they kept all of that under-
growth cut; but this side started deteriorating and washing
down so bad, they let that undergrowth grow. And where you
see that break up there in the wall? A little over two years
ago that side just brushed it all -- that pressure from the
363 earth just pushed that wall down early one morning, and those
big stones fell off. I called the policemen and they came out
here and got in touch with the government, and they sent the
men out here. They had to get something to lift those stones.
They couldn't even move them.

I, my sister, and a bunch of us were in a meeting with
these men about two months ago. They had another one yester-
day and I forgot it. I asked them about putting the rest of
those stones up there, and they said they had to wait until
they found some more just like it.

Gundaker: They're going to have a long wait because those are special.

Jarrell: They had this caretaker and he raised the flag every morning
at eight o'clock and then lowered it at four in the afternoon.
He stayed up there all day, every day.

Gundaker: Did he have a little house or a bench?

Jarrell: Oh, it's a little monument up there that serves as a little
377 house that he could go in out of the rain. No, that's gov-
ernment, not anything up there.

Gundaker: Did it ever get dangerous for people to walk in there?

Jarrell: No, it's not dangerous!

Gundaker: It's always been a park for the neighborhood that people used?

Jarrell: Yes, we've just used it. If you'd go up there you could
383 understand. It's a lot of history up there. A lot of his-
tory. And, you see, [there's] a monument right here on this
corner. [There's] a lot of them up there. They're all the
way up. Up there it's beautiful.

Gundaker: I don't like climbing, but maybe I'll make myself one day.

Jarrell: You don't have to climb to get up there from the other side. It's kind of slanting. This is the low side, the steepest side going up from here to the gate right there around the corner.

Gundaker: Tell me about your own interests, like your hats [and] how you got into learning to do all these things.

Jarrell: 397 When I was in Nashville I didn't have any outlet other than working; so, I just decided to start doing a little art work. I first started doing painting; then, I decided I would do needlepoint. Now, I needlepoint and knit and crochet. I can't embroider because I can't make two stitches the same length. Then I decided I would take millinery, and in between taking millinery, I took sewing. So the lady put me out of the sewing class.

Gundaker: They put you out of the sewing class?

Jarrell: 412 Yes. We had a little, simple twenty-five cent pattern that she had for everybody to cut out and make a dress. Well, I cut mine out while the rest of them were trying to place theirs on the fabric. When I went home I made mine. When I came back the next week -- I went once a week -- she reprimanded me for making it.

Gundaker: Why did she do that?

Jarrell: 426 I told her, "I guess you wanted me to stretch it out the whole fourteen weeks!" I said, "I thought you wanted me to go on and make it; you told me to take it home. I've finished it." Well, she took it and turned it inside and out trying to find some fault in it, and she couldn't. Finally, she told me, "Well, you did a good job, but you don't need to be in the class." I went there to take up tailoring, but I had to start in that. She said, "I'll tell you what, I'd like for you to just help me and be an instructor." Well, she was getting the pay! So, she just put me out of the class. I knew I didn't need the class, but I went in the class so I could get into the tailoring. You have to start in the beginner class.

Gundaker: I see. Did you go on and take the tailoring class?

Jarrell: No, because she taught it. (laughter)

Gundaker: 436 Did you go on and make tailored clothes anyway?

Jarrell: Yes, I did. I just went on and did it myself.

Gundaker: What kinds of clothes do you enjoy making?

Jarrell: I enjoy making suits, dresses, and I love to make children's
443 clothes. I love to make little, small baby clothes. I used to
make a lot of baby clothes. I have a little niece who was in
Germany, at the time, because her husband was in service. She
had a little girl -- I think she'll be eight this year -- I
made the [grand-niece] little dresses.

I have a cedar chest full of odds and ends, beautiful
batiste, dotted swiss, and fabric like that. I had given so
much of it away that I was sorry. [My niece's] parents were
going over [to Germany]. Her mother is my sister. I told
them to pack very light. They couldn't take but forty pounds.
460 I was going to send these dresses to the baby, and they didn't
know how many I had. I had nineteen! I made these dresses
from two, three, and four-year-old sizes.

Gundaker: That child was set for her whole childhood!

Jarrell: She sure was. I smocked them and rolled and whipped and put
on lace. I still have a lot of lace, but you can't find that
nice lace any more. I bought some batiste to make some
dresses. I couldn't even roll it; it was just as stiff. So,
474 I took that and made some little slips.

Gundaker: They put polyester in it now.

Jarrell: Oh, it's not batiste any more. [My niece] got all the batiste
but one piece; I have a yard-and-a-half. I'm going to make
me a blouse out of that.

Gundaker: Now you know, I bet there a people who are going to hear this
who do not know what the different kinds of fine fabric are
481 any more, and what they're like. Tell people what batiste
is.

Jarrell: It's a very nice, soft fabric, something like voile.

Gundaker: Is it like what a lady's handkerchief was made out of?

Jarrell: No, the lady's handkerchief was made out of a handkerchief
linen. It's linen.

Gundaker: Is batiste cotton?

Jarrell: Cotton, it's cotton; it's very fine cotton.

Gundaker: What are some of the other kinds of fabric that you can't
490 find any more?

Jarrell: Beautiful wool. They tell you it's wool, but it's not. And
all the shoes are plastic. They burn your feet up. You don't
find any beautiful wool. But I have some wool in there, and
I'm going to make me a suit out of it one day. I have three
or four pieces of wool, 100% wool.

Gundaker: And you got them a while ago.

Jarrell: Oh, years ago, years ago.

Gundaker: I was thinking if there was a place in Chattanooga that you
think of as having the finest fabric -- where everybody used
to go.

Jarrell: Miller Brothers, Lovemans, Timothy's -- all the stores here
507 sold beautiful fabric. And in Nashville I got it at Cain-
Sloan, Harvey's, and Castner Knott. All the stores used to
have this beautiful fabric. And then I used to go to the
woolen mill in Rossville.

I used to sew for my sisters when they were in school.
You could go out there. They had an outlet across the
street, and they sold this fabric by the pound. My mother
would give me five dollars -- I think it was fifty cents a
pound -- and my sister and I would get on the bus and go out
there, and I'd get five dollars worth of fabric. I'd get
523 enough to make all my sisters skirts to wear to school, and
have some for myself. You could get a big armful of that
fabric for five dollars.

Gundaker: Now, what colors did they have? All colors?

Jarrell: All colors. Any colors. Plaids, solids, and everything.
Sometimes you'd get a piece long enough to make -- when they
first started making jackets and dresses the same length, I
had a piece large enough to make a suit. And they called
them "swagger suits." You could go out there and select your
pieces and then they would weigh them.

Gundaker: What about some of the different styles? A swagger suit is a
suit where the jacket and the skirt were the same length?

Jarrell: Yes.

Gundaker: What are some other kinds of styles that you've seen come and
go?

Jarrell: Oh, they did make some of the dresses -- in the evening wear they had some shorter in front and longer behind. The styles are just about the same, but they tighten up on them in different places. (laughter) Now these dresses they are wearing now, with the waistline so long, they made them back then; but they weren't exactly the same style.

Gundaker: How about hats? Have you seen styles in hats that come and go?

Jarrell: Yes, all kinds of styles in hats. I can't name the styles. There was one time they wore the little tight-fitting hats; then they wore the little turbans. I'll tell you, styles go and come. You may notice this season they've turned [the brim] up on the side and put a feather on it. Next season, they'll turn it down on the side and put a bow on, and it'll be the same hat.

Gundaker: You were telling me the other day a little about what is involved in making a felt hat, and about your steamer pot.

Jarrell: Oh, yes, and you know what? I looked all over the house yesterday, and I couldn't find that hat; it's on the block somewhere. I was going to show it to you.

Gundaker: Tell us what kind of steps are involved to make a felt hat. What would a person start with and have to do to get one?

Jarrell: Well, you take your felt and you steam it and get it soft, and then you shape it on the block. That's a head block sitting there, and I have them [i.e., blocks] with the round crown. You just shape it on there.

Gundaker: What's felt made out of, wool?

Jarrell: Wool.

Gundaker: When they say something is a beaver hat, do they put fur in it ever, or anything?

Jarrell: We didn't make the beaver hats. We made just a plain felt hat. You know what a plain felt hat is? Well, we made that. They taught us to make them. You put that on your block and you steam it.

Gundaker: And the block -- for people who can't see it -- kind of looks like a short cylinder, like kind of a tall cake or something.

Jarrell: It's made out of -- I've forgotten the name of the wood, but you can stick pins in it. You see, I have pins stuck in that one there. I heard you couldn't get them any more.

Gundaker: It's like a balsa --

Jarrell: That's what it is, I believe. You can stick pins in it, and
599 you shape your crown on the block. Then you steam it, and you leave it there until it gets dry. And when it gets dry, it is shaped.

Gundaker: And then you have to put a hat band on it of some kind?

Jarrell: You put your band on it, and if you want a brim, I have a
606 brim block over there. Would it be all right to get it?

Gundaker: Oh, sure. I'll turn this over. We're going to continue on side two.

End Tape 1, Side 1
Begin Tape 1, Side 2

Jarrell: [Tape changed; conversation begins mid-sentence] -- if you
001 want to, you can make it any width you want.

Gundaker: Now, in front of me is the start of a pink straw hat with a lot of pins in it. Did you have to weave the straw for this first?

Jarrell: No, I didn't. I bought the straw. It was already woven.

Gundaker: Where do you get straw for a hat? At the store?

Jarrell: I did get it in New York, but they do not sell hat materials
007 any more that I know of. There's a place in Washington that has a little, because they send me catalogs occasionally. But this is old straw; it's old braid here. And it's the same type of braid this is.

Gundaker: For people who can't see [these hats], the braid is about an inch-and-a-half wide. Bands woven in and out of pretty, different textures of straw. Then those are sewed together. It's a little like a braid rug, isn't it?

Jarrell: Yes. Now, these are the little strings that are made into
013 the -- see, I would cut them -- are made into the straw. But the art in making hats [is that] you do not see any of

(Jarrell): my stitches.

Gundaker: No, you don't see any stitches.

Jarrell: You are supposed to have all of your stitches hidden. You're
018 supposed to hide all stitches, because you don't want anybody
to go out and count the stitches in your hat.

Gundaker: How about this black velvet, beautiful, kind of turban-looking
hat? This hat is made out of the finest, softest velvet. I
can tell by touching it.

Jarrell: That's a velvet hat I made. And you put your linings in
[showing inside of hat].

Gundaker: Beautiful. Did you ever sell these hats to people?

Jarrell: Oh, yes, I've made hundreds of hats and sold them. That's
023 why I haven't got any. I made hats out of pheasant feathers.
I can make feather hats.

Gundaker: Did they come to your home to get a hat?

Jarrell: Yes, they'd come to my home and then we would give hat show-
ings, and I showed them on television and so forth.

Gundaker: Was this in Nashville?

Jarrell: Yes, it was.

Gundaker: I wish we had it on television here. This [hat] has about
three layers and then a flat top. How old would it be?

Jarrell: Oh, this hat is about twenty years old. They wore this type
032 of hat then. You see, that's the front. And this is layers
of buckram. You take your buckram and fit it over it. To
make a fabric hat, you have to cut your fabric on the bias,
extreme bias.

Gundaker: Why is that?

Jarrell: Because it will stretch and pull any way you want it to.
Now if this was on straight fabric, cut on the straight line,
I couldn't pull it and shape it. And then, you see, I tacked
it down in there.

Gundaker: I see. That's beautiful. I was going to ask you how you
ever learned to do such a thing, how you learned to make hats

(Gundaker): in the first place.

Jarrell: I went to Watkins Institute in Nashville. Mrs. Lee Reese
040 was the instructor. That's how I learned to make hats.
It was a big class. We had everything there to work with.
I went to school two-and-a-half years. I have my diploma.

Gundaker: What were the different kinds of things that they taught you
in school that you would have to practice to get your diploma?

Jarrell: We learned to make straw hats, felt hats, and we had to create
some of our own. And we had to make fabric hats. We had to
learn to cover shoes. We learned to fix bridal veils and make
050 handbags and gloves. And that's all we were taught.

Gundaker: How do you get the fabric to cover a shoe? I've always won-
dered that.

Jarrell: Oh, anything. I can cover a shoe out of a piece of your blouse.

Gundaker: Do you have to get it wet or do you just cut it?

Jarrell: No, no, you cut it on the bias.

Gundaker: And then you tuck it in?

Jarrell: Tuck it in. I could take a pair of old shoes if they aren't
worn too thin here [looking at a shoe], and you put glue on,
down in the crack, and you tuck your fabric in between the
sole and the upper.

Gundaker: Suppose you got your foot wet, would it come loose?

Jarrell: We used Sobo glue. The heel would have to be a good heel,
062 have good taps, because you packed your fabric in. You press
it in, between the tap on your heel and the heel. Then you
press it in through here.

Gundaker: This is the different seams all the way up the back of the
shoe.

Jarrell: Yes. Then you bring the fabric over on the inside, very
closely, and glue it.

Gundaker: Now, would you do this over a leather shoe?

Jarrell: Yes, it'd be over a leather shoe.

Gundaker: And then people did this to get something to match for a party?

Jarrell: Match, yes.

Gundaker: Would they dye it before or after you did that?

Jarrell: Well, we never did do anything but out of fabric.
071 For instance, you have on a green blouse and if you wanted your shoes like that, I'd take a piece of fabric that color and fix it.

Gundaker: So, if you bought material for a dress, you could make the shoes out of the same?

Jarrell: Yes. That's what I did for so many people. I've made covered shoes to match their dresses.

Gundaker: Oh, I want some covered shoes!

Jarrell: I'll show you how to cover them, too! They're beautiful when you get them. I know my little niece was in a wedding when her brother married, down in Houston, Texas. Her mother sews beautifully. She lives in the first house down the street there. We went to Texas, and [my niece] had this printed dress, and I covered her shoes. It was her senior year. All the girls just had a fit over her shoes. She just enjoyed telling them, "My aunt did it." She loved to praise what you'd do for her.

Gundaker: I don't think very many would know how to do that either.

Jarrell: If you have a good [heel], not too thin around or across there,
086 and your heel has good taps, you can cover them beautifully.

Gundaker: People aren't really willing to take the time any more to do a lot of these things. What other kinds of things do you do? You said you were a "piecer" but not a quilter?

Jarrell: Oh yes, I can piece quilts, but I don't quilt because I stick
091 my fingers. I have a quilt in there now that I cross-stitched. It's a queen-size. I'm quilting it on the sewing machine. They said it couldn't be done, but you know, I have quilted them before.

Gundaker: You can think of ways to not stick yourself.

Jarrell: Oh, I can't stick myself! My mother liked to quilt. But I
097 never could quilt on account of sticking my finger. And I
can't be hunched over all day. You know how they have to do
to quilt.

Gundaker: When your mother made quilts -- thinking back into the past
now -- can you remember any of the styles that were popular
then? Did she use strips, long strips, or stars?

Jarrell: My mother made the same type quilts. All of these quilts
[pointing to quilts], but a few of these appliqued quilts,
are the quilts that my mother made. [There] was a fan quilt
on the wall down there yesterday. My mother made that fan
quilt. My mother made every quilt [that] I have seen them
quilting over there at Senior Neighbors. These new styles,
these appliqued quilts -- now, they didn't make appliqued
quilts then.

Gundaker: No. There was a very famous appliqued quilt that was made
108 in Athens. Did you ever see Harriet Powers' quilt?

Jarrell: No.

Gundaker: It was called the "Bible Quilt." I just wondered because of
your mother coming from that area, if she'd ever appliqued.

Jarrell: No, my mother didn't applique. In fact, she didn't have time.
She had eleven babies. They used to have fabric they called
"jean," and it was so rough I never will forget it.

Gundaker: What was it like? Was it like blue jeans?

Jarrell: No, they called it "jean." It was a wooly type, like wool,
115 and it was rough. My grandmother would take her son's and
her husband's old worn-out suits and things, and take the
good part and piece them together and make quilts for us.
She would put an outing flannel lining on them, and then she
would tack them. Sometimes she'd brow-stitch around each
square. I hated those things!

Gundaker: I know which kind they are. I like the outing flannel sides.

Jarrell: That outing flannel was fine because it's soft. But, honey,
that top! And I'm allergic to wool anyway. I made a beauti-
124 ful quilt out of silk neckties. I let a lady take it to the
fair and somebody stole it.

- Gundaker: How did you do that? I've always wanted to make a quilt with neckties. Do you stuff batting into the tie when you do a quilt like that?
- Jarrell: 130 No, no. I just sewed it together. Ripped [the ties] out, cut them in different pieces. You don't make a pattern. Just so [long as] you can fit it in and keep it even. [I] brow-stitched around them and feather-stitched. I feather-stitched around each square, which was very pretty. I let a lady take it to the fair and somebody stole it.
- Gundaker: What a shame.
- Jarrell: I knitted a coat and they tried to get me to let them take it to the fair. I didn't. I had a coat and an appliqued quilt. That's the time the Woman's Building got burned up. The Woman's Building up there at the State Fair really caught fire and burned down.
- Gundaker: Isn't that awful. How long ago was that?
- Jarrell: That was either '64 or '65.
- Gundaker: That must have been tragic. So you didn't have your things in there that year?
- Jarrell: 144 No, no. Well, I'll tell you, this lady always helped over there in the Woman's Building, getting everything prepared. She just got on her knees, almost, and begged me to let her put my coat and quilt in. I said, "I don't want to put my coat in the cleaners and I don't want to wash my quilt. By the time all those folks with their dirty hands, germly hands, get finished with it, I don't even want to wear it, and I don't want the quilt on my bed." And she said, "Oh, I'll watch it." I knew she couldn't watch it all the time. Mrs. Fowler -- I worked for the Fowlers -- said, "Columbia, why wouldn't you let Miss Allen take it?" I told her why. She said, "Well, I don't blame you." She was in Memphis [on business] when the building caught fire, and she called me and said, "Ohhh, the Woman's Building burned down. I'm so glad you coat wasn't in there." Now, I paid \$65.00 for the yarn I knitted my coat out of.
- 153
- Gundaker: Back then, in '65 or '65, that must have been the finest yarn.
- Jarrell: It was angora wool.
- Gundaker: Do you still have this coat?

Jarrell: Yes, but the cleaners ruined it.
159

Gundaker: What did they do? Did they stretch it?

Jarrell: They stretched it out of shape.

Gundaker: You may find a better cleaners yet.

Jarrell: I don't know whether anybody could get it back in shape. I've been planning on relining it. I can reshape it if I do it. But I didn't put [in] my quilt because I could just see everybody touching it. They can't look at them unless they touch them, and I didn't want to wash it.

Gundaker: Just thinking about the fair, now that's a whole other interesting thing. Did you ever enter anything in the State Fair?

Jarrell: No.

Gundaker: Did you go to visit the fair?

Jarrell: Yes, I went.

Gundaker: Well, is there anything memorable that you ever saw at the fair, or that you think people would be interested in?

Jarrell: Not necessarily. Mostly, I went to the Woman's Building.
169 I didn't go down to the animals and all of that. I didn't care anything about that. I'm allergic to animals anyway. I really am. And therefore, I would go in the Woman's Building and mill around and look at all the beautiful canned goods and handwork. I was more interested in that than anything.

Gundaker: Have the styles changed a lot in what the women would take to the fair over the years?

Jarrell: No, they took the same thing, from preserves and jellies --
176 they had everything there, which was very pretty, but I just -- I didn't go all over the fair ground.

Gundaker: Is there anything else that you think people ought to know about what you do, or that's from changes you've seen?

Jarrell: Oh, [there's] so many changes I've seen in eighty-one years!
182 Everything is changed.

Gundaker: Suppose you were to pick out the two or three most important things that you think have changed. Let's say three things for the better, and three things for the worse.

Jarrell: Well, the first thing is: people used to make their children obey; that's what's wrong with the world now. You see, people used to stay at home; mothers stayed at home and raised the children. Now, the babysitter raises them, if they can afford one. And those babysitters are not raising -- they [the children] are out in the street doing crime. Now, I think that's one of the worst things that's ever happened in the United States. Instead of putting these children in Juvenile Home, they should put the parents in the pen. If my mother left home -- and we didn't have a fence -- and told us to stay in the yard, we stayed!

Gundaker: And you had different ages of children helping out in your family, too; you had older children helping the little ones, I imagine.

Jarrell: I'm the fourth child. My mother didn't work because she never did have time. By the time she cooked and washed and ironed for us, the day would be gone. My father worked. But when [mother] went away, we stayed in the yard. We didn't even go next door. Parents, now, don't even know where the children are.

Gundaker: It's a sad thing. What about changes in the city of Chattanooga? Is there a thing that's happened that seems the most important?

Jarrell: Well, everything has changed. They didn't even have stop lights; I remember when they didn't have stop lights up town. I don't know how long you've been here [but] all down in the commercial center is just different. One thing down there, just about all the buildings are empty.

Gundaker: That's right. This neighborhood has not had any really dramatic ripping apart that some of the neighborhoods like Orchard Knob or the Ridge [has had when] the freeway went through, has it? Has there been anything that came through your neighborhood?

Jarrell: No. I guess they would have ran us off of this hill if that government property wasn't up there. See, doesn't anybody want up on this hill.

Gundaker: They can't have it anyway.

- Jarrell: 221 No that's government property. But now you take right down there, across from that church, they made all of those people move several years ago, tore all of those houses down. Oh, it's been nearly fifty years since they said there wouldn't be any more dwellings built on East Third. It was going to be strictly commercial. But now the city is starting to build all of those little huts out there, right across the street over there. They tore all those houses down and it just grew up down there, so now they've taken it, going to build. They first wanted to put the prisoners out here where the Juvenile Home is.
- Gundaker: 233 It's a painful topic, but do you know people who were made to move or where they went or how they reacted when they were told to move?
- Jarrell: Oh, they cried and did everything else, but they had to go. When the city takes a notion to take it, they take it. They'd come through the black neighborhoods and they'd take what they wanted. They didn't ask them to move, they told them to move. They'd try to help some of them get located. Up there from Holtzclaw, all around up in there, they made all of those people move, and all down to Hawthorne Street.
- Gundaker: When they widened the road, or was this before?
- Jarrell: It was since. They just made them move.
- Gundaker: Recently?
- Jarrell: 244 I can't tell you how many years ago, but I know it's been over ten years, because we had some friends that lived there. They would try to help some of them find homes, but [with] what little they gave for [the house], it wouldn't pay for what -- you know.
- Gundaker: No. Did they make some of the churches close down in there, too?
- Jarrell: 250 Wasn't any churches out in there. This church right down here was the only church on East Third Street until Second Baptist [Second Missionary Baptist, 2305-07 E. Third St.] built right there on the other side of the Red [Food] Store. Then these two little churches up here on the corner, right across from the Juvenile Home [Hamilton County Juvenile Court Detention Unit, 1600 E. Third St.] -- that Methodist

(Jarrell): church* was back that way on Holly, and that Presbyterian church** was on the west side. That's up there. Now we used to live right there where that Presbyterian church is.

Gundaker: I'm trying to visualize. Where is it? Let's see, what cross street is it?

Jarrell: Holly.

Gundaker: Third and Holly.
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Jarrell: And down here where Pruett's store [2108 E. Third], we used to live there.

Gundaker: When you lived down in either of these places, did they have the yards about the same as now, about the same size?

Jarrell: Yes, and the houses -- you could step almost out of one door into the other one. They had them all packed up.
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Gundaker: Did they have a lot of houses in the "shotgun" style?

Jarrell: Yes, and every other style. They had "shotgun" and little duplexes. These Jews would come out and every crack they'd find, they'd try to stick a building on it. And then they'd have a little building not much longer than this house. They'd have these three little rooms running back and a door, an entrance. Some of them, if they couldn't get them lengthwise on the lot, they'd run them back this way and have the entrance on the side. See, they won't let them build now. The city. They are going to build theirs like they want them. But they said the lot was too little to build a house on.
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Gundaker: When you lived in these houses, [was it the] landlords who owned them and then they came around for the rent? Or, did the people own them themselves?

*Cleage's Chapel, A. M. E. Zion Church, 354 N. Holly St., dedicated new building, May, 1984, at 1500 E. Third St.

**Stephen Temple Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1601 E. Third St., dedicated August, 1984; was previously at 451 Cumberland Ave.

- Jarrell: 279 Some of them owned them and the landlords owned some. Some of them were rental property, and some of the people owned them. When they tell you to go, you have to go. If you don't go, they'll just set your furniture out. That's the way they do.
- Gundaker: Now, with the change in government to the district system, are people in this neighborhood feeling like they're going to get more representation and be able to have more say against things like that?
- Jarrell: 286 Well, they're hoping to. But they can't win. They can't win. Chattanooga's not ready, they're not ready; they are not going to win. [There's] a lot of them hoping that. But you just can't win.
- Gundaker: You have to hope that it's going to get better sometime and keep trying.
- Jarrell: You know, "money talks." Whether you have a principle or not, money talks. We don't have that many influential people out here.
- Gundaker: How about in the black community in Chattanooga, though, do you feel --
- Jarrell: 295 That's what I'm talking about. We don't have that many influential people. Now you take out in this neighborhood -- C. B. Robinson. Now, he is the only "somebody" that has any influence out here. The poor thing; now, he's getting too old. He didn't want to run this term, but they just begged him to stay in there. Now he lives right over the hill there. He's the only somebody out here in this neighborhood that has any influence.
- Gundaker: 302 Now which district is Orchard Knob?
- Jarrell: I don't know. I tell you, I'm not a politician and I don't follow politics. I really don't know what district this is. But we had so many people running for offices this year, I don't see how any of them got any votes.
- Gundaker: It was kind of a new venture, I guess. It looked like a garden of little sign posts springing up on every single corner.
- Jarrell: I went down here on the corner of Kelley and East Third

(Jarrell): one day, and [there were] eleven down there.

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Gundaker: I guess they'll sort it out in the future. I don't know how, exactly, to put the question, but I've always felt like Chattanooga has an unusual situation in having suburbs like Lookout Mountain. They have influence, but the people don't live in the city. You have experience in both worlds. Is that how things were in Nashville, or is that similar?

Jarrell: It's the same way in Nashville. It's still Tennessee.
(laughter)

Gundaker: Were the suburbs part of the city or were they outside the city limits?

Jarrell: Some of them were. The people I worked for lived in a section that was called Belle Meade, and it is marked on the map. There's not anything out there but wealthy people. There's not any shacks out there, not any grocery stores and not any filling stations. It's strictly residential. I don't know whether they've changed it or not, but you used to couldn't buy a lot under an acre. They have their own police force, own fire department.

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All of Lookout Mountain didn't have a fire department.

I don't believe it was around in Fairyland. Didn't used to be. I remember a man hosted a party -- I can't think of his name -- he was a Hogshead,* I think, and he hosted a party. He had to catch a plane early that morning, and he left. His wife was still at the party. He was going home and get him a nap. Seems to me like he had one or two children. Anyway, the maid got out. They said he -- I'm sure he'd had drinks, you know, they hosted this party -- and he must have gone to sleep smoking and set the house afire and burned him and the children up. I think it was two [children].

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They didn't have fire protection around in Fairyland at that time. Everybody said they should have gone over to the firehall near Watkins Street; but they didn't pay for their protection and they didn't go over there. They got burned up. That's when they put protection around in Fairyland.

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*James McChesney Hogshead, Jr., and wife Louise, nee Worsham. Last listed in 1950 city directory at 6 Hardy Rd., Lookout Mountain. In 1951, Louise is listed as his widow, residing at 113 Hilldale Dr.

[At this point, Miss Jarrell asks an unidentified third party about the family involved in the fire. The ensuing three-way discussion could not be heard clearly on the tape and was omitted from the transcript. The interview ended after this discussion.]

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