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An Interview with

MR. ERNEST WALDAUER

April 20, 1977

Interviewed by

Roberta Miller

Mississippi
Department of Archives and History
and the
Washington County Library System
Oral History Project:
Greenville and Vicinity

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Interviewee: Ernest Waldauer

Interviewer: Roberta Miller

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Scope Note: The Washington County Library System, with assistance from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, conducted oral history interviews with local citizens. The project interviews took place between 1976 and 1978. The interviewees included long-term residents of the Greenville-Washington County area in their late 50's and older.

This is Roberta Miller, an Oral History Interviewer for the Washington County Library System. I am interviewing Mr. Ernest Waldauer of the Woodlawn Plaza Apartments in Greenville, Miss. The date is April 20, 1977.

Ernest, when did your parents come to Greenville?

WALDAUER: My father came here in 1873 from New Orleans. He worked his way up here on a steamboat and got a job as passage at very small pay. What he was doing I can't remember.

MILLER: Who were his parents? Who were your father's parents?

WALDAUER: My father's parents were Abe Waldauer and Henrietta Waldauer.

MILLER: And where did they come from?

WALDAUER: They were originally from Germany but papa was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1858.

MILLER: And then they went to New Orleans.

WALDAUER: They went first to Columbia, South Carolina and then to New Orleans.

MILLER: What were they doing in New Orleans?

WALDAUER: I have no idea.

MILLER: Don't remember. So your father came to Greenville and after he got to Greenville what did he do?

WALDAUER: He got a job, I know it was a very small job

at one of the stores. I don't know who. That was in 1873. In 1886 he formed his partnership with Mr. Nathan Erlich. That was Ferd Erlich's father.

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: A general mercantile store that in those days handled everything from pins to caskets, and they built a two-story brick building on Washington Avenue about where the Stein Mart is now. That was in 1886, and it was known as Erlich and Waldauer.

MILLER: Okay.

WALDAUER: Then papa later sold his interest to Mr. Erlich and Ferd Erlich operated it. Then later they sold it to Mr. Ike Solomon, the corner of Washington and Walnut, and next door there was a small jewelry store owned by Saul Klein, S-a-u-l K-l-e-i-n, who came here from Cleveland, Ohio and married Nettie Erlich, I mean Nettie Marshall. Mrs. Marshall was a sister of my father.

MILLER: Mrs. Marshall was a Waldauer.

WALDAUER: That's right. Bertha Marshall Waldauer. They had a store on Walnut, right behind Finlay's Drug Store.

MILLER: After your father sold out to Mr. Erlich, what did he do?

WALDAUER: Papa went into the cotton business and he opened, he incorporated the Waldauer Company.

MILLER: Where was your father's business? Where was it?

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WALDAUER: His business?

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: On that corner.

MILLER: On that corner?

WALDAUER: Where the doctor just moved out of it
and moved out somewhere else.

MILLER: At the corner of Walnut and Main.

WALDAUER: Yes.

MILLER: And this was a cotton business?

WALDAUER: Cotton and more or less real estate in
lands.

MILLER: I see.

When were you born, Ernest?

WALDAUER: February 23, 1897.

MILLER: 1897.

WALDAUER: In other words, I'm 80 years old.

MILLER: All right. Where did you go to school?

WALDAUER: Well, I started school down in a little
frame building on the Archer School lot on Hinds and Percy,
where the Boy Scout Auxiliary building ---

MILLER: Yes. The Boy's Club.

WALDAUER: School in the first grade.
Miss Nellie Griffin was my first teacher. Then when Central
School was built, I entered Central School in the second
grade the first year they opened the school.

MILLER: When was that?

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WALDAUER: That must have been about 1904 or 1905.

MILLER: Yes. And you went to Central School through ?
How long did you go to Central School?

WALDAUER: At Central School? Well, that's a long story. I went from the second grade through the seventh grade in Central School, then I went to Archer School. When Archer School was condemned, you remember hearing about how High School was transferred back in the top floor of Central School house, so I actually graduated in 1914 from Central School, in the same class as "Old Stuff" (Brodie Crump) and Henry Crosby.

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: And Zelda Buehler was a member of the same class. Don't say that I told you, but Minnie Lee Thomas was also in that class.

MILLER: Now, that was in 1914?

WALDAUER: 1914 - in June of 1914.

MILLER: And then you went to college?

WALDAUER: Yes, I went to Mississippi A & M at Starkville.

MILLER: Yes. And did you graduate?

WALDAUER: I graduated on the 7th of March, 1918. I got my diploma in less than four years. I had ample credits to get my diploma so I got it on the 7th of March and I enlisted in the Army.

MILLER: Immediately. Right away.

WALDAUER: Yes, shortly thereafter.

MILLER: How long did you stay in the Army?

WALDAUER: How long, what?

MILLER: How long were you in the Army?

WALDAUER: Well, I was actually -- I had to have surgery before I could -- I applied for Officer's Training School because I had had training at State for 4 years. I was turned down on a physical, so I had to have surgery, which I had in May of 1918 and at the same time Burt Taggart was born he was right next door to me. I saw it in the paper and then I was inducted on June 5th and I served at Fort Oglethorpe Georgia in the Veterinary Company, Number One, in which I had enlisted, and I was discharged the 29th of January, 1919.

MILLER: Did you know anything about the Veterinary business?

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: Did you know anything about Veterinary work?

WALDAUER: Yes. I had had some courses in Veterinary medicine at A & M, you see. They taught us veterinary, treating farm animals, cattle, but no small animals, and I liked it and I was very fond of Doctor E. M. Ranck, R-a-n-c-k, who was at the head of the Veterinary School and State Veterinarian, and he said, "You would make a good, an asset to the Veterinary Corps" and gave me a letter to the Veterinary Corps and that was how I enlisted in the Veterinary Corps.

MILLER: What did you get your degree in, at A & M?

WALDAUER: What?

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MILLER: What was your degree in?

WALDAUER: My degree? BS in Agriculture.

MILLER: Agriculture. Were you planning to be a farmer?

WALDAUER: Yes, you see, I was going to work on the farm for my father.

MILLER: Your father had a farm?

WALDAUER: Had a farm at O'Reilly in Bolivar County, and that was why I was interested in agriculture. I was interested in cattle raising and livestock.

MILLER: Did you ever farm?

WALDAUER: Did I ever -- ?

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: Practically no, because when I came home papa got sick in 1919 and, of course, there is something that might be of interest (tape interference).

MILLER: During the 1930s?

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: Before the 1930 depression?

WALDAUER: Just about that.

MILLER: There was a depression in the twenties.

WALDAUER: Papa died in 1929, the fall of 1929.

MILLER: Yes, we were really having a depression before the thirties.

WALDAUER: Yes.

MILLER: So, since you didn't farm, what did you do when you came back from the Army?

WALDAUER: Papa and mama had rental property and real estate and I took over that in the upstairs office in the Bank of Washington building, Real Estate and Rentals. Then later I added insurance, and then from there I moved downstairs in the building next to Joe Reilly, in his building where he had a Tailor Shop, and in 1944 Celeste and myself bought the Bank of Washington building and we took the office that Bergman, Finlay and Starling had for years. The Radio Station WJPR was in the other side of the building and upstairs we had offices rented.

MILLER: Cotton offices were up there, weren't they?

WALDAUER: I think there were twelve, weren't there? I think there were twelve rooms upstairs.

MILLER: And I remember that there were some cotton men that had offices up there?

WALDAUER: There was a cotton sample, a big cotton sample room, that we rented to Rosenbergs. They had it for their stock and other things.

MILLER: When the 1927 flood came, were you married then?

WALDAUER: No.

MILLER: You weren't married?

WALDAUER: No.

MILLER: You hadn't married then.

So, what happened to you and your family during the flood?

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WALDAUER: Well, my mother was in the hospital before the levee broke and she passed away the night of April 23rd, two days after it broke.

MILLER: Two days after it broke.

WALDAUER: Well, I think you know, we could not bury her for several weeks and Mrs. Wells kept her remains in her residence in a private room, her den, until at such time as we could have her funeral.

MILLER: And that was probably June, wasn't it?

WALDAUER: That was in June or July. I've got the paper somewhere.

MILLER: Now, that was Mrs. H. L. Wells?

WALDAUER: Yes.

MILLER: Of Wells Funeral Home.

WALDAUER: Yes, Lorene Wells and my oldest sister were very close friends and graduated from Archer School together.

MILLER: Who was your oldest sister?

WALDAUER: My oldest sister? Bertha.

MILLER: That was --

WALDAUER: I've forgotten her age but she was --

MILLER: She was in Mrs. Wells' class?

WALDAUER: She was considerably older than I was because we had a brother between and then Milton and then myself.

MILLER: So, when the levee broke that day you all were all very concerned about your mother, I know.

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WALDAUER: But prior to the time when the levee broke I was Commander of the American Legion in that year, in 1927, and we maintained a kitchen on the levee feeding the men who worked on the levee and any of them that wanted something to eat or a cup of coffee.

MILLER: This was before the levee broke?

WALDAUER: That was before the levee broke.

MILLER: Who was working there with you?

WALDAUER: When the levee broke we moved our kitchen into Greenville in a building on Main Street next to the old Democrat Times office and in a couple of days we had water up to our knees in that building and we had to move the kitchen on the levee and we operated three kitchens feeding originally it was estimated nearly 10,000 people until we could get them away from here to a camp in Vicksburg.

MILLER: Who else ran the kitchen besides you?

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: Who else ran the kitchen beside you?

WALDAUER: Oh, gosh, I don't know. Well, there were so many --

MILLER: Mr. Charles Loeb.

WALDAUER: Roscoe Smythe was my left-hand man.

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: One of the Muffuletto brothers, who was not a Legionaire, was very helpful to me, and then we had 245 members in the Legion and all of them worked. I don't --

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if there was any that didn't I couldn't call names, but everybody pitched in and did what we could.

MILLER: And there were three kitchens?

WALDAUER: Three kitchens, and they were scattered from the Corps of Engineers, which was down on Deaton, and the levee north to the old protection levee up there near Blocker Dairy. We had the Army and National Guard put up tents for these people to live in. Fred O'Bannon was in charge of erecting the camps. He was in the National Guard and Galla Paxton was a Major and the head officer in the Guard. We voluntarily went under Martial Law and Galla was at the head of it, but this new book that Pete Daniels got out just made a big mistake in no way mentioning Will Percy. Will Percy was the spearhead of everything. He was put in command and he and his father did an excellent job, and there was Charlie Williams, who was known as an excellent flood fighter, and he did quite a job trying to hold that levee. Then there was a civilian committee with Will Percy, his father, LeRoy Percy, Mal Robertshaw, E. D. Davis, I think your father had an office over his, didn't he?

MILLER: No, my father had an office up in the Rosenfeld building.

WALDAUER: And Charlie Fullerton was very helpful, because he had experience in distributing and handling food because he worked for Malone & Hyde.

MILLER: Yes. Now where did you get your food?

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WALDAUER: How did we get our food?

MILLER: Where and how?

WALDAUER: We robbed Goyer Company, the Itzig Company, the Malone & Hyde or anybody else and they were glad to get rid of it.

MILLER: Because it would spoil?

WALDAUER: We were in action two or three days before the Red Cross got in here. Of course, they took over and assumed all debts but Mr. Percy and Will told these people that we needed these supplies and they needn't worry about the money. They would see that they were paid. They didn't know when they would get their money. They said, "Well, we'd rather have it this way than to have it get wet and ruined." Of course, the Goyer Company and Itzig didn't have water. They had a higher building, of course, so they --

MILLER: How about Armour & Company and Swift & Company?

WALDAUER: Armour & Company and everybody cooperated.

MILLER: So you didn't have any problems finding food?

WALDAUER: No.

MILLER: How in the world did you feed that many people?

WALDAUER: How did we get it to the levee?

MILLER: Yes. In boats?

WALDAUER: No. Captain U. G. (Uris) Chipman,

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Assistant Fire Chief, rigged up a wagon - raised it up. He hauled food and refugees to the levee and, also, some was brought by boat.

MILLER: How did you feed that many people?

WALDAUER: Well, they just had to line up and come by the window there and we'd hand them out a plate of whatever we had that day, beans and bread and coffee or whatnot, and we got bread, a lot of our bread came from Indianola by boat. The McKinneys had a bakery over there and we had one of these fishermen took his boat out of the river and would make trips to Indianola. I made one trip back with him with 300 loaves of bread in his boat.

MILLER: That's really something, isn't it?

WALDAUER: The city of Memphis sent us a barge of fresh water in five gallon demijohns. They sent us other supplies. They also sent us a Park Agent Pumper with a crew to operate it, and they were placed in a tent on top of the levee at Main and out where the Yatch Club is today.

MILLER: Was that in case a fire broke out on the levee?

WALDAUER: In the camps or anything else, or any fire we could get to. We had some two or three fires during the flood. We had no mechanical fire department. It was all horse drawn, and Chief Donovan was the Chief and Chipman was his assistant.

MILLER: Was the Fire Department horse-drawn in

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1927? Didn't they have motors on the fire engine in 1927?

WALDAUER: No pumpers.

MILLER: No pumpers?

WALDAUER: No, they were horse-drawn.

MILLER: They were horse-drawn in 1927?

WALDAUER: Yes, and --

MILLER: There were three fires. Where were the fires?

WALDAUER: One fire was at Neal-Dodds Lumber Company. It started when the water got in their lime house. That was right behind the Itzig Company on Alexander Street. There was a fire in that two-story building on Nelson and Broadway, where Joe Gow Nue moved to. That was two I recall.

MILLER: How do you think those fires started?

WALDAUER: Well, there's no question to the Neal-Dodds fire. The other one they never did, so far as I know, they couldn't determine.

MILLER: Probably cooking.

WALDAUER: It could have been electrical or anything else.

MILLER: Did the electricity stay on in town?

WALDAUER: The Light Company at that time was on the corner of Poplar and Percy Streets, down across from where the Chicago Mill is today. There was very little water down there. The closer it got to the levee the shallower the water.

MILLER: Did we have lights all over town?

WALDAUER: Most of them, most of the town.

MILLER: Most of the people who stayed had electricity?

WALDAUER: Most of the ladies and children had left here until the last train left. Now the C & G sent a train of boxcars in here for people to live in and to haul stuff and the force of the current knocked the train off the track at Paducah crossing out there at Canal Number 9 and it landed on land that I owned and laid there for months.

MILLER: And people lived in those boxcars?

WALDAUER: People lived in boxcars wherever they would place boxcars all up and down the line from Heads, Helm on down, Leland, until they could get --

MILLER: How many people do you think left Greenville? Is there any way to know?

WALDAUER: It's hard to tell. As I said, they were leaving two or three days before the levee broke and after the levee broke they had about twenty-four hours before the railroad tracks were flooded, before the water got to the Y & M V or the C & G.

MILLER: How many people do you think stayed on the levee?

WALDAUER: On the levee?

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: We estimated at one time 10,000, black and whites of course.

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MILLER: 10,000.

WALDAUER: Of course you don't have to mention colors but most of the refugees were black.

MILLER: Were black, most of them.

MILLER: Where did you stay? Were you able to stay at home?

WALDAUER: Where did I stay? Most of the time I had an Army cot on the covered barge at the foot of Main Street where our supplies were and I stayed on the barge. Some nights I stayed upstairs in the Bank of Washington Building. Once in a while I went home with Ralph Davison who lived on South Broadway next to Central School and I'd get a bath. The only baths I got was on the steamboats that landed. I got friendly with the Captains of the various boats.

MILLER: How did they get the mail in and out?

WALDAUER: The mail came by boat and they'd put a covered, I guess you would call it a covered wagon, I don't think they had any of these trailers then or not, on the ramp at the foot of Washington Avenue and the levee and they sent the mail down there. Steve Finlay also was one of them, I can remember, that helped distribute the mail down there. The mail came by boat from Luna, Arkansas or it came from Memphis or it came from Vicksburg, depending on the direction.

MILLER: When we sent mail out, how did they send it?

WALDAUER: The same way.

MILLER: Steamboats would pick it up?

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WALDAUER: The boats would take it. In other words, Lyon Packet Company. That's Tiger Lyon's family and Lyon Koch's family had two or three boats. They had the Speed, the Verne Swain - one went to Sunnyside and Eudora.

MILLER: Did they own the Uncle Oliver?

WALDAUER: No. The Uncle Oliver was out of Vicksburg. The Tennessee Bell did a wonderful work and "Big Mama Sprague" hauled thousands of people out of here to Vicksburg. They pushed more barges, of course, than anybody else could. Then, the Chicago Mill had a small boat that they brought their timber in, The Wabash, and they -- it was small enough to go in from the river to Lake Lee and take refugees off the levee at Avon and Wayside and bring them here to the camp and then they were sent to Vicksburg. The Capitol, you remember it, was run by the Streckfus Line.

MILLER: That was an excursion boat.

WALDAUER: Yes, they were to run an excursion out of here under the auspices of the Legion during that time after the levee broke but, of course, they couldn't.

(Turned tape)

I had met the Captain on a trip and we had become friendly because the Legion had sponsored all of their excursions out of here and I was on the committee that sponsored it and he invited me to come on and have a bath and a meal and spend the night and the next morning when they left here the dern fellow played the calliope, his piece was,

"By, By Blackbird", with all the blacks on the levee.

Now, anything else about the flood?

MILLER: (tape interference)

WALDAUER: The American Legion was supposed to have their state convention in the early part of July but, of course, they couldn't because the roads were impassable and trains hadn't started running so it was postponed to the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth of July, and we had an excellent attendance at that convention, which was held in the old opera house and Ben Hilbun who was later president of Mississippi State, was State Commander, and Ben took sick here for a couple of days and then at the convention here I was elected State Commander for 1928, and I was put on a lot of committees with the Rehabilitation and all of that. We were getting money from all over the country, money, food and clothing.

MILLER: The American Legion was?

WALDAUER: The American Legion and the church, all of the church ladies did an excellent job of sorting clothes in the Levee Board building on Main Street.

MILLER: That was the sack house, wasn't it?

WALDAUER: -- and distributing everything else and I guess that covers that portion of it.

MILLER: Now, where did the Legionnaires stay at the Convention?

WALDAUER: Most of them stayed at the Rest Haven

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Hotel on Washington.

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: -- because Joe Ouletta was operating it for Mrs. Grego and he was an ordered Legionaire and a lot of them stayed at the Roslyn Hotel.

MILLER: We didn't have the Greenville Hotel then?

WALDAUER: We also put up tents in the Court House yard for any surplus but didn't use them. A lot of them stayed in the private homes. See, I had no one at home but myself. Gladys and Miss Jeanette Johl, who lived with us, had gone to Memphis and, of course, Ben Hilbun stayed with me and one or two others and, as I said, they were taken into private homes and friends but they were all well taken care of and we had barbecues for them and everything else.

MILLER: Yes, I can remember it. I remember it. I was still at High School but I remember it because it was exciting.

After the flood, now, there was a lot of rehabilitation going on.

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: A lot of rehabilitation. Did you work helping repair the city? Did you work on any of those rehabilitation committees?

(tape interference)

WALDAUER: Rehabilitation committee. There was a state meeting in Jackson and I was a Legion of the State and was on that committee.

MILLER: What did you all do?

WALDAUER: I had to go to Jackson in a devil of a way. They put that in the Democrat, I think, Lynne Walcott used that before, then the Masonic Lodge did an excellent job both with money and equipment and other things rehabilitating as well as the churches. They were sent money from all over the country and gave money where needed and helped where help was needed.

MILLER: People got money to paint their houses and repair them?

WALDAUER: Well, they had to get it from some source because in those days there was no flood insurance. The government wasn't throwing it away like that. They weren't even taking care of the levees. You see, that was before the Flood Control Act of 1928. That was the beginning of the Flood Control Act and I'll give you a little dope on that if you want it.

MILLER: I do.

WALDAUER: All right. In 1927 the National American Legion met in Paris, France. I was a delegate, one of the delegates. It was the latter part of September and the first of October, and a few of us went to Bob Morrow, you've heard of Bob Morrow, and myself, and some others and the Mississippi Department - the Mississippi Department of the American Legion wrote a Resolution and presented it to the Resolution Committee at the National Convention in Paris asking that the government

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help the local Levee Boards with the building of levees and flood control and that, to my mind, was the beginning of the Flood Control Act of 1928. It actually started in the American Legion of Mississippi.

MILLER: And you presented this at the meeting in Paris?

WALDAUER: I was Chairman of the delegation on account of being the past Commander. I've got a lot of other things here.

MILLER: Now, then after 1928 the Flood Control Bill was passed.

WALDAUER: The Flood Control Bill was passed and that was when they started building the levees higher and with the cut-offs. You remember, Mr. Will Elam was Assistant Engineer of the Levee Board and he wrote a book, "Speeding Waters to the Sea." He gave me an autographed copy and I loaned it to somebody and I never got it back. I loaned Will Percy's "Lanterns on the Levee" and I never got it back.

MILLER: Then the flood control work was under the U. S. Engineers, was it not?

WALDAUER: Before the -- ?

MILLER: No, after the year of the flood.

WALDAUER: The Corps of Engineers started taking over.

MILLER: Took charge of the levees.

They were building levees all through the depression,

weren't they?

WALDAUER: Building levees?

MILLER: Building and repairing levees?

WALDAUER: Repairing. Well, they were repairing --

MILLER: After the Flood Control Bills were passed and the U. S. Engineers took charge of maintaining the levees, the levees had to be rebuilt and repaired.

WALDAUER: The Levee Board - in the various districts - that was part of their business. That was why you were paying a tax on your land and property, a levee tax.

MILLER: Who came in and took charge of repairing the levees, Ernest?

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: Who came in and took charge of building the levees?

WALDAUER: I don't know who, they were from the Commission.

MILLER: The Levee Board Commission?

WALDAUER: No, the U. S. Commission and Captain West at that time was Chairman of the Commission (Note: This was the Mississippi River Commission and Captain West was President).

MILLER: And they checked on the work of the levee contractor?

WALDAUER: I imagine they did. They checked on all of the work that was being done.

MILLER: Do you think that all of the money that the

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Engineers spent here helped Greenville get through the depression?

WALDAUER: Helped Greenville? Why, certainly it helped, just like any other payroll --

MILLER: We were just fortunate to have a big payroll even though it was unfortunate we had a flood.

(Tape interference)

WALDAUER: We didn't have any tanks at that time. Everyone was told to boil their water and be sure to boil it. Captain Chipman conceived the idea of connecting the well at the Consumer's Ice Company, you remember them - Mr. Lyne Starling - behind where the Queen City Furniture is, and he ran a line of hose from their well to the fire hydrant at the corner of Washington and Delesseps and pumped water into the water mains to get some fresh water into the mains. It was a wonderful idea and was really very helpful and I don't think he ever got very much credit for doing it but he --

MILLER: So the water could come into your house, so you could get fresh water at your house?

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: Where would the water go to?

WALDAUER: Well, we could get water then but we --

MILLER: You'd have to go to that hydrant to get it?

WALDAUER: Not if we had it in the homes but most of the blacks didn't have it in the house at that time.

MILLER: Right.

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WALDAUER: They'd get the water, you'd get rain water and I said Memphis sent us a barge of water down here.

MILLER: Yes, water was very important.

WALDAUER: It was handled very carefully, the way they gave it out.

(Tape interference)

MILLER: The boys from McGehee, Arkansas came over and brought sandwiches?

WALDAUER: The boys from McGehee, Arkansas, they brought us sandwiches by seaplane, and then from Lake Village they came over here with a boat - one of those inboard motor boats - and they also came with this barge to get food and feed but they were the first to bring us something to eat.

MILLER: Then when the levee broke at Pendleton, they needed help.

WALDAUER: They needed help.

MILLER: Tell me about that again now.

WALDAUER: They got under water over there --

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: They started bringing their livestock to the levee. Of course, to put them on high ground. The levee was about the only place, other than we had a lot on the Winterville Mounds, but when they needed feed stuff and we didn't have it, they came over here to see if they could borrow some food stuff to feed their animals over there so the Red Cross fellow said we couldn't send it, they were in the

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western area and we were in the eastern, and Mr. LeRoy Percy said, "There's no such damn thing in disaster, there is no territorial restriction so far as we are concerned they are going to get it. If there's any legal liability or anything, I'm at fault, you can blame it on me, you can fight it and I'll go to the Supreme Court with it." and he told us to load them up, give them what we could spare and we did.

MILLER: And everybody was helping everybody.

WALDAUER: Well, everybody was helping us why shouldn't we help them?

MILLER: Right,

WALDAUER: If we had it to help them with.

(Tape interference)

MILLER: You came home from service in 1919.

WALDAUER: I was discharged on January 29, 1919 at Fort Oglethorpe, and then I came by the way of Holly Springs and spent a couple of days with my sister, Bertha Shoemaker, and I got home around the first or second of February. I talked to my father about what to do and what he wanted me to do but he said, "I want you to do whatever you feel like doing." I said, "I want to go back to Mississippi A & M for this last part of the semester and take some work that I did not get to take before I left there." and he said, "Can you get in over there?" I said, "Well, I'm going to call Mr. U. Crouch, who was registrar at the time and I was friendly with and see what he says" so he said, "If you want to come over and enter as a

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day student we are only too glad to have you but we can't put you in the dormitory but you can take any class work you want." I said, "Well, I'll see what I can do about getting a room, I know where I can board over there," and I'd hate to show you the menu at the cafe, how you could eat for about 25¢.

MILLER: I'd like to see it.

WALDAUER: I've got it here somewhere, and so there was a friend I had over there named Yeates and he lived just off the campus. I wrote to Mr. Yeates and asked him if he knew where I could get a room close to the campus, where I could walk back and forth to classes and he wrote back, "Yes, in my attic." "We have a spare bedroom and you're welcome to it" so I went back and I rented that room and I ate at the Boarding House and the Y. M. C. A. cafe on the campus for the fourth quarter of the fourth semester. That was somewhere, it must have been in the middle of February to the middle of June, but I already had my diploma. It was mailed to me but I never did get it. I'm a graduate without a diploma, so I went back over there and wanted to take up some Veterinary Animal Husbandry and, of all things, Bee Keeping which I wanted and I did, so when I came home papa was sick so I came on back and took over the business with mama.

MILLER: And that was the Real Estate business.

WALDAUER: Rentals and Real Estate.

MILLER: Rentals and Real Estate.

WALDAUER: Well, it was in April I started in the

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insurance business. I didn't stay over there too long because papa took sick and I came back. I used to go over there on what's now the C & G and it took 12 hours to get from here to Starkville.

MILLER: And, how many miles is it?

WALDAUER: Well, it's 168 to Columbus. We'd go to West Point and change trains to the M & O to Artesia and then a dummy line from Artesia out to Starkville.

MILLER: It took 12 hours?

WALDAUER: About 12 hours.

MILLER: Did your mother run the business all by herself for a while?

WALDAUER: Mama took care of the rent collections by herself and my older brother, Abe, was back home out of the Army before I was and he helped papa dispose of the implements and livestock up at O'Reilly.

MILLER: That was where you had a farm? That's where your place was, your farm?

WALDAUER: You want to know what it was by the railroad man's termination? The Jew town with an Irish name.

MILLER: That's good.

How did your mother collect the rent?

WALDAUER: Well, in a horse and buggy. She had a one-horse buggy and I used to go out with her in cold weather, We'd go out on Sunday morning and she'd heat bricks in the kitchen oven and put them in a croaker sack to keep our feet

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warm.

MILLER: A croaker sack? What is a Croaker sack?

WALDAUER: A sack that holds corn or that kind of stuff.

MILLER: How do you spell croaker?

WALDAUER: C-r-o-c-k-e-r, I'd spell it. The houses that she had, in those days you had to collect weekly on Sunday morning because they got paid off on Saturday night and she was getting about \$1.50 or \$2.00 a week, a house that these blacks are paying \$30.00 for or \$40.00 a month for today.

MILLER: Where would the houses be? Where were they? What part of town?

WALDAUER: What part of town?

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: Well, the Waldauer Company bought what was known as the old stave factory, which was located on South Hinds beginning at the C & G Railroad going to Clay and from Hinds back to Shelby, that square block, and they called it Frankel, Elkas and Waldauer Subdivision. They subdivided it into lots - 25 foot lots - some of it was sold and on some of it was built rental houses. On the corner there by the railroad they built a store building and it still remains there and then later papa bought a piece of land over where Lucy Webb school is, from Gum Street back to the railroad. I've forgotten the name of that subdivision but it was also

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subdivided into lots and sold and some houses built on them, some they built, some they financed.

MILLER: How much was a house worth then?

WALDAUER: How big were they?

MILLER: How big were they and how much did it cost to build one?

WALDAUER: Well, they were two bedrooms, a kitchen and an outdoor closet, no plumbing, no lights. Now the last house that Celeste and myself built, we built on South Delesseps on the property down there and we built two rooms and a kitchen, with electric lights, outdoor toilets and they were wired for light.

MILLER: What year was that?

WALDAUER: It must have been about '30 or '31? Somewhere along in there. The actual cost to build - the material, building and heat, the electrical and painting, was \$550.00, and today would cost about \$5,500.00. Of course, you'd have to put in baths.

MILLER: That was about in 1930?

WALDAUER: Somewhere about that. We married in 1929 and it was a couple of years after we married we bought that.

MILLER: When you first started helping your mother, the rents were about \$2.00 a week?

WALDAUER: \$1.50 to \$2.00 a week.

MILLER: What were people making and where did they

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work?

WALDAUER: Well, they were working at the Oil Mills, they were working at Paepcke-Leicht Lumber, which is now Chicago Mill. If you want I can give you a little history there. Leavenworth Sawmill, Wineman's, the Corps of Engineers, and any other --

MILLER: Compress?

WALDAUER --- lawn work, carpenters, or any other, you know, any kind of work they could pick up.

MILLER: It was not skilled work, it was people who just made ordinary wages.

WALDAUER: Work was unskilled work but, of course, they didn't get any government aid or anything like that.

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: I'll tell you another little story. One day down at the office a colored man walked into the office, who had rented from us and done business with us, and I went out and shook hands with him - I've forgotten his name now. I said, "John what in the devil are you doing here, I thought you were up in Gary?" He said, "Mr. Ernest, it got cold up there and there wasn't no Mr. Ernest for me to go to and borrow a few dollars to buy some coal." You remember that?

MRS. WALDAUER: Sure do.

WALDAUER: And he said, "And I come back home and I want a place to live."

MILLER: What did you want to tell me about the

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Paepcke-Leicht Company?

WALDAUER: About what?

MILLER: About the Chicago Mill?

WALDAUER: Oh, the Chicago Mill was originally the Paepcke-Leicht Company. Mr. Herman Paepcke was a Chicagoan. He came down here when they put the Mill in here and married Irene Robertshaw.

MILLER: Not Irene, it was her sister.

WALDAUER: Well, her sister then, I'd forgotten. One of them married Mr. Watson. This one married --

MILLER: Miss Irene never did marry.

WALDAUER: I thought it was Irene. I've forgotten the name but she married Mr. Paepcke and he was then President of the Chicago Mill, and then later Paepcke-Leicht sold out to Chicago Mill and they sent Mr. Mayhall down here as Manager.

MILLER: It was Mr. Berry, wasn't it?

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: Wasn't it Mr. Berry?

WALDAUER: Fred Berry first and then Mayhall.

MILLER: Right, yes.

WALDAUER: Then Burt Weiner, of course.

MILLER: Yes.

WALDAUER: The Chicago Mill bought Leavenworth's out and they bought the Wineman's out. The Paepcke-Leicht, or Chicago Mill, was the only mill left until the U. S. Gypsum came in.

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MILLER: Were there some other small mills?

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: Were there any small mills?

WALDAUER: V. A. Denslow had a small mill up in the north end of town near the Compress.

MILLER: And, how about Judge Hart's family, didn't his father have a mill?

WALDAUER: What?

MILLER: The Hartys. Wasn't there a Harty Mill?

WALDAUER: Who was that?

MILLER: H-a-r-t-y.

WALDAUER: Harty had a lumber yard. J. J. Harty Lumber Yard, it was on South Hinds.

MILLER: Judge Harty's family?

WALDAUER: Then the Harty's lived on Broadway and the Lumber Yard was behind their house on Hinds.

MILLER: I see.

WALDAUER: It was known as J. J. Harty Lumber Company. It was not a mill. It was a lumber yard, like Virden or, you know.

MILLER: And did they sell out too?

WALDAUER: They eventually sold out after -- Oh, what's the fellow's name that came in here and married one of the Harty girls?

MILLER: Mr. Kimble.

WALDAUER: Raymond Kimble, his father.

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