

## **Carmon Elliott Transcription Conducted by James Newberry on February 8, 2012**

Newberry: Alright, this is James Newberry. I'm here with Carmon Elliott.

Elliott: What's your last name?

Newberry: Newberry. Newberry.

Elliott: Y-U-V-E-A-R?

Newberry: N-E-W-B-E-R-R-Y.

Newberry: Newberry.

Newberry: Newberry.

Elliott: Alright.

Newberry: And we're here on February 8, 2012. Mr. Elliott, do you agree to this interview?

Elliott: Oh yes.

Newberry: Okay, well thank you. Now, Mr. Elliott, what year were you born?

Elliott: What is what?

Newberry: What year were you born?

Elliott: 1911.

Newberry: What's your birthday?

Elliott: February 15th. So it's only two or three days off that I'll have a birthday.

Newberry: So in about a week you'll be 101.

Elliott: That's right.

Newberry: Wow! Okay, now where did you grow up?

Elliott: I grew up in Harden County, Kentucky. They uh--. Elizabethtown is the county

seat.

Newberry: Yessir. And uh, how long did you stay in Kentucky? Where did you move when you grew up?

Elliott: I stayed on the farm until uh--. Let's see, when was it that I left? Let's see. I left the farm in May of uh--.

Newberry: Were you still a little boy?

Elliott: No.

Newberry: Were you a teenager?

Elliott: No, I was 22 years old.

Newberry: So were you still living in the house where you grew up?

Elliott: Yeah.

Newberry: Were your parents farmers?

Elliott: Yes.

Newberry: What sort of things did you do on the farm?

Elliott: Well, we raised corn and cane which we made into sorghum molasses, and we grew all kinds of garden stuff. We had a good garden every year. We raised livestock, cows. We had a few sheep. We sold a few lambs every year and sold the wool. We sheared the sheep in May, and then we had three horses which we used to pull plows. One of them was a buggy horse. That's the only transportation we had, a road wagon and a buggy.

Newberry: Okay. Now, what were your parents' names?

Elliott: Silas, S-I-L-A-S, and Rosie, R-O-S-I-E, Elliott, E-L-L-I-O-T-T.

Newberry: And did you have brothers and sisters?

Elliott: I had one sister, Glenn, G-L-E-N-N-I-E. She was two years my senior. She was

two years younger than I.

Newberry: Okay, why did you leave at the age of 22?

Elliott: Why did I leave the farm?

Newberry: Yessir.

Elliott: Oh, it's purely economic. I finished high school, and after I finished high school I worked off a certificate at Bowlinggreen Business University, well, Bowlinggreen's teachers. It was good for two years. And they changed superintendents, and I just got to teach one year. Then after that in 1931, I farmed with dad one year, and the results were so bad. I told dad there must be a better way of making a living than on the farm we lived on although we owned the land.

Newberry: So you taught one year?

Elliott: Taught in a one room school one year.

Newberry: Did you teach all grades?

Elliott: Yessir. Eight grades.

Newberry: Describe that experience of teaching.

Elliott: Sir?

Newberry: Describe the experience of teaching all those grades in a one room school house.

Elliott: Yeah.

Newberry: Was it difficult? I mean, I guess you had to know the whole--.

Elliott: Yeah, yeah. It kept you awful busy to take care of all eight grades in an eight hour period which you were allotted.

Newberry: Then you left there and went back to the farm and farmed a year.

Elliott: Um, let's see.

Newberry: In 1931?

Elliott: No, I farmed before I taught.

Newberry: Oh, I see. You left the farm when you decided that wasn't working out.

Elliott: After I taught one year, the CCC was enacted, and I joined the CCC, and I was in there for 13 months.

Newberry: And that was the Civilian Conservation Corps, and that was established under Roosevelt?

Elliott: Yessir.

Newberry: Talk about that.

Elliott: Well, there were 100 and some camps all over the country. That was the great thing Roosevelt ever did. He farmed--. He furnished, although the money was no big it was a lifesaver in that time. Our company was 547. Number 547. They had us slated for California, and they changed their minds and had us up in eastern Kentucky. A camp that belonged to the University of Kentucky, and we uh--. It was four miles off of Highway 15 which ran through central Kentucky, and went from Lexington to Whitesburg up in eastern Kentucky so it was four miles off that highway. The first thing we had to do was build bridges. There were several creeks. We had to build bridges so we could get up to the camp when it did rain. Now, I've only been back to the campsite one time since I was discharged in uh--. They discharged a bunch of us and hired some more. And I was discharged in uh--. I forgot now.

Newberry: Was it a two year stint or four year?

Elliott: I was in there 13 months.

Newberry: So just over a year?

Elliott: Yessir.

Newberry: What were some of the projects you did?

Elliott: Uh, they, you see that was a few years after the death of the chesnut trees. They

all died. It was our job to cut those dead chesnuts and snake them out of the forests. I don't know what they did with them then, but that was after we did the road work and the bridge work. Then we had to build barracks. We didn't have any barracks. We lived in tents until we had time to build barracks to live in. We had good meals, and we got up at five o'clock, went to bed at ten, and it was a good life. Most of us--. I gained weight. I weighed 156 pounds. That's more than I ever weighed in my life.

Newberry: Was it hard work?

Elliott: Well, it was labor work.

Newberry: But it was worth the money?

Elliott: Yeah, yeah.

Newberry: So when you left there after 13 months, where did you go and what did you do?

Elliott: I went home and spent one month with my parents. I helped dad thin corn for the year, and then I went to Chillicothe Business College in Chillicothe, Missouri. I took a business course and was out there thirteen months. I came back to Louisville and got a job with Standard Oil Company in their tire depot as a stock clerk. I worked there until about a year and a half later when I got a better job with Stearns Coal and Lumber Company down in southeastern Kentucky in McCreary County. Standard Oil was a nice company to work for, but I checked real close and their record of promotion was mighty slow. So I was a young man, and I decided that I could fail a few times, and you know--. So I went to--. That's the best move I ever made. I got a job as a cashier.

Newberry: And you said that was Stearns?

Elliott: Stearns, Kentucky. I worked there for 16 years. I left there in August of 1953.

Newberry: So when did you come to Georgia?

Elliott: I came to Georgia in February of 1937.

Newberry: I thought you were working in Stearns, Kentucky.

Elliott: I went to Stearns in February of 1937. I left in '53.

Newberry: Did you come to Georgia in '37?

Elliott: That's right.

Newberry: So that was your first trip to Georgia?

Elliott: Yeah.

Newberry: Why did you come?

Elliott: A better job.

Newberry: And that was with Stearns?

Elliott: Right.

Newberry: And where was that? What city was that in Georgia?

Elliott: Stearns, Kentucky.

Newberry: And what county was that?

Elliott: McCreary County. Capitol was Whitley City, Kentucky.

Newberry: Okay. Now, when did you move to DeKalb County, Georgia though?

Elliott: In 1953.

Newberry: Okay, why did you move here?

Elliott: Why did we leave?

Newberry: Why did you leave your job in Kentucky?

Elliott: Medical reasons.

Newberry: And did you come to the Atlanta area at that time?

Elliott: Let's see. What was the question?

Newberry: Did you come to DeKalb County in 1953?

Elliott: Yes.

Newberry: Was it for another job?

Nurse enters: (Hello. How are you? I'm doing well. Mr. Elliott, Mr. Elliott. Who's that? It's me.)

Newberry: Okay, so you say you moved to DeKalb County, Georgia in 1953?

Elliott: Yes. Yes, I went with the company in 1953 after I left the coal company, and uh--. I joined a company in uh--. I don't know, I guess it was '53. They were building a transformer plant, an electrical transformer plant at Rome, Georgia. That's when I first went with them. They finished in May or June of the following year. They brought me back into Atlanta when I went with the regular plant. I was with them about 16 years.

Newberry: And then, did you change jobs, take a promotion.

Elliott: They had a transformation. They had a controller that was demon. He was not a man. He was a demon. He fired everybody. He was going to fire me, and I got a chance to go with another job, another company, Wright Brown Electric Company, and I was made secretary-treasurer. I stayed with them the rest of my work life.

Newberry: When did you retire?

Elliott: I retired in 1953.

Newberry: So stopped working altogether in 1953?

Elliott: Yeah, I lost my eyesight. I had to quit. You can't keep books when you're blind.

Newberry: So you went blind in 1953?

Elliott: Yessir.

Newberry: So you've been blind almost sixty years?

Elliott: Yeah.

Newberry: So what did you do at that point?

Elliott: I was in charge of all the money that came in and all the money that was paid out.

Newberry: Were you able to survive after that without being able to work?

Elliott: Well, I made it somehow.

Newberry: Did you get married?

Elliott: I got married before I ever came to Georgia.

Newberry: What was your wife's name?

Elliott: Mildred Trammell. T-R-A-M-E-L-L.

Newberry: How many children do you have?

Elliott: Had two. A girl and a boy.

Newberry: When did Mildred pass away?

Elliott: She uh--. They both graduated from college, and they both got jobs teaching.

Newberry: Your children?

Elliott: Yeah.

Newberry: When did your wife pass away?

Elliott: My wife passed a way--. She died in February--. I forgot. It was in--. She died with a heart attack.

Newberry: Was that many years ago?

Elliott: Yeah. It was about 30 years ago.

Newberry: What was your experience during World War II?

Elliott: I didn't--. I was working for the coal and lumber company.

Newberry: So you were above drafting age?

Elliott: No I was not above. I was exempted.

Newberry: Because you were working for an industry that supported--?

Elliott: Right, right. They exempted me without my asking them.

Newberry: So would you have preferred to not be exempt?

Elliott: Yes, I would have.

Newberry: So where do your children live?

Elliott: My daughter lives with her husband in Sarasota, Florida. Both retired. My son and his wife live in Wilmore, Kentucky. Both retired.

Newberry: How old are your children?

Elliott: Boy was born in '47. And Anne was born in February--.

Newberry: In the forties or the fifties?

Elliott: Forties.

Newberry: Your daughter, Anne, said you could name all of the presidents since you were born. Is that true?

Elliott: I don't know where she got that. I sure can't. Lord, my back hurts. My back is killing me.

Newberry: Do you want to stop?

Elliott: No, go ahead.

Newberry: She's just joking about that then. You don't know where she got that from?

Elliott: Got what?

Newberry: About the presidents?

Elliott: No, I don't know where she got that.

Newberry: How does it feel to be 100 years old?

Elliott: It doesn't feel very good. I can tell you that.

Newberry: But does it feel like an accomplishment?

Elliott: No.

Newberry: How do you think you were able to live to be 100? Did you eat well? Did you exercise?

Elliott: Yeah, I've just now finished exercising on my pump machine. That might have had something to do with it, but I don't know. I reckon it's just common ordinary decent living. I wouldn't--. Kept from dissipating. No tobacco. No liquor. No smoking, and just uh--.

Newberry: So what did you do after you retired because of your blindness?

Elliott: Well, there's not much you can do when you can't see. I didn't do anything to make a living.

Newberry: At that point did you move to DeKalb County? Where did you live in this area?

Elliott: We lived right here in the Atlanta area. I've got a home here.

Newberry: In Tucker?

Elliott: Oh no. Down on Woodridge Drive off Lawrenceville Highway. It's empty now. I'm holding it open. It's locked up, but the kids use it when they come. My daughter has a daughter who lives in--.

Nurse enters: (Hello. Hello.)

Newberry: That was your nurse.

Elliott: What did she want?

Newberry: She was going to check up on you, but she'll be back in a few minutes when I'm finished. You were talking about your granddaughter.

Elliott: She uh--. My daughter has a daughter that lives in Michigan. They go up there to visit her every once and a while. It's too far to drive in one day so they stop and stay with me going and coming.

Newberry: How often do you see your children other than that?

Elliott: That's all.

Newberry: What about your son?

Elliott: He comes more often because it's only about 500 miles, but it's about 550 miles from here to Sarasota so it's quite a drive. It's an all day drive.

Newberry: So that's about a 1000 miles between your son and your daughter?

Elliott: Oh yes.

Newberry: From Kentucky to Florida.

Elliott: That's right.

Newberry: Could you describe your daily schedule here?

Elliott: Well, we get up about eight o'clock and have breakfast. We have the noon meal at twelve o'clock. The next meal is at five o'clock. That's it.

Newberry: You said you do exercises?

Elliott: Yeah, I've got an exercise machine back here in the corner. I've already gone through it today.

Newberry: How long do you do it?

Elliott: Fifty--. Thirty minutes a day.

Newberry: And do you listen to a radio?

Elliott: Well, a little bit. I get sick and tired of what they're talking about. I don't waste a lot of time. I usually listen to Neal Boortz in the morning, and then there's another fellow that comes on at six o'clock.

Newberry: So how do you think the world has changed since you were born in 1911?

Elliott: Well, it's more wicked. Seems to me it's becoming more wicked. That's my assessment.

Newberry: In what ways in particular?

Elliott: Well, if going to church is any indication, there are fewer people going to church than ever in the history of the world.

Newberry: So that's been very important to you throughout your life?

Elliott: Sir?

Newberry: So that's been very important to you throughout your life?

Elliott: Yessir.

Newberry: Can you tell me how got the name Carmon?

Elliott: No sir. I don't know where she got it.

Newberry: It's a unique name.

Elliott: Yeah, it can be a boy's name or a girl's name.

Newberry: But it's spelled with an o instead of an e.

Elliott: That's right. I think the e is for the girl.

Newberry: Right. Why did you decide to stay in Georgia rather than move back to Kentucky?

Elliott: Well, I had a better job in Georgia than I had in Kentucky.

Newberry: But I'm talking about after you retired.

Elliott: After I retired I never did work anymore.

Newberry: You didn't want to move back to Kentucky to be near your family?

Elliott: My family had passed away. They had all died.

Newberry: Even your sister?

Elliott: She--. My sister had married and died. Now her husband has died. They left a daughter, and the daughter is still living. That's the only living relative I have.

Newberry: Besides your children and grandchildren?

Elliott: Right.

Newberry: Well, I appreciate it, and I hope you're feeling better.

Elliott: Well, it's a drab existence. Boy, I want to tell you. You're producing nothing, and it's just a bad thing.

Newberry: I understand. I want to thank you for letting me talk to you, and I enjoyed it.

Elliott: You're quite welcome. I don't know what I gave you that will be of any help.

Newberry: Well, I enjoyed it just to talk to you, but I appreciate it. I'm going to stop.

Transcribed by CS