

FRANKLIN BRYANT

When did you leave the island?

1941.

Why did you leave?

I leave in '37 after I got married.. He want us to come back and we stayed until he died. After she remarried, we didn't stay here too long because she didn't have the money to pay me.

What did you do for her?

Chauffeur. Butler. Take care of the yard and motors and so forth. I been working there all my life. I think I started at the house around '35 I think, but I used to working in the field on and off during the day on the farm.

Did you move directly to Savannah?

Yes. I worked when I could find a job. First I worked as a longshoreman for a while, but I didn't like that. Then I started working on construction jobs for a few years, went in the service, came back and I start working for the city. I worked all the lift stations. A lift station for the sewer and water. I worked that for 27 years. I retired from the new plant on President Street in 1978.

We live in that house still standing over there Four rooms and a kitchen. We had a garden. Plenty of orange trees. My mother plant them. I remember the day we planted them in 1922. It get cold, and put them under the stove to keep them warm until they get big enough, then we plant them in a box in the front yard. We had orange, we had apple, we had fig, we had peach, we had plum we had all kind of stuff. Copps had orange too.

How did you get around the island?

You had horse. My daddy had a Model T. Most people had a car on the island. There were several cars over here. There were maybe 40 families over here. My daddy had a grey horse. My daddy had only a couple of horses. He had hogs and chickens. Plenty wild hogs on the island. They hogs, they had wild hog, and turkey just like ants. I used to hunt squirrel. I didn't hunt too much. I like to fish. I usually fish after work. Anything that bites. It's a long ways from the ocean to right here. You had all the fish you could want right here.

What did you do every day?

I worked every day. Go to school. I think I go sixth grade. I used to like math, and Liked to read. After the service, I went through high school and got a trade, electronics. I went school on a GI bill. I was in the South Pacific. I tell you what happened, I was called in '41, but when they call me, i didn't get the letter, this man got the letter. The next thing I knew I got a letter from the FBI. I was living in Savannah, and I come home that evening and saw the letter and thought I hadn't done nothing. I had go to the FBI office, and when I walked in the door, they knew who I was. The man came in and said, "Bryan, you think you dodging the draft."

I said, "I ain't dodging no draft."

"You got your letter and you didn't go."

"I didn't get no letter."

And he said, "Well, you in pretty bad shape and in trouble. You're going to have to get a lawyer."

"I don't have no money for a lawyer."

"You need a lawyer. I know a good lawyer who can straighten this out for you right away."

And I said, "Okay."

And the same man who took my letter, he sent me to him, and I said, "Oh, no."

He said, "I tell you I'm going to get you a lawyer. I have friend coming up here."

So this boy did come up and I looked at him and said, "Oh, no, no."

He said, "Mr. Bryan, you're telling the truth. Do you have any money?"

"I've got a little change."

"You got a car."

"Yeah, but the tires is bad."

"I'm going to send you to Beaufort." He give me a letter, and he told me get the bus to Beaufort. If the Lord's for you, who could be against you?

When did you join the church?

I joined in 1931 over here. After I leave here, I joined the church in Savannah, St. James AME Church, 632 E. Broad. Really the church was in Bluffton, Camel AME. They had local preacher call, but they had a real preacher once or twice a month. My uncle was preacher. My aunt husband's a preacher. We've got a lot of preachers in the family now. Right now, I'm a steward, a class leader, going to the district conference, and I'm a delegate to all the meetings. I got to go to Augusta Thursday. We house our congregation in Augusta. I represent the whole church.

When you joined the church here, did you have to do something special?

I was around 15. It was just something I decided to do. It's kind of personal. You got to believe now, in Jesus Christ. I know what it is all about now. You learn later what it is all about. In the Methodists, you are only baptized once.

Did you have to go pray?

Yes, that's between me and God. Back in those days you had go tell your dreams to the church. The main thing is believing in Jesus Christ. There are all different ways of worship, but there is just one God. I believe if you believe in God, then you wouldn't do all these bad things. you would try to lead a Christian life.

You saw some figures?

Yes. I can still remember it. It look like you. You get up to it, and it just vanished. I don't know whether it was in your mind, or what. I couldn't tell you what it is. I didn't see it often. I remember one time, I and my first cousin was playing outside and it was getting late in the night and we was out there and there was this white woman out there, and there wasn't no people over there at that time and we said we'd catch this woman with the light. We were just two little fellows, a month apart in age, and so every time we go in there, she'd go in this corner and that corner. That's two of us now, so I wanted to ask him about it and he wanted to ask me, that was years after we was all married then. He's passed now, we was in Savannah and he say, "I wanted to ask you something. You remember when we used to play in that house and there was a funeral that night. You remember that white woman we see?"

"Yes, I wanted to ask you about that too."

That's gospel truth. "I said, 'you go this side and I go that side and we'll see if we can catch that white woman in the house.'" I could remember as well as that and so could

he. We were about 8 or 9 years old. She was a white woman, but I can't remember what she was wearing. She looked at me, but she didn't say anything. If he were living, he'd tell you the same thing. I was a kid. His name was Buster Bryant.

Were there places on the island that were considered haunted?

No. People talked about it.

Do you remember any of the stories you were told as a child?

We didn't talk about that too much. We came up in pretty much the same time as my parents. My mama was born over there. My father was born on Callawassie I think. Some were born on Callawassie. Some were born other places. My father was 84 or 85 when he died. My mama died in '41 at about 42. I'm 77 years old.

How did you meet your wife?

We grew up together. (Genevieve) We've been married 56 years. I bought my house in Savannah 40 years ago. I couldn't afford the rent now. I bought the whole thing for about \$6,000. I don't pay too much tax now. You know the Kroger store on the East side. I live over there. When I moved out there, there wasn't much there.

Did you farm while you were here?

I was more mechanical. My daddy really didn't farm more than he needed. We didn't need no big farm. He worked regular. He was the assistant to the superintendent. I had my work cut out to do. He had an ice plant, making about 600 pounds a day. He had his own generator. It was small building and he had his cold storage there. He had a corn mill, he had a cotton gin. He had a lighthouse, a Delco which gave it's own light, you had to keep the batteries charged. No one else had light on the island except lamplight. We had radio.

Did you travel off the island a lot?

Almost every day because I had to get the mail. They had a box over at Bailey.

How long did it take to get there?

As long as it took for your boat to go. I have rowed that far. He had three motorboat. He had a big boat that got it in the big storm in '40. It got us to Bailey and then smashed up. It got all these docks up to Charleston. It was terrible. It didn't hurt no houses. That wind blow so much. All over there was open field, and in front of the house it was open field. All that oak they have planted there wasn't there. He growed anything from tomatoes, corn, everything that grows. He had oats to feed the cattle with. He sold all the agricultural products.

Did you ever play baseball?

Oh yeah. The field used to be off of where the church used to be. They used to come off the mainland and they go over there and play ball. This was a popular place. People used to come from Savannah and work here. Some of them would come and stay when they can. Work in them days was scarce. Maybe 20, 30, 40 head of people would come. They'd come by boat. They used to go from here to Savannah on the big boat.

Did people ever go on excursions?

Oh yeah. To Beaufort every week. The boat went to Beaufort every week. And back there we used to go to Port Royal twice a week or more to get the mail. My uncle was the captain then. That boat been about 50 feet long. They used to dock it down at that river where the pilings are. I had three uncles here. I think my grandmother on my daddy's side came from Georgetown or something like that.

Did they ever grow rice on this island?

Yeah. I remember when I was small, people used to take this thing called a mortar and a pestle. I never done that. They stopped that. They used to plant a whole lot of rice then. This was a lot of open land. That's what most people did to make a living then. I didn't pick much cotton. My uncle used to sell it by the bale. One uncle used to live right up the road there. About five families lived close together. There used to be 'tesian well down there. There must have been about 10 to 15 of them. When the tide high, the water gush out. Since they dig all these industrial well, the water went down. I remember that. We drill a well right down there near Dessausure Pinckney. I don't remember too much about well now. I remember that well because we had tot tote water from all the way down here. For drinking water special. We had another well near the house for washing.