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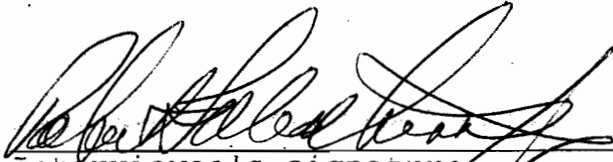
We R.L. Westbrook Jr and Deanne Westbrook  
Interviewee (print) Interviewer (print)

do hereby give and grant to Dr. Suzanne Marshall, Assistant  
Professor of History, Jacksonville State University, all  
literary and property rights, title, and interest which we  
may possess to the audio or video recording(s) and transcript(s)  
of the interview(s) conducted at

3215 5th St N.

on the date(s) of April 1, 1995

for the oral history collection being compiled by Dr. Marshall.




Interviewee's signature

Address 3215 5th St N  
COLUMBUS, MS 39701  
Phone 601-327-6809

Date

4/1/95



Interviewer's signature

Address JSU P.O. Box 3553  
Jacksonville, AL 36265  
Phone 205-782-6429

Date

April 1, 1995

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Robert Leodaniel Westbrooks Jr. M/F male

Address: 3215 5th Street N. Columbus, MS. 39701

Phone number(s): 601-327-6809

Approximate age or date of birth: Feb. 11, 1948; 50 yrs. old

Mother's Name: Mrs. Eva Doris Stewart Westbrooks

Father's Name: Mr. Robert Leodaniel Westbrooks Sr.

Places lived and when: Reidmont AL; Ft. Knox Kentucky; Ft.

Benning GA; Ft. Campbell Kentucky (early childhood); Germany (at times) ->

Education: elementary-highschool; yrs of college

Religion: Baptist

Business, political and social memberships (past and present) \_\_\_\_\_

Present occupation: Network Technician

Former occupations: Army Officer, Surveyor

Special Skills: Electronics, Communication Transmission, Telephone Communication

Major Accomplishments: \_\_\_\_\_

National Events in which interviewee has participated: Vietnam Conflict

Local Events in which interviewee has participated: \_\_\_\_\_

National born U.S. citizen?  Yes  No

Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Country from which he/she emigrated: \_\_\_\_\_

Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

**ONE MAN'S LIFE**

by:

Deanne Westbrooks

Dr. Marshall

History 202

April, 17 1995



Experiences throughout a person's life mold and make them who they are. During an interview on April 1, 1995, Mr. Robert Leedanial Westbrooks Jr. shared some of his life experiences with me. I learned a lot about his life, and it was very interesting.

*No doubt scary here*

He was born on February 11, 1945, in Piedmont, Alabama, in his aunt's house. This is a reflection of the time in which he was born. In small rural areas, hospitals did not exist. Many people were born in homes with the help of family members. His parents, Mrs. Eva Dora Stewart Westbrooks and Mr. Robert Leedanial Westbrooks Sr., who were also born in the Piedmont area, later had two more girls.

Mr. Westbrooks' father was in the Army, so they moved a lot when he was young. They lived in states such as Kentucky, Georgia, and North Carolina. They also had the opportunity to live in Germany twice. This was quite an experience for a young person, because someone can learn so much living in a foreign country.

The first time they moved to Germany was in 1956. They lived on a former Nazi base under American

control. They lived in U.S. housing, and he attended an American school with other military children. The signs of World War II were still all around them. Mr. Westbrooks remembers that,

In the 1950's, ...the economy was still trying to recover, but the German people were a very industrious hard-working people, so they gained ground quickly, but there was still a lot of signs of war even ten years after it was over.

Living in Europe <sup>was and</sup> provides many opportunities for travel. The Westbrooks were able to travel around to countries such as, "Austria, Italy, Switzerland, France, and Spain". They traveled around, staying in a tent for approximately a month, and they got to experience many different European cultures. This is quite an opportunity for a child of twelve. Many people do not get the chance to see Europe, much less live there.

<sup>wh</sup> It is very interesting to look at the presidents ~~that~~ have been in and out of office in the course of one's life. Franklin D. Roosevelt was in office when Mr. Westbrooks was born, and then he was followed by Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. John F. Kennedy took office in 1961. When he was asked what his opinion of J.F.K.'s presidency, Mr. Westbrooks said that he did not support Kennedy's administration.

One memory that is always vivid in everyone's mind from this time period, is where they were when President Kennedy was shot. Mr. Westbrooks was in an English Composition class at Jacksonville State College. "As soon as we came out of the class... someone had just heard on the radio that he had been assassinated, and the word was spreading up and down the hallways." He recalls that for the next few days, everyone on campus was glued to their television sets and radios, as was the entire country. This was a traumatic time in United States history. People hated to see their president and leader killed in cold blood. During this time, the country was going through the Cold War, and this added to people's tensions. Even those, like Mr. Westbrooks, who did not support Kennedy, were shocked and amazed at his death. The country stood still for a while as this president <sup>passed</sup> ~~past~~ and L.B. Johnson took his place.

Living during this period of history, people have memories of the Cold War and Arms Race, and the Space Race. Mr. Westbrooks' memories of this time are very vivid as he recalls how they effected his family. All of the American citizens were effected in different ways and have different memories.

The Cold War was the United States involvement in opposing communism and a stand off with Russia occurred. When asked of memories of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Mr. Westbrooks had a lot to say. He was a senior in high school, and they were living in Germany for the second time. People stayed glued to their radios to listen to the extensive coverage. His strongest memory of this time was how this effected his family.

My father, being in the military, ...was put on alert then, and he was subject to have to be deployed somewhere and so for several days there, we didn't even see him because he was with his unit ready to go in case they had to deploy him.

Their family was greatly <sup>a</sup> effected as they sat on pins and needles to see if Russia would back down while the world sat on the brink of nuclear war.

The Space Race also evolved at this time. The Russians launched Sputnik, and the world stood still. American citizens were in disbelief <sup>that</sup> <sup>could do this</sup> at the Russians and soon began to put Americans into space, and then they eventually landed someone on the moon. <sup>1969</sup> This was a proud time for every American citizen. Mr. Westbrooks recalls,

"There was a period after the Russians first started launching satellites, and the United States started launching satellites, ...at night you could watch some of the bigger ones cross the sky as they orbited the earth.



Mr. Westbrooks lived in a volatile time of United States History as the Civil Rights Movement took hold. There are many different opinions of this time in the minds of Americans. Mr. Westbrooks believed that, "Whatever occurred, it always seemed to give the South a black eye", and he also felt that much of it was undeserving<sup>ed</sup>. The South was a very unstable area of the country at this time but not the only area. All sections of the country had its' trouble with segregation.

*where?*

Mr. Westbrooks enlisted in the Army, and as a result, took part in one of the most devastating wars in United States history. Vietnam became a trouble spot for the world when communism tried to take hold. Kennedy sent in advisors in the early sixties and then Johnson stepped up involvement during his administration. Mr. Westbrooks was sent over in October of 1967. "When I went to Vietnam... I was stationed in Long Been." *Is this the correct spelling? Do you research* He worked in the surrounding areas and was later deployed to Cambodia. The soldiers had many humbling experiences while fighting for democracy. He once spent a week near a communications tower with a communications group and some military police. They were constantly getting bombed, and he did not get to sleep for four nights. This was the

normal life<sup>o</sup> a soldier in Vietnam, and these are some of the reasons they still have trouble today.

Agent Orange was a chemical defoliant used by the troops in Vietnam. "I have flown over areas where Agent Orange was used on the jungle below, and there is nothing down there.... All you saw was just a grey looking dead area where it was used." When it was used, it devastated the land. One of the many effects left from this war, was the effects of this chemical. The land is still dead and unproductive, and the people who were exposed to it still have medical problems.

This war divided the country because some people did not support the cause. The protesters affected the troops moral and harassed them when they returned to the states. Mr. Westbrooks stated that, "When I returned from Vietnam, I was stationed in San Francisco... I had to deal with people who looked down on me just because I was willing to serve". The spirit of the troops was an important part of fighting this war. It was also hard fighting for people who, at times, did not seem to care. This war devastated and divided a generation, and the memories still live vividly in their minds.

There are always times people look back on, in their lives, as their favorite. For Mr. Westbrooks, traveling when he was young and getting to see things that most people do not get the chance to see, must have been a great time in his life. He also said, "Getting married and having my kids, those are the things I want to remember".

People's memories of their lives can say so much. Mr. Westbrooks got to experience a lot when he was young. Most people do not get the chance to travel as extensively as he did. Living through the Space Race, the Arms Race, and the Civil Rights Movement also greatly effected his life and how he sees society. His personal experiences have made him who he is. So many things happen during a person's life that mold and make them who they are, and Mr. Westbrooks shared a small part of this with me.

And  
interesting  
93



Deanne Westbrooks  
Dr. Marshall  
History 202  
April, 6 1995

*Type this  
on final  
project*

Interviewee - Mr R.L.  
Westbrooks Jr

Place - his home

When - ~~1995~~ April 1995  
Subject - His life before &  
during Vietnam

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Deanne Westbrooks  
Interviewee:  
Mr. R.L. Westbrooks Jr.  
April 1, 1995  
Place: his home  
Subject:  
his life before and  
during Vietnam

Dr. Marshall  
History 202  
April, 6 1995

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Use of Agent Orange

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Favorite time of life

Favorite president

Deanne Westbrooks  
Interviewee:  
Mr. R.L. Westbrooks Jr.  
April 1, 1995  
Place: His home  
Subject: His life before  
and during Vietnam

Dr. Marshall  
History 202  
April, 17 1995

#### LIST OF QUESTIONS

1. Where and When were you born?
2. Who was president when you were born?
3. Tell about your family.
4. How long did you live in Piedmont?
5. Tell about your childhood in Germany, what you remember of the German culture?
6. How was the German economy after the war?
7. Where all did you get to travel?
8. Were you scared that you might fall off the Leaning Tower of Piza?
9. Where were you living when J.F.K. was elected?
10. Did you like his administration, did you think he was good for the U.S.?
11. Where was you the day J.F.K. was assassinated?
12. How did you find out (he was dead)?
13. Did you have classes or were they cancelled (when he died)?
14. Were all the reports of Lee Harvey Oswald, or were there reports they suspected some people in the government?
15. Do you believe any of the theories on his death?
16. What was the spirit of the U.S. citizens at the time?
17. What do you remember about the Cuban Missile Crisis?
18. Where you abroad when it happened?
19. Did you receive many reports in Germany?
20. Did it hit as close to home there as it would have if you had been in the U.S.?
21. What do you remember about the Bay of Pigs Invasion?
22. Do you remember the day the Russian's launched Sputnik?
23. What do you remember about the day the U.S. first walked on the moon?
24. Where were you when we first put someone in orbit?
25. How did the American society perceive what we now call the Space Race and the Arms Race?
26. Did it frighten you knowing the biggest powers of the world had such nuclear power?
27. Did you have a bombshelter?
28. Did you feel that being on an army base at the time make you feel as if you more of a target?
29. What do you remember of the Civil Rights Movement in the South?
30. Do you feel the South and the nation as a whole has come a long way in this movement?
31. Do you think the government's actions or the steps they have taken have made the situation worse or better?



32. Do you believe the government's legal actions have helped or hurt?
33. Do you remember the day Martin Luther King was shot?
34. What were the contrasting feelings in the white and black communities at the time?
35. Who was president at this time?
36. How did you get into the army, did you enlist or were you drafted?
37. How long were you in the army?
38. What do you remember of America's first involvement in Vietnam?
39. When were you first sent over?
40. Where were you when you learned you would go to Vietnam?
41. Was there ever a time when you felt you might not come home?
42. What was the spirit of the troops at the time, did they sometimes feel like the confrontation was pointless?
43. Did the protesters effect the troops spirit?
44. What were the feelings toward the president at the time?
45. How did the troops feel about the use of Agent Orange?
46. Looking back, do you think the army realized the extent of it's damage at the time?
47. What were the dates of your involvement in Vietnam?
48. Who was president when you returned?
49. What was the societies mood when the Watergate scandal was revealed?
50. When you look back on your early childhood through your twenties and thirties, what was your favorite period or fondest memory and why?
51. Who was your favorite president and why?

**Deanne Westbrook**

**History 202 Tues., Thur. 11:00**

Interviewee: Ruby Grace Perkins

Address: 404 24th Ave. N., Columbus, MS. 39701

Date of Birth: Sept. 21, 1919

Place of Birth: Grandmother's house in Alabama

Date of Interview: To be determined at her convenience.

Place of Interview: Her home

The subject of the interview will be on her life in the 30's and 40's. It will be very interesting to hear her stories of the way of life during the Depression and World War II. She can tell of her families' hard times and how they managed. She can also give accounts of the way a typical American woman was affected by the war. I think it is important to hear the stories of an average person, and see how they recall their past. I can use the books that we learned about in the library to find other accounts of the past. The class timeline will be very helpful and the books Great Dates in United States History, and The Annual Register of World Events can be used. She will make an interesting interview because of her unique stories in her life. gmb

*gmb*

Interviewee changed b/c Mrs. Perkins had a conflict

Interviewee: Robert LeDaniel Westbrook Jr.

Parent -  
background  
info.

Questions for Interview

1. Where were you born?
2. What is your first memory?
3. When did you move to Mississippi?
4. Did you have a large family?
5. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
6. What was the extent of your education?
7. What was it like growing up in the 20's?
8. What was your favorite part of your childhood?
9. Do you remember the day that the stock market crashed?
10. Was your family ~~drastically~~ affected by the Depression?
11. How did you get your necessities (food, clothing, etc...)?
12. Do you remember the day that World War II began?
13. How did the media portray Hitler and the Nazi's?
14. Did the war seem close to home?
15. Do you remember the day the war ended?
16. What is your favorite memory?

I intend to branch many more questions off of her answers. They should be expandable in order to make her give her best answers.

14.

Good

Good