

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

700 PELHAM ROAD N.

JACKSONVILLE, ALABAMA 36265-0982

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

TELEPHONE (205) 782-5032

**Gift and Release Agreement:**

We Mildred Jones and Dana Thompson  
(Interviewee) (Interviewer)

Do hereby grant permission to Jacksonville State University to copy the tape of the interview conducted at Mildred's home on the date(s) of November 17, 1995 for the oral history collection being compiled at Jacksonville State University.

This collection will be maintained by Jacksonville State University for research into the history of Northeast Alabama and the South. We further grant researchers permission to quote from the interview on this tape.

Mildred Jones  
(Interviewee's signature)

Date 11-17-95

328 Powell Main St  
(Address)

Rainsville, Al 35986

(205) 638 3772  
(Telephone)

Dana N Thompson  
(Interviewer's signature)

Date 11-17-95

101 B Traylor St NW  
(Address)

Rainsville, Al 35986

(205) 638 4048  
(Telephone)

1685 Church Ave

Jacksonville, Al 36265

(205) 435 4617

**Interviewee Background Information**

Name: Mildred Palmer Jones  
Address: 328 Powell Main Street Bainsville, Al 35986  
Phone Number(s): (205) 638-3772  
Approximate age or date of birth: September 26, 1924  
Mother's name: Maudie Agnes Cleveland Palmer  
Father's name: Henry Clyde Palmer  
Places lived and when: Bainsville Alabama Gadsden; Horton; Boz; Artalla;

Education: High School Degree and an Associate Degree in Commerce from Snead State  
Religion: Methodist  
Business, political and social memberships (past and present): \_\_\_\_\_

Present occupation: Owner of Woodson Jones Chevrolet Co.  
Former occupation(s): Sec at Camp Sibert; 10 yrs Federal Land Bank Offices; 20 yrs Accountant for New Car Dealer  
Special skills: Seamstress  
Major Accomplishments: Worthy Matron of <sup>the</sup> Eastern Star; Sec/Tres. of the Methodist Church.

Local events in which you have participated: NA

State and/or regional events in which you have participated: Worked at Camp Sibert during World War II

National events in which you have participated: NA

International events in which you have participated: NA

Natural born U.S. citizen? (Yes) No  
Naturalized Citizen: Yes (No) Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Country from which you emigrated: NA  
Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in your possession: \_\_\_\_\_

Individuals you recommend who might be candidates for an oral history interview: Robert E. Deader was on the ship Nevada in Pearl Harbor.  
Additional information: My Husband and I raised four children. We were able to put all four through four years of College.

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MILDRED JONES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

DANA THOMPSON

RAINSVILLE, ALABAMA

NOVEMBER 1995

## The Life and Times of Mildred Jones

Thesis: In this paper, I will discuss the life and times of Mildred Jones. I will start with her early life. Then I will move ahead to her life and the war years. Finally, I will take a look at her life up to present day.

Mildred Palmer was born in Gadsden, Alabama, in the year of 1924. She was a middle child. Mildred had two brothers and four sisters. She lived in Gadsden until she was two, then her family moved to Blount County. Her mother was hired in the county as a teacher here. Mildred and her family lived in several different places within the county.<sup>1</sup>

Mildred grew up during the Depression years. There were very hard times in Alabama. In 1929, the Stock Market crashed on October 29. This day is also referred to as "Black Thursday."<sup>2</sup> In 1930, the depression dominated the states. Grain and cotton prices dropped steadily through the year.<sup>3</sup> Copper prices reached their lowest since 1895.<sup>4</sup> The National Income dropped to less than 68 billion, from a high of 81 billion in 1929. Unemployment passed the 4,000,000 mark.<sup>5</sup> The government created many programs for the unemployed in the state. They formed the Civil Works Administration. This administration repaired roads and gave many people jobs.<sup>6</sup> Later the government formed the Public Works Administration to help the unemployed.<sup>7</sup> In 1935, the Works Progress Administration.<sup>8</sup> Mildred's oldest brother Roy was old enough to join the Civilian Conservation

Corps. This was initiated by the Reforestation Unemployment Act to create jobs through a reforestation program.<sup>9</sup> Roy was sent to Oregon and Washington while he was a part of the CCC.

During the depression years, when a lot of people were starving, Mildred and her family farmed and grew their own food. They canned all of their foods. They picked blackberries and made jams. They did have enough money to buy sugar, because it was only five or ten cents for a five pound bag back then.<sup>10</sup> Mildred's mother was a seamstress, and she made most of their clothes. During this time, they could buy material very cheap.

Mildred had both a high school and a college education. When she was five, her mother had her reading books at home. By the time she started the first grade, she was way ahead of her class. She was so far ahead by the end of the year, that she was promoted to the third grade. Her mother was her teacher part of the time while she was in school. Mildred moved to Susan Moore for her high school years. While at Susan Moore, she was elected cheerleader by the student body. Mildred was very proud of this, because of the fact that she had been chosen by her peers.<sup>11</sup> After Mildred graduated high school, she attended Snead State in Boaz, Alabama. She attended here for two years. She got her Associate Degree in Accounting. By this time, World War II had started.

World War II killed more persons, cost more money,

damaged more property, affected more people, and probably caused more far-reaching changes than any other was in history.<sup>12</sup> It opened the atomic age, and brought sweeping changes in warfare.<sup>13</sup> The number of people killed, wounded, or missing between September, 1939, and September, 1945, can never be calculated. More than 10 million Allied servicemen and nearly 6 million military men from the Axis countries died in war.<sup>14</sup> World War II cost more than \$1.15 trillion. More than 50 countries took part in the war, and the whole world felt its affects.<sup>15</sup>

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The American battleships Arizona, California, Oklahoma, and Utah (an old target ship) were sunk.<sup>16</sup> The battleship West Virginia, settled in shallow water, and the Nevada ran aground.<sup>17</sup> Damaged battleships were the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the Tennessee.<sup>18</sup> Destroyers Cassin, Downes, and Shaw, and the minelayer Oglala, were sunk or badly damaged.<sup>19</sup> In all about 19 ships were sunk or damaged. About 3000 Americans lost their lives at Pearl Harbor. The Japanese lost 28 planes and 3 midget submarines. Japanese forces also attacked Guam, Wake Island, the Philippines, and other strategic points in the Pacific at the same time Pearl Harbor was attacked.<sup>20</sup> Mildred's future brother-in-law was on the ship Nevada that ran aground. His name was Bob Graves. She also had a brother and two great uncles in Pearl Harbor when it was attacked.

A declaration of war against Japan was passed by

Congress on December 8, 1941. The sole dissenting vote was cast by Jeannette Rankin, a Republican from Montana. She had also cast the sole dissenting vote against World War I.<sup>21</sup> On December 11, 1941, Germany and Italy declared war against the United States, and Congress adopted a resolution recognizing a state of war.<sup>22</sup>

Camp Sibert was Alabama's first Chemical Warfare Center. Thousands of young Americans were being prepared for combat in World War II in Europe and the Pacific here. Camp Sibert was a major training installation of the United States Army. The War Department had discussed the need for a chemical warfare center throughout the summer and fall of 1941.<sup>23</sup> When America entered the war on December 8, the United States faced the Axis enemies who might very well resort to the use of chemical agents on the battlefield. The Army decided that the American soldiers needed training in how to defend themselves against chemical warfare.<sup>24</sup> Camp Sibert was created and located in a 36,000 area in Etowah and St. Clair counties.<sup>25</sup>

The installation was to be a Replacement Training Center where men could be trained in individual operations and sent out as combat replacements.<sup>26</sup> Sibert also would be a Unit Training Center where companies could be trained as complete combat organizations ready to serve together in a specific chemical warfare service.<sup>27</sup> One hundred and sixty-nine Chemical Warfare Units were trained at Camp Sibert; forty-four were black units.<sup>28</sup> Forty-seven percent

of all United States Chemical Warfare Units were trained at Sibert.<sup>29</sup>

The economic effects of Camp Sibert on surrounding areas in Etowah and St. Clair counties were staggering. Hundreds of civilian jobs were created, especially construction jobs. Increased retail sales tremendously boosted the local economies.<sup>30</sup>

In 1943, upon her graduation from Snead State, Mildred was taken to Camp Sibert to take a Civil Service Exam. One of her teachers, along with most of her class, went down. After the class took the test, if they passed, they were almost always hired to work at Camp Sibert. Mildred did pass the test and was hired as a typist at first. Later, she became a secretary for one of the offices at Camp Sibert.<sup>31</sup>

Camp Sibert was Mildred's first paying job. She started out making \$25 a week. Later she was making \$200 a month. This was enough money for her to rent an apartment, and to pay for her food and clothes. Mildred worked at Camp Sibert for two years.<sup>32</sup>

While Mildred was working at Camp Sibert, she also told, in the interview, of World War II POWs being brought in. Sibert's POW compound initially was established as a branch on nearby Fort McClellan but became a separate camp on May 15, 1944.<sup>33</sup> The impact of Camp Sibert on northeast Alabama continued after the war.

Mildred met Woodson Jones in 1941, through her sister.



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Her sister had just graduated from Snead State , with a Degree in Education, and had been hired in DeKalb county as a teacher. While her sister was teaching, she rented a room from Woodson's parents. In 1944, the two decided to get married. They were married while he was at home in his delay en route to overseas. He was at home for 14 days, and they were married on August 12, 1944. He thought that he was going to be shipped overseas, but when he got to California, the military sent him to Alaska. His eyes were bad without his glasses, so they sent him to Alaska.<sup>34</sup> Woodson served as a Motor Poole Sergeant. He rode a motorcycle when he was stationed in Virginia, before he was sent to Alaska. He delivered mail from the quartermaster's office to different places on the campus. Some of his jobs here were the same as the ones Mildred had at Camp Sibert. She thought this was a neat coincidence.<sup>35</sup>

The state progressed away from the depression years with the jobs that the war created. Alabama was a major producer of ammunition and soldiers for the war. Gasoline was rationed, so many car pooled to their jobs. Many people hitch-hiked to where they needed to go. Back then, it was safe to pick them up, unlike it is today. Everyone worked to support our soldiers.

When the war was over, Mildred was so excited when she heard that her husband was coming home. She met every train that came to Fort Payne. She thought that Woodson would be on the train because that was how he left. Woodson returned

home on the bus, and he had to go to the train station to find Mildred.<sup>36</sup>

After the war was over, Woodson and Mildred decided to start their family. Their first child was born on July 1, 1948. It was a boy, and they named him Dale Woodson Jones. A year later their second child was born. It was a girl, and they named her Sherry Lynn Jones. She was born on August 16, 1949.

The 1950s and 1960s were a time of racial upheaval. Racial segregation in public schools was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court handed down a single ruling on four state cases, including Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, and another involving the District of Columbia. The ruling on May 17, 1954, outlawed the practice of "separate but equal" facilities in public school systems.<sup>37</sup> On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a black seamstress, would not give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Birmingham.<sup>38</sup> Police arrested her for violating the city's segregation ordinance. This sparked the Birmingham bus boycott led by Martin Luther King Jr.<sup>39</sup>

Woodson and Mildred's third child was born during this time. It was another girl, and they named her Cindy Lynette Jones. She was born on February 9, 1957. Their last child was born on May 18, 1962. It was another girl, and they named her Theresa Ann Jones.

April 12, 1963, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., was arrested in Birmingham, during a desegregation drive.<sup>40</sup>

The violence of this standoff was viewed around the nation on television. Police Chief Eugene "Bull" Connor led the attack on the protestors with dogs and fire hoses.<sup>41</sup> On September 15, 1963, a church bombing in Birmingham left four young black girls dead. The attack on the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church sparked further violence in the city, leaving two more dead and nineteen injured.<sup>42</sup>

During this time also, Mildred and Woodson opened their first car dealership in 1964. Their dealership was located in Scottsboro. They were in business there for about twenty years. Mildred worked as the accountant for the business. Two of their children were able to finish high school and begin college.

The 1970s and 1980s were good years for Mildred and Woodson. Their car dealership was doing well. Two of their children had finished four years of college. Dale attended Jacksonville State University and received a Degree in Business. Sherry attended the University of Alabama and received a Degree in Education. The other two children were finishing up high school at this time. Cindy graduated in 1975, and Theresa graduated in 1980. Cindy attended Jacksonville State University and received a Degree in Education. Theresa attended the University of Alabama at Huntsville and received a Degree in Accounting.<sup>43</sup>

Mildred and Woodson traveled quite a bit during this time. They traveled to places both in and out of the United States. Woodson and Mildred have traveled to every state in

the nation except for North Dakota and a few of the north-eastern states. They won a trip from the Chrysler Corporation. It was a cruise overseas. The Rhine River cruise was taken by the two. It went from Holland to Switzerland and stopped at selected cities along the way.<sup>44</sup> On this cruise, Mildred and Woodson visited Munich, Germany. They saw the Berlin Wall, and the East German Soldiers. Mildred made the comment in our interview that, "if you would have tried to go across the Wall, the East Germans would have shot you." They also traveled to Greece. Mildred and Woodson won a trip to take a cruise to five different islands in the Aegean Sea. They also traveled to Rome, Italy while in Rome, Mildred was able to visit St. Peter's Cathedral. They took another trip to Scotland and Ireland. Her favorite trip was one of the first times they drove across country. They took the southern route through San Antonio, Texas. She really enjoyed the desert scenery. Mildred and Woodson have also traveled throughout the state of Alabama. They have been to nearly every state park.

Alabama Football has also been a big part of Mildred's life. In 1975, Woodson had his first heart attack. He decided then, that he was a workaholic and needed to lighten up a little. When football season came around, the two started traveling to all the games. Between 1975 and 1994, Mildred and Woodson did not miss but one or two games per season. No matter where the game was, whether in state or out of state, the two were there watching the game.

In fact, Woodson had one heart attack in Birmingham, the night before they were to play Auburn the next day. He tried to get his doctor to let him watch the game, but he would not let him. His doctor was afraid that he would get too excited. He had another heart attack just before a Penn State game also.

The 1990s have been years of happiness and heartache for Mildred. On January 28, 1992, Mildred's youngest daughter arrived home from work. With her two-month-old baby in her arms, she climbed the stairs to her front door. Theresa slipped and fell back down the stairs with the baby. She hit her head on the chimney. Theresa and her baby were rushed to the hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Two days later, Theresa was pronounced dead. Katelyn, her baby only had scratches on her body. The entire family was in a state of shock.

During the 1990s Woodson bought his second car dealership. It was located in Fort Payne. The name of the dealership is Woodson Jones Chevrolet Geo Inc.

On August 12, 1994, Mildred and Woodson celebrated their Fifth Wedding Anniversary. The family hosted a big celebration for the happily married couple. One month later, Mildred was diagnosed with diabetes. Her sugar level skyrocketed. She was hospitalized, and the doctors were able to get her sugar levels back to normal.

On October 27, 1994, Woodson had his final heart attack and passed away at their home. The family was devastated

again but were able to pull through. Now, Mildred just takes every day, one day at a time.

In conclusion, Mildred has lived a very exciting life. From the depression years, to the World War II years, even up through the Alabama football years. In the interview conducted, I learned a great deal about my family. Mildred Jones is my grandmother.

## Notes

1. I received this information from the interview I conducted with Mildred Jones. Mrs. Mildred Jones, interview by author, Tape recording, Rainsville, Alabama, 17 November 1995.
2. I received this information from a reference book in the Houston Cole Library. Gorton Carruth, The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates, 8th ed., Harper and Row Publishers: New York, 1987.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. I received this information from a reference book. The World Book Encyclopedia, no 48, World Book Inc., Chicago, 1986.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Mrs. Mildred Jones, interview by author, Tape recording, Rainsville, Alabama, 17 November 1995.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. The World Book Encyclopedia, no 48, World Book Inc., Chicago, 1986.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Gorton Carruth, The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates, 8th ed., Harper and Row Publishers: New York, 1987.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.

20. I received this information from a reference book in the Houston Cole Library. Gorton Carruth, The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates, 8th ed., Harper and Row Publishers: New York, 1987.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. I received this information from an article in the Alabama Review. Joseph T. Robertson and P. Wayne Findley, "Camp Sibert, Alabama's First Chemical Warfare Center, 1942-1945," The Alabama Review, no 48, (January 1995).
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. I received this information from an interview I conducted with Mrs. Mildred Jones. Mrs. Mildred Jones, interview by author, Tape recording, Rainsville, Alabama, 17 November 1995.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. I received the information from a history book. Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, The American Pageant: A History of the Republic, 10th ed., Stanford University: DC Heath and Company, 1994.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.



40. I received this information from my Alabama History Book. William Warren Rogers, Robert David Ward, Leah Rawls Akins, and Wayne Flynt, Alabama: The History of a Deep South State, Tuscaloosa: The University Press, 1994.
41. I received this information from a reference book in the Houston Cole Library. Gorton Carruth, The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates, 8th ed., Harper and Row Publishers: New York, 1987.
42. Ibid.
43. I received this information from an interview I conducted with Mrs. Mildred Jones. Mrs. Mildred Jones, interview by author, Tape recording, Rainsville, Alabama, 17 November 1995.
44. Ibid.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bailey, Thomas A. and David M. Kennedy. The American Pageant: A History of the Republic. 10th ed. Stanford University: DC Heath and Company, 1994.
- Carruth, Gorton. The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates. 8th ed. Harper and Row Publishers: New York, 1987.
- Jones, Mildred P. Interview by author, 17 November 1995, Rainsville. Tape recording. Jacksonville State University Oral History Collection, Jacksonville.
- Robertson, Joseph T. and P. Wayne Findley. "Camp Sibert, Alabama's First Chemical Warfare Center, 1942-1945." The Alabama Review. no 48(January 1995): 3-15.
- Rogers, William Warren, Robert David Ward, Leah Rawls Atkins and Wayne Flynt. Alabama: The History of a Deep South State. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1994.
- The World Book Encyclopedia. no 48. World Book Inc.: Chicago, 1986.

## Chronology of Historical Events

- 1920 Prohibition movement goes into effect. Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution proclaimed in effect.
- 1921 America's unknown soldier buried at Arlington National Cemetery.
- 1928 Muscle Shoals Bill, providing for the government ownership of hydroelectric plant at Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee River, passed by Congress.
- 1929 Stock Market crash, the beginning of the Great Depression.
- 1933 Civilian Conservation Corps, Agriculture Adjustment Act, and the Tennessee Valley Authority were established.
- 1941 The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. A declaration of war against Japan was passed by Congress. Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.
- 1942 Camp Sibert was created in Alabama.
- 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan are destroyed by atomic bombs. The unconditional surrender of Japan was announced.
- 1950 The Korean war began.
- 1954 The U.S. Supreme Court hands down the Brown vs Board of Education decision.
- 1962 The Cuban missile crisis.
- 1963 The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., was arrested in Birmingham during a desegregation drive. A church bombing in Birmingham left four young black girls dead. The attack on the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church sparked further violence in the city. The University of Alabama was desegregated. Gov. George Wallace stood in the front doors until Federal troops removed him.
- 1965 Rev. James Reeb died from a beating he received in Selma, Alabama.
- 1968 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

1969 Astronauts land on the moon.

1970 Pres. Nixon orders invasion of Cambodia.

1971 The Pentagon papers, are published.

1973 Vietnam cease-fire and U.S. withdrawal.

1973- Watergate hearings and investigations.  
1974

1974 Pres. Nixon resigns.

1975 South Vietnam falls to communists.

1978 Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel.

1979 Iranian revolution and oil crisis.

1979- Iranian hostage crisis.  
1981

## Chronology of Mildred's Life

- 1924 Mildred Palmer was born September 26.
- 1930 Mildred started school.
- 1941 Mildred finished high school.
- 1943 Mildred finished two years of college.  
She began work at Camp Sibert.
- 1944 Mildred and Woodson were married August 12.
- 1948 Her first child was born, Dale Woodson Jones.
- 1949 Her second child was born, Sherry Lynn Jones.
- 1957 Her third child was born, Cindy Lynette Jones.
- 1962 Her fourth child was born, Theresa Ann Jones.
- 1965 Mildred and Woodson buy their first dealership.
- 1970- They traveled extensively throughout the country,  
1990 and also overseas. They traveled to many Alabama games.
- 1992 Mildred and Woodson buy their second dealership.
- 1992 Theresa, their youngest daughter, died in an accident.
- 1994 Mildred is diagnosed with diabetes.
- 1994 Woodson died of a heart attack at their home.

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- II. Life and Times during World War II.
  
- III. Life and Times after World War II.

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3. What was your early family life like?
4. What kind of education did you have?
5. What was your life like during World War II?
6. What kind of jobs did you do while you were at Camp Sibert?
7. Where is Camp Sibert located?
8. When did you meet Woodson?
9. When did you get married?
10. How many children do you have?
11. When did you open your first car dealership?
12. Where have you traveled within the United States?
13. Where have you traveled outside of the United States?
14. How has Alabama Football influenced your life?