

Interviewee Background Information

Name: Barbara Brown
Address: 1124 Kaley St
Phone Number(s): _____
Approximate age or date of birth: Aug. 17 1915
Mother's name: Ida Phillips Cornelius
Father's name: John Alton ~~o~~ Cornelius
Places lived and when: Blount County - growing up until married
moved to Jacksonville
Education: Scholarship at Sneed 1yr. 3yrs. at Jacksonville
Master of Business Univ. of Ala.
Religion: Church of Christ
Business, political and social memberships (past and present): _____
Teacher Organization, Alpha Delta Kappa,
Present occupation: Retired - Having fun
Former occupation(s): Teacher of Business Education -
13yrs at Glencoe 12yrs. at Etowah
Special skills: Business Skills
Major Accomplishments: Satisfaction of doing what she did
for a living.
Local events in which you have participated: Assisted in all
clives through school.
State and/or regional events in which you have participated: _____
Pres. of Alpha Delta Kappa - state conventions - around
School activities
National events in which you have participated: ND
International events in which you have participated: ND
Natural born U.S. citizen? Yes/No
Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date: _____
Country from which you emigrated: _____
Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in your possession: _____
Individuals you recommend who might be candidates for an oral history interview: _____
Additional information: _____

Gift and Release Agreement:

We Barbara Brown and Sandy Statom
(Interviewee, print) (Interviewer, print)

do hereby give and grant to 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 Mrs. Brown's house on the date(s) of Nov. 15, 1996 for the oral history collection being compiled by the Jacksonville State University Library.

Barbara Brown
(Interviewee's signature)

Address 1124 Raley St.
Gadsden, AL 35903
Phone 492-3715

Date Nov. 15, 1996

Sandy Statom
(Interviewer's signature)

Address 1210 Raley St.
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Phone ~~494~~ 494-5652

Date Nov. 15, 1996

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MRS. BARBARA C. BROWN

by

Sandy Statom

Alabama History

Nov. 19, 1996

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When and where were you born?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. What was your family like?
4. What do you remember most about your childhood?
5. How did the ending of World War One affect your family?
6. Did your mother have to go to work during the war?
7. Was your father in World War One?
8. Do you remember the day the stock market crashed in 1929?
9. How did it affect your family?
10. How did your life change when the depression hit? (money, home, etc.)
11. How did the depression affect your schooling?
12. When did you go to college?
13. Where did you go to college?
14. What was college like?
15. When did you graduate?
16. Did you meet your husband at college? If not, when?
17. Where did you get your Master's Degree?
18. Why did you pick teaching as a career?
19. When did you start teaching?
20. What kind of student's did you teach? (color, attitude, etc.)
21. Did you spank your students or did you send them to the office?
22. What was your salary?
23. Were you teaching at the start of World War Two? If so, Where?
24. How did the war affect you personally? (husband, family, food rationing, etc.)
25. How did the war affect your teaching?

26. Did you have to follow any special rules during the war? For example, black-outs, rubber drives, gas rationing, etc.
27. What do you remember most about teaching at that time?
28. Were there any shortages?
29. How did you feel about President Truman dropping the atomic bomb on Japan? Did you feel it was necessary?
30. Did the Korean War affect your family in any way?
31. Did the court case of Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education affect your teaching?
32. How did you and your colleagues react?
33. Did you resent intergration of schools? Why or why not?
34. Was the K.K.K, known around Etowah County?
35. Did you like Kennedy as a president?
36. What did you think about a man walking on the moon?
37. Did you think it would happen in your lifetime?
38. How did you feel about the freedom riders?
39. Were you in Anniston when the freedom buses went through town?
40. Were you for blacks to have civil rights? Why or Why not?
41. How did you feel about balcks wanting to go to an all-white college?
42. Were you for it or against it?
43. How did you feel about George C. Wallace?
44. What did you think of Martin Luther King?
45. What did you think of his demonstration in Birmingham?
46. How was your school and your teaching affected by intergration?
47. Where were you when Kennedy was shot?
48. How did you feel about Vietnam?
49. What were your feelings about the war?
50. How did the people react when the Vietnam soldiers came home?
51. When did you retire from teaching?

52. Do you feel your unprejudice view of blacks, during a highly racially divided society due to your relationship with the Lord?
53. Tell me any stories or experiences you remember in your life?

CHRONOLOGY OF MRS. BARBARA BROWN

- 1915 Born August 17 to John and Ida Cornelius.
- 1918 She took her first picture with her parents.
- 1919 June 28---Treaty of Versailles signed ending World War One---Mrs. Brown's uncle comes home the same day.
- 1920 Mrs. Brown get the right to vote with the passing of the 19th amendment.
- 1929 Read about stock market crash in the Atlanta Triweekly Constitution which was delivered three times a week.
- 1930's Didn't feel the depression too much in the country, plus, her family was too poor.
- 1937 Started college at Snead State at the age of seventeen which she paid for with a full scholarship.
- 1938 She went off and on to Jacksonville state University.
- 1939 She married Troy Brown on November 17th. She also taught her first year of teaching for \$65/month. She got an extra \$5 for being her own principal.
- 1941-1942 Only brother goes overseas to fight in World War Two. He got sick in England but made it back to United States with the help of the Lord.
- 1942-1944 Had to practice blackouts and dispose of garbage differently, for easy recycling. Also had students bring in letters from loved ones overseas to share with the class. She also had to get coupons for her share of rationed foods and her husband had to carpool to help ration gasoline.
- 1945 Approved of Truman dropping the atomic bomb on Japan.
- 1953 Mrs. Brown had no direct contact with the Korean War except for what she read in the papers.
- 1954 She is for black equal rights and intergration of the public schools.
- 1961 She didn't approve of the freedom riders. She thought there were more peaceful ways to fight for balck equal rights.
- 1963 Summer of '63---took graduate classes with people at the University of Alabama who saw Wallace block the doorway on campus. They said it was just a big production.
- 1963 April of '63---liked Martin Luther King and what he believed but didn't like his demonstration in Birmingham because she doesn't like those kind of things. Teaching at Etowah High School when Kennedy was shot.

- 1964--** **Late 1960's—didn't have problem with teaching black students because she asked a female black student to help her with correct racial terms so she wouldn't offend anyone. She thought Vietnam was uncalled for and senseless.**
- 1974** **June— retires from teaching.**
- 1974-
present** **Starts enjoying life and is continuing to do so.**

CHRONOLOGY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD EVENTS

- 1920 Budget bureau set up to oversee federal spending---19th amendment passed granting women the right to vote--- Transcontinental airmail service started---1st commercial radio program broadcasted.
- 1921 Congress enacts quotas for European immigrants.
- 1923 Newspapers expose K.K.K. graft, torture, murder---Henry Luce begins to publish Time magazine.
- 1924 Senate probes Teapot Dome Scandal---Veterans' World War I bonus bill passed.
- 1925 John Scopes convicted of teaching theory of evolution in violation of Tennessee law.
- 1926 First Martha Graham modern dance recital
- 1927 Charles Lindburgh completes flight from New York to Paris ---Coolidge vetoes farm price-control bill ---Sacco and Vanzetti executed.
- 1932 F.D.R. elected president.
- 1933 21st amendment repeals prohibition.
- 1934 Securities and exchange commission authorized.
- 1935 W.P.A. hires unemployed---Congress passes Social Security Act.
- 1936 F.D.R. is re-elected.
- 1937 Auto Workers' sit-down strike forces General Motors contract---FDR loses court-packing battle---Roosevelt recession begins.
- 1938 Minimum wage goes up to forty cents.
- 1950 Truman authorizes \$10 million in aid to the French in Indochina.
- 1954 Fall of Dien Bien Phu---Geneva Conference---Eisenhower backs Diem's regime in Saigon.

- 1961 Kennedy sends thousands of military advisors to Vietnam.
- 1963 Overthrow and assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem.
- 1964 Congress passes Gulf of Tonkin resolution.
- 1965 U.S. begins to bomb N. Vietnam.
- 1968 U.S. ground troops reach 500,000---Paris peace talks begins.
- 1969 Nixon announces withdrawal of 25,000 troops from Vietnam.
- 1970 Nixon orders invasion of Cambodia.

The year is 1915 and it's the middle of World War Two. A lot is going on in the world. On May 7, the Lusitania was sunk by a German U-boat killing 1,200 out of the 1,900 passengers on board. Out of the 1,200 killed 128 of them were Americans. Also in this year on July 2, a German professor exploded a bomb outside the U.S. Senate. He also killed J.P. Morgan the next day. The professor later committed suicide when the authorities were about to capture him [New York, Avon books, 1990), 241-242].

Admist all this confusion I came into this world on August 17, of the same year. At the time I was the only child of John and Ida Cornelius but I would later become the oldest of nine children. My family is poor but we had everything we needed to live on, plus, we had the love to keep us together.

Now the year is 1918 and this is the year that I take my first picture with my parents. I was three years old when this happened and the camera scared me. It looked like a monster with the black drapes hanging behind it. My mother had to give me a bunch of wild flowers so it wouldn't scare me so much but it didn't work. I was still miserable.

In August of that same year, 10,000 Americans joined the Japanese to help in the invasion of Russia. Five hundred Americans died during that invasion [New York, Avon books, 1990) 247].

The year is 1919 and the war is finally starting to come to an end. Negotiations started in January. Hopefully the war will end soon so my Uncle will come home to me and my family. We haven't heard yet but today the treaty of Vesailles was signed (July 28) ending the war in Europe [New York, William Morrow & Co., 1981), 311, 316] My father and grandfather went into Oneonta for supplies and groceries when they heard the news over a store's radio. They went to the train station to see if anyone they knew was getting off the train and ended up coming home with my Uncle. There was a lot of yelling, praying, and loving. It was a good day all around [Barbara Brown].

In the intervening years leading up to the Depression my family and I spent a lot of time together. We would pick hickory nuts, go to church, and just be together. So when "black Thursday" came, we were all together when my father read us the news of the stock market crash out of the Atlanta Triweekly Constitution.

We really didn't feel the pinch of the Depression. My family was too poor to buy stocks so we didn't lose money as so many of our friends in the city did when the crash came. \$30 billion dollars in stock values had been lost in just two short months. Such stocks were:

	Sept. 3, 1929	Nov. 3, 1929
American Can	181	86
AT&T	304	197
Anaconda Copper	131	70
G.E.	396	168

The fifty leading stocks in the New York Times went from 311.90 to 164.43 by Nov. 13, 1929 [New York, G.P. Putnam's, 1979), 281]. My family wasn't that affected like our friends in the city due to the fact that we were already poor, plus, my family grew our own food so we never went without food.

The year is 1937 and the biggest scandal to hit the papers is of Amelia Earhart's plan to fly around the world with Fred Noonan as navigator [New York, Avon books, 1990), 285]. Her plane later came up missing and the most accepted theory is that she met her watery grave somewhere over the Pacific Ocean.

Mrs. Brown's first picture
with her family. Taken
in 1918.



Mrs. Brown's highschool
picture

STUDENT

The first session I asked for individuals to write a description of life during the Great Depression. Barbara Brown wrote a story and said that it was influenced by Troy and also Audrey Talbot, her sister. I appreciate her talent, willingness, effort and energy put into this story.

The Great Depression - A Parable

It came to pass in those days, the days of the Great Depression, being interpreted, the days of deprivation.

And lo, the day was called Monday, when a sharecropper, whose surname was Cornelius, said to his children, "Get thy hoes and lets hoe cut the cotton, and when thou hast finished, thou canst work for other farmers and keep what thou makest for thyselfes."

When it came to pass that the crops were laid by, they canned green beans, tomatoes, blackberries, and made sour kraut. But nevertheless, there remained time for neighbors and relatives to visit, peradventure, some would spend the night.

Now when it was yet summertime, the church, lo, even the denominations, held their protracted meetings, later called revivals. But, nevertheless, when it was yet daytime the men would play baseball in a large pasture, others were spectators.

Now upon the first day of the week for the most part, the mother and children walked near two miles, carrying their shoes in hand until they reached church. And behold harvest time drew near; Albeit they were share croppers and for a surety, could not keep all their harvest. Likewise, as earlier, they earned money picking cotton and bought new shoes. Verily, they bought school books also.

Nevertheless, they never knew of their poverty 'till some years later when news came that the Great Depression was nearing an end.

Mrs. Brown's Parable
on the Great Depression
written Oct. 18, 1992 for
the E. Gadsden Church of
Christ Church Bulletin.

In this same year I started my first year of college at Snead State in Boaz, Alabama. I was awarded a full scholarship that paid for everything so my family wasn't burdened with the cost of my education. The scholarship was based on three things: character, ability, and need. In my case they only considered two qualifications: character and need [Barbara Brown]. College life was different then it is today. There was no smoking, drinking, and under no circumstances could the boys come into the girl's dorm building.

After Snead, I went on and off to Jacksonville State University while I taught at a one-room school. That was also the same year I married Troy Brown, whom I had known since I was seven years old.

That first year of teaching was hard but at the same time very rewarding. It was hard for two different reasons. The first was because we had no electricity in the classroom and we had to use a coal stove to keep warm. The second was because I had to teach six grades at once. That is also why my first year was very rewarding.

I had twenty-eight students in which six of those were sixth graders. There were two girls in the sixth grade class who would get bored by the end of the day so I would allow them to help the younger students. The girls enjoyed helping and the younger students learned from the older ones [Barbara Brown]. My salary for teaching that year was \$65 per month. It was five dollars more than the average because I was my own principal and disciplined the students. By the end of the school year I had to contend with two changes in my life. The first was that I was moved and had to teach the third grade at Walnut Grove Elementary in Gadsden, Alabama and the second was World War Two.

I was thankful for the first change because I was able to concentrate on just one grade but the war changed my methods of teaching and my personal life completely around. My teaching was affected by the fact that the fathers of my students had to go overseas. I would have them bring in letters from loved ones that were overseas. They would share them with the rest of the class and it would help them deal with the pain of separation

better because they knew they weren't alone. The war concerned me personally because my brother and husband had been called on to serve the country.

My brother had to go overseas and while he was there he got sick in England. We weren't sure if he would make it back but with the good Lord's help he got better and he did make it back to us. My husband is a different story,

Troy had been called up for service and had passed all the requirements but was given a 90-day deferment because his work at Goodyear was considered essential. After each ninety days he would have to go back but Goodyear would always get him a deferment. During that same time we had to follow different rules pertaining to our homelife.

We had to dispose of our garbage differently by cleaning out all the tin cans and opening them at both ends and then flattening them for recycling. We also had to practice blackouts where we had to put blankets up on our windows and turn out the lights [Barbara Brown].

By the end of the war, I had grown so sick of the killing that I approved of President Truman dropping the bomb on Japan in 1945. At the time I felt that was the only way the war would end. I still feel that way. Three years after the ending of World War Two, I got my Bachelor's Degree from Jacksonville State University.

I was teaching at Glenco when the Korean War started in 1950. Thankfully I wasn't affected in any personal way except for what my students had to go through and what I read in the papers.

The year of 1951 would cause a chain of events that would change the country forever. In that year a court case was heard in front of the Supreme Court. It was Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education. In it Brown was challenging the doctrine of "separate but equal" in pertaining to the separation of racial schools. The Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional [New York, Avon books, 1990), 336] That decision and the following civil rights movement would change my teaching forever. Also during this time the Vietnam War was just beginning.

It is now 1961 and the Freedom Riders are coming through Anniston on their way to Birmingham. I don't approve of their methods. I feel there are more peaceful solutions to settle things.

In April of 1963 there was a man known as Martin Luther King that led a peaceful demonstration on the streets of Birmingham. The demonstration was calling for the equality of blacks. I like Martin Luther King and his message. I thought he was a wonderful leader for his people at the time. The only thing I didn't approve of was his demonstration because I just don't like things like that [Barbara Brown].

By 1964, changes had occurred that would affect me and America, as a whole, for the rest of our days. The first would be the assassination of President Kennedy. I was teaching at Etowah High School when a teacher came and told me. It was a sad day in America. The second was that Etowah had absorbed Norris High School, an all-black school, and I would now have blacks in my classroom. I was for blacks coming into the school as long as they worked hard for their education.

I never had any problems with any of my black students. I contribute that to the fact that three days after they were in my class, I pulled a black girl out of class to talk to her. I picked this girl because I felt she was a leader among the others. I asked her to help me with the correct racial terms when referring to their race. She told me that they wanted to be called black and I told her that I would call them that when referring them as a whole group. I never did have any problems out of my black students because that girl told them what I had said [Barbara Brown].

The Vietnam War is also escalating in this same year. On August 5---U.S. planes bombed N. Vietnam for their attacks on U.S. ships. The war lasted another eleven years until President Ford called the war finished. On April 29---the last Americans were evacuated out of Saigon and the last two Americans died for that war [New York, Avon books, 1990), 374, 383]. The war to me was a senseless waste of human life and we should not have been in it to begin with.

In June 1974 I retired from teaching and, for the past twenty-two years, have been taking life easy. My husband and I go camping, read the Bible, enjoy going to church, and just have fun in general. That is what we plan to do until the good Lord calls us home.

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- XII. Black civil rights.
- XIII. Vietnam War.
- XIV. Various stories.

END NOTES

1. Quotes from Barbara Brown. Pages 2-5.
2. Notes from: Don't Know Much About History. New York: Avon books,1990. pgs. 1-4.
3. Notes from: The Day America Crashed. New York: G.P.Putnam's, 1979. pg. 2.
4. Notes from: A Short History of World War One. New York: William Morrow & Co.,1981. pg.1.

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Stokesbury, James L. A short History of World War One. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1981.