

ROSA LINDSEY KILGO

Birth - 1920

My grandmother was born in a small town in Alabama on February 11, 1905, and has lived her entire life within forty miles of her birthplace. She was the first of eight children for my great-grandparents, a machinist-farmer and a housewife. The family was -and remained - poor. Today my grandmother is quite comfortable financially, but she still thinks of herself as poor. I never understood why until I spoke with her for this interview.

Granny's first memory is at about age four when her father gave her a cotton sack to fill. He offered her fifty cents if she could pick fifty pounds of cotton. She remembers that she picked five pounds that day. Five pounds is an inconsequential amount until you realize that cotton bolls are almost weightless, and that the child picking the cotton probably weighed less than forty pounds.

As the oldest child, my grandmother assumed adult responsibilities early. She worked in the fields and helped her mother with the housework, becoming more and more of a caretaker with the birth of each sister or brother. Granny was nine when her brother was born, and her mother contracted typhoid fever after his birth. My grandmother took over the running of the house - the cooking, cleaning, washing, and ironing - and took care

of her three younger sisters and the new baby. After her mother recovered, Granny says that she still was expected to do much of the work, both inside and out. Her mother knew that she had been able to carry the load while she was sick, and saw no reason for Granny to stop now just because her mother was recovered.

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My grandmother's world as a child consisted of work, church and school. Work was a given - there was always something that needed to be done. Granny remembers no distinction between girl's work and boy's work. Each child was expected to do assigned jobs, and they evidently accomplished these chores without complaining.

I was surprised to learn that my great-grandfather always helped to cook breakfast. He rose before the rest of the family and started a fire in the stove. By the time the rest of the family was up, he had brought the ham or bacon from the smokehouse and had begun cooking it. My grandmother's "breakfast" job was biscuit making, and her sister Velma was the coffee-maker and egg cooker. My grandmother said that many of the men in their neighborhood did the same thing as my great-grandfather - the sooner children ate, the sooner they could begin milking cows and gathering eggs.

In my grandmother's family, the labor force consisted of the children. There were no hired hands to help with the plowing or livestock, and when hog-killing time came, my great-grandfather needed to look no further than his kitchen table. The girls helped to slaughter hogs alongside their father and brother. My grandmother remembers after one experience her father reaching across the supper table to pat her hand and tell her that he was proud of her for helping that day.

Cecil, Granny's only brother was evidently lazy. He would either do his chores poorly, or not do them at all, preferring to spend his time on the front porch reading. Granny says that she and her sisters usually ended up doing his work as well as theirs in order to protect Cecil from their father. This "covering up" would characterize their relationships until Cecil died. He grew up to be arrogant and self-centered, and thought that the world owed him something. Unfortunately, he found a wife who agreed with him, and she (and later their numerous daughters) spent her life catering to him.

My great-grandmother was an avid gardener. My grandmother remembers people stopping by just to look at her mother's old-maids (zinnias) and petunias. On Saturday, (the short day of the week) my grandmother and her sisters

would weed the garden, "deadhead" (snap off the dying blooms), and sweep the yard. No sprig of grass was allowed in either the flower beds or the yard, so after the girls finished with the weeding, they went to the woods and gathered branches and limbs to make brush brooms. The limbs were tied together with twine, and they swept the front yard. My grandmother recommends dogwood branches for this.

Religion and the church was and is an important part of my grandmother's life. She and her family attended church every Sunday, the only day that they did not work. Their leisure was spent going to revivals, singings, and other church-related activities.

My grandmother tells the story about a Christmas when both her mother and father had been very sick, and their church "made up" for their family. On Christmas morning, members of the church brought food and toys to my grandmother and her family. Granny said that she and her siblings had already resigned themselves to having no Christmas that year, and the arrival of the "goodies" was like an answered prayer. Granny says that this kind gesture from their parish was not at all unusual. The church - tiny, rural, doubtlessly poor - took care of

their members who were having a hard time.

Granny loved school. She had close friends there, and it was probably a welcome rest from farm work. She went to school until the tenth grade, when she had to stop because of bad eyesight. When I asked her, during this interview, what the best time in her life had been, she quickly answered - to my surprise - that it was while she was attending school. I suppose I had expected a more "grandmotherly" reply - when her children were small, or after my grandfather retired - but the speed with which she answered the question left no doubt that she meant exactly what she said. She also said that if she could relive any part of her life, it would be those school years.

*analyze
why must
the be
case?*

Granny says that her family had some good times as well as bad. She remembers her father saving pennies until he had enough to buy a popcorn popper. She and her sisters and brother would take turns shaking it over the fire, arguing over who held it the longest.

Christmases were always special. Granny and her sisters and brother always hung their stockings over the mantle on Christmas Eve, and in the morning they would each have an apple, an orange, and a bunch of raisins. The girls always got a china doll, either

blond or brunette, and their brother usually received a sling-shot or ball. My grandmother remembers that one Christmas, the girls received their usual gifts, but their brother had a red wagon filled with toys. I suspect that the pile of toys has grown considerably over the years in my grandmother's mind!

Granny recalls that the family usually ate their Christmas meal at noon, and the meal never varied: ham from their smokehouse, sweet potatoes and green beans from their garden, and three different cakes. These same dishes have appeared on my grandmother's own table at Christmas for as long as I can remember.

My grandmother lived her first years at one of the most exciting times of the 20th century. Women were finally allowed to vote, the Panama Canal was built, The Republic of China was established, the Model T was produced and marketed, and World War I was fought before she was fifteen years old. As a young girl, only two of the mentioned events had much effect on her. She remembers World War I because her father worked at the foundry more, and there was a little more money, and she remembers when the 19th Amendment was passed. Granny's mother told her that while she - my great-grandmother - would never vote, that my grandmother would, and that

would make her "just as important as a man". My grandmother never forgot that, although she can not remember why her mother felt unable to vote, and Granny has voted in every election since 1928.

My grandmother feels poor today because she was poor as a child. She describes a childhood that was filled by hard work and lacked joy. There was little money, sometimes not enough food, and certainly nothing left over for frivolous things. Granny has never romanticized those growing-up years, and she emphatically states that she would not like to relive them.

I asked my grandmother if she realized at the time she was living those years just how hard her life was. She thought for a minute and replied that while she and her family knew how hard they had it, everyone else had it just as bad. She told me that all her life she was taught to do what was expected, and that hard work was expected, so she never questioned it.

Good story about an interesting woman. I'd like to see you use her words in the text -- quotes. Who, some analysis

A-

ROSA LINDSEY KILGO
A Chronological Overview

Brenda Thurman
History 436
11:00
Dr Marshall

Rosa Hasseltine Lindsey Kilgo

b February 11 1905
Snead Alabama

Father Martin Buren Lindsey

Mother Sarah Lorena Osborne

Married James Roosevelt Kilgo (12 07 01 11 13-72)
March 2. 1922

Children	James L	b 1924 d 1924
	Erston O	b 1925
	Evelyn R	b 1927 d 1963
	James E	b 1929 d 1975
	Dorothy M	b 1931
	Frances L	b 1933
	Vivian C	b 1935
	Shirley A	b 1937

1905 Rosa Lindsey born
1922 2-11-05 Snead, AL
Spends first seven-
teen years in Altoona,
AL Marries James
Kilgo 3-02-22

1923- Rosa and Jim move to
1937 Attalla, AL. Have eight
children Begin small-
scale farming

- 1905 -- Theodore Roosevelt Pres
First "Environmental"
Pres.
- 1908 - "Model T" goes on market
- 1912 - Republic of China is estab.
- 1914 -- WWI begins in Europe
- 1917 -- U S. enters war
- 1920 - First commercial radio
broadcast is made
- 19th Amendment gives
women the vote
- 1922 - Egypt gains independence
from Great Britain
- Mussolini becomes dictator
of Italy
- USSR Formed
- 1927 - Lindbergh flies across the
Atlantic
- 1929 - Stock Market crashes,
Great Depression follows
- 1933 -- Hitler becomes Chancellor
of Germany
- "New Deal"
- TVA created
- 1935 - Congress passes Social
Security Act

1938-
1966

Jim begins work at Republic Steel. Rosa's children are educated, married, and leave home. Daughter Evelyn dies in 1963. In 1966, Jim retires, and Rosa continues work on the farm.

1967-
1992

Rosa becomes a widow when Jim dies in 1972. Her son James dies in 1975. She continues to live alone, taking care of herself, tending a small garden, canning, quilting and keeping track of children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and rascally Republicans.

- 1941 - Pearl Harbor attacked
America enters WWII
- 1944 - G.I. Bill is approved
by Congress
- 1945 - WWII Ends
- 1951 - First national telecast
- 1954 - Supreme Court ruled segregation
in public schools unconstitutional
- 1958 - First American space satellite
launched
- 1962 - Supreme Court rules school
prayer unconstitutional
- 1961 - Berlin Wall erected
- Pres. John Kennedy sends
advisors to SE Asia
- 1963 - Freedom March in Washington, DC
Blacks demand equal rights
- John F. Kennedy assassinated
- 1965 - Pres. Johnson sends combat
troups to Vietnam
- Civil rights movement continues
- 1966 - Medicare goes into effect
- 1968 - Martin Luther King and
Robert Kennedy killed
- 1969 - U.S. begins withdrawing
troups from Vietnam
- 1971 - Busing is used to segregate
public schools
- "Women's Lib" becomes a national
movement
- 1974 - Richard Nixon resigns after
the Watergate break-in

- 1975 - War in Vietnam ends
S Vietnam is conquered
by N Vietnam
- 1980 - Ronald Reagan elected
Inherits double-digit
inflation.
- 1981- The rich get richer
- 1992 Apartheid ends in S Africa
Berlin Wall falls
AIDS becomes epidemic
Cold War ends
Clarence Thomas confirmed
and the beat goes on

*This is exactly
what I wanted.
May I copy
it (anonymously)
& use it as a
model?*

Works Cited

World Book Encyclopedia
1980 Edition

Oral History Tape Recording Release Agreement

I, Rosa Lindsey Kilgo, hereby give and grant my tape recordings and their contents to Dr. Suzanne Marshall, Assistant Professor of History Jacksonville State University, and authorize her to make them available for scholarly research purposes.

INTERVIEWEE Rosa L. Kilgo

ADDRESS 620 9th Ave, Attalla, AL

INTERVIEWER Brenda Thuman

DATE OF INTERVIEW 11-7-92

NUMBER OF TAPES _____

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SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWEE/DONOR Rosa Kilgo

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Rosa L. Kilgo Interview

Tape Outline

Side One

- I. Introduction and Family Background
- II. Growing Up
 - A. Cotton picking
 - B. Division of labor - "girl's work v. boy's work"
 - C. Milking cows, feeding hogs
- III. Christmas
 - A. Gifts received
 - B. Christmas dinner
- IV. Good Times
 - A. Popping popcorn
 - B. Pet squirrels
 - C. Flower gardens and brush brooms
- V. Meeting Granddaddy
 - A. Staking a claim
 - B. Feeding the new minister's family
 - C. Courtship of Granny and Granddaddy
 - D. Marriage and first home
- VI. Jim's jobs
 - A. Coal miner
 - B. Republic Steel
 - 1. Advancement and promotion
 - 2. Starting wage

Side Two

- I. The Depression
 - A. Size of family during depression
 - B. Lack of necessities

- II. FDR's Programs
 - A. Road work
 - B. Living on \$3.00 per week
 - C. Buying a cow
 - D. Visitors and "poor" relations

- III. Motherhood
 - A. Typical day
 - B. "Helpful" children

- IV. WWII and Good Times
 - A. Canning in communal kitchens - 300 tin cans
 - B. Hog killing

- V. Red Hill Methodist Church
 - A. Building a Sunday school
 - B. Working in the church
 - C. Sunday lunches

- VI. Grandchildren and Christmas

- VII. Voting habits of Rosa

End side two

Side Three

I. Voting practices continued

A. Granny (Democrat) and Granddaddy (Republican)

II. Jim Retires

A. Division of labor

B. Fishing in the snow

C. Shared hobbies

D. Granddaddy's chicken house

III. Conclusion and Reflection

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Rosa Lindsey Kilgo M/F Female
Address: 620 9th Ave SW Atlanta AL 35157
Phone number(s): (205) 538-9851
Approximate age or date of birth: 2-11-05
Mother's Name: Sarah Lorena Osborne
Father's Name: Martin Boren Lindsey
Places lived and when: Snead, AL Altoona AL
Atlanta, AL
Education: 10th Grade High School
Religion: Methodist
Business, political and social memberships (past and present) —
Present occupation: retired
Former occupations: wife, mother, farmer
Special Skills: sewing, cooking
Major Accomplishments: raised 2 children
National Events in which interviewee has participated: Voted in every election since 1928
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: _____