

Sallie Paul

I

Interview with Sallie Paul, 79 years

Marion, S.C., Fairlee Street

—*Annie Ruth Davis*

"I remember we colored people belong to de white folks in slavery time. Remember when de war was gwine on 'cause we hear de guns shoot en we chillun jump up en holler. Yes, mam, I remember dat. Remember de 30th of dis October, I was 79 years old.

"No, mam, I ain' got no kin people. You see I been born in North Carolina. Government lady get Lindy Henderson to stay here en look out for me 'cause it be like dis, I can' see out my eyes one speck. Can' tell de night from de day. Don' discover daylight no time, child. We rents dis here house from Miss (Mrs.) Wheeler en Lindy treats me mighty good."

(Lindy: "Well, we gets along nicely. I done feed her up en she get back in bed, it be so cold en ain' got no coal to heat her. Yes, mam, has to wait on de Salvation of de Lord. Government gives us a little small salary, but we has to live mighty small, mighty small. Honey, it takes a right sharp to live on dese days. If dey wasn' helpin me, I just don' know, be as I ain' much dese days. Got dis high blood so worsen en den I has such a achin in my joints en throat dat does worry me right smart too.")

"My white folks, dey was de Williamsons dere in North Carolina. Yes, mam, dey was good to dey colored people. We lived right in dey yard or dat what you may say in de yard. All de colored people lived dere side de yard whe' dey be close enough to holler if anything get de matter. You see, I wasn' big enough to do no work much den only as we chillun tote up wood for de white folks en piddle 'bout de yard. I know I won' big enough to do nothin but jump up en keep fuss gwine all round de yard dere. I remembers dey used to get a handful of switches en stand us chillun up in a long row en give us all a lick 'bout de legs. You see, dey didn' work de chillun when dey was little bit of things en stunt dem up. Chillun grow to be 'bout 12 or 13 years old fore dey work dem in dat day en time.

"My white folks was well off peoples, honey. My Massa, he run three plantations en he had a heap of colored peoples dere. You see, people didn' run over de ground in dat day en time like dey do now. De men lift up every piece de dirt in de ground en get all de roots out it. My mother, she was one of de plow hands dere en when time come to lay off de ground, she force to work out. Dat de reason we chillun be up in de yard twixt meals. Den when breakfast en supper come, we eat to we house. Live close enough to de white folks house dat de nigger chillun could go to de house en get dey hominy en clabber 'tween meals. Oh, dey have dese here long wooden trays set up somewhe' under de tree dere in de yard dat dey would full up wid hominy en clabber for we chillun. Give some spoon en dem others

never had none. Dat it, all eat out de same tray right side together. Yes, mam, when I was raise up, have plenty to eat en chillun never fail to get it."

(Lindy: "Oh, child, we was bred en born in a fat kitchen in dat day en time. We was well taken care of. People say I don' look like it 'cause I here gwine 'bout wid stick in my hand. Sho was raise up in a fat kitchen. Yes, mam, I was raise to do all de cookin en de nursin for de white folks. Ain' never see no kitchen yet dat dey could lost me in 'cause I was trained myself. Never had no chance to go to school no time. You see, if it wasn' cookin, it was chillun. 'Bout time new baby come, dat first baby be knee child en so on like dat. Well, let me hush now, honey, en let Sallie tell you dat what in her mind. She de one what you come to get speech from.")

"Yes, mam, de people ate like dey eats now, but dey didn' never know what a stove was in dem days. Some of de kitchen fireplace, you could put a whole railin in it to hang de pots on. Den dey had dem big old clay chimneys wid dirt ovens dat would hold a bushel of tatoes to a time. Just was a brick chimney now en den in slavery time. Bake all de cakes en de bread right dere on de fireplace. Child, dere sho been more to eat in slavery time den dere be now en I know dat all right. Dere been more sheep en hogs en cows en goats. No, mam, I don' think I like goat. I don' think so. I recollects I tried to eat some goat one time en it swell in my mouth. Know I wouldn' eat sheep neither. It a sin. Seem like dey so humble.

"White folks didn' give de niggers no money no time, but dey had money in slavery time much so as dey does now. You see, all de white folks wasn' equal. Some was poor en de colored people sell dem things dey white folks never want. Oh, dey take anything you carry dem.

"I don' know nothin 'bout de Yankees only I see dem come through dere de day we was freed, but won' no great heap of dem come. Coase dey was passin through dat country all durin de war en come to de colored people's house en get somethin to eat. Yes, mam, colored people feed dem en give dem somethin to travel on. It just like dis, de Yankees would give de colored people dey good clothes en take dey rags. You see, dey was desertin. Was runnin away en gettin back home. I don' know whe' if de white folks know 'bout dey dere or not, but I know one thing, Massa didn' see dem.

"Yankees didn' do no harm nowhe' in dat country to nobody, white nor colored. Never hear tell of dat, but white people was scared of de Yankees as dey was of a rattlesnake. Yankees tell de colored people dey was free as dey was, but just didn' know it. I know dey said dat 'cause I was standin up listenin to dem just like any other child be standin dere lookin up in your mouth. Den when de colored people was freed, heap of de white folks died 'cause dey grieve demselves to death over de loss of dey property. Sho know dat 'cause I see dem en hear tell 'bout it plenty times.

"Dere been plenty white folks dat wouldn' never fight against de Yankees widout dey couldn' get out of it. Dey slip off en hide in pits dey dig in de woods en in de bays. Some of dem say dey didn' have no slaves en dey won' gwine fight. Dat de way it be, if dey didn' fight, dey had to run away en stay in de woods. Dat point me to think 'bout how young Massa would slip off wid de colored boys on a Sunday to play like white people will do en would learn dem to read. Carry old Webster's Blue Back wid dem en when dey been way off yonder, young Massa would learn dem to read. My father could read, but he couldn' never write.

"Yes, mam, white folks get handful of switches en whip de nigger chillun round de legs, but wouldn' never whip none of de grown 'omans 'cause dey was breedin. Didn' kill niggers whe' I was born."

(Lindy; "My Lord, child, reckon dey would 'bout beat me to death if I been livin den 'cause I done had two husbands en ain' never bear no child yet. Doctor tell me if I want a child, I would have to go to de hospital en be operated on en I wouldn' never get my mind fixed to do dat. Honey, I lies down in dat bed dere at night en thanks my God dat I ain' never had dat operation. I know I been bless 'cause dis de time of Revelations de people livin in. Don' want no child my God gwine hold me responsible for at de Jedgment. Sho bless 'cause like I see de world gwine, people ain' got no time to be gettin ready to meet dey God. Tell my God dat I thank he a thousand times again dat I been make like I is. It a blessin, honey, a blessin.")

"Yes, mam, de white folks make dey own cloth right dere on de plantation in dem days. Dey had a loom house, but my mother had a loom right to her own door. Sometimes, she would weave piece for de white folks en den she weave for herself. White folks find all de colored people's clothes en see to have all dey weavin done in dat day en time. Dey had certain one of de colored people to do all de common weavin, but dey couldn' do dem three en four treadle till dey Missus learn dem how. My old Missus could weave any kind of cloth or blankets or anything like dat.

"Oh, de white folks be right dere to look after dey colored people if dey get sick. Coase dey gwine take care of dey niggers. Gwine save dem just as long as dey got breath in dey body. Won' no niggers gwine suffer if dey need doctor neither. Heap of dem was cared for more better in slavery time den dey is now 'cause dey had somebody dat had to care for dem or lose dem one. Ain' no white folks want to lose dey niggers.

"No, God! no, God! I hear talk 'bout it, but I don' know whe' dey can do it or not. If dey can conjure, dey keep it to demselves. Dey never tell me. I hear tell of dem things call ghosts, but I ain' never see none of dem en ain' never see no hant neither. I has see a spirit though. Peoples dat been dead, dey appears fore you en vanishes. Seen dem all right. Dem things call ghosts en things, I don' wanna see none 'cause I don' know 'bout dem. Hear talk of dem, but ain' seen nothin like dat.

"Well, it like I tellin you, everybody didn' hate dey white folks. Dat how-come some niggers stayed right on dere wid dey white people after freedom en farmed for half what dey made on de crop. You see, dey didn' have nothin to work wid so dey stayed on dere en farmed on shares.

"I couldn' exactly tell you which de better times dese days or in slavery time. I know heap of de colored people fared better when dey belonged to de white folks 'cause dey had good owners. Didn' have to worry 'bout huntin dey clothes en somethin to eat in dat day en time. Just had to work. Now dey have to hunt it en get it together de best way dey can. Oh, honey, peoples has so much worryations dese days. Dat how-come dey ain' live a long time like dey used to."

II

Interview with Sallie Paul, age 79

Marion, S.C.

—*Annie Ruth Davis*

"No, mam, I ain' able to see none tall no time. Dis here one of my eye is weaken from dat other one. Cose I can tell de day from night, but say see somethin, I couldn' never do dat.

"Well, I don' know nothin more to speak 'bout den dat I been tell you dem other times you come here. It just like I tell you, we nigger chillun would look to de white folks yard in de day, but we stayed to us house in de quarter on a night. Oh, we lived close enough to de white folks yard to know dere was cookin gwine on in de Missus kitchen. No, child, we never eat us meals to de white folks house. You see, all de niggers on de plantation would draw rations den just like heap of dese people 'bout here draw rations dese days. I mean dey would draw so much of ration from dey Massa to last dem a week at a time just like de people draw government ration right 'bout here now. Dere was sho a plenty to eat in dat day en time, too, 'cause I know whe' I come up, I was raise on a plenty. Dere was abundance of meat en bread en milk all de time. Yes, mam, cows won' lackin no time whe' I was raise. I remember dey would give us chillun all de milk en hominy us could eat twixt meals. Always fed de nigger chillun to de white folks yard twixt meals. You see, dey was mighty particular 'bout how dey would raise en feed de little niggers in dem days. Been more particular den you would be particular wid a ten dollar bill dis day en time. Would keep dey little belly stuff wid plenty hominy en milk same as dey was pigs. Dey do dat to make dem hurry en grow 'cause dey would want to hurry en increase dey property. De white folks never didn' despise to see a big crop of nigger chillun comin on. Hear tell dat some of de white folks would be mean to dey colored people, but never did see nothin of dat kind 'bout my white folks' plantation. Cose de colored people would be let loose to get together on a night en when Sunday come. Dat all de time dey ever had to visit 'cause dey been force to work from sunup on de hill till sundown over de swamp.

"Oh, de colored people had plenty song in slavery time, but I ain' studyin nothin 'bout dat now. My 'membrance short dese days, child. Yes, mam, de colored people had so many song in slavery time, I can' remember de first word. Dey would sing anything dey could make a noise wid. Some of dem could read out de hymn book en some of dem couldn' tell one word from de other. Yes, mam, some of de young Massa would steal off to de woods wid dey colored mate on a Sunday evenin' en learn dem to read. No, Lord, dere won' no schools nowhe' for de colored people in dem days. White folks catch nigger wid a book, nigger sho know he gwine get a whippin soon as dat tale let loose. Now en den dey young Massa would learn dem, but dey wouldn' never let dey fore-mammy know 'bout it. Cose dey couldn' never write, but some of dem could read. Massa en Missus never know 'bout it though.

"Now, it de Lord truth, honey, I ain' want to mislead you noway. Wouldn' do dat for nothin. Don' lay no mind to heap of dis talk I hear some people speak 'bout. I gwine talk 'bout what I been touch wid. Some of de colored people fared good en some of dem fared bad in slavery time. Some of dem had good owners en some of dem had bad ones. Thank de Lord, I didn' get much of it 'cause I won' but nine years old when freedom come. (Whe' de lady? Gone?). (The old woman is totally blind and remains in bed all the time). Some of de white folks had dese here overseers en dey was rough owners. Thank God, I was little en dey never didn' whip me exceptin little bit 'bout de legs dere in old Massa yard. Remember dey cut we chillun round de legs wid a switch sometimes when dey would want to punish us en learn us better sense. Honey, us had a good old Massa. Won' no cuttin en slashin gwine on round us like dere was on dem other plantations round dere. My blessed a mercy, lady, some of dem grown niggers mighty as well been dead in dat day en time, de overseers been so mean. De little chillun wouldn' never be force to work like dey is now. Dey would just be playin 'bout dere in old Massa yard en totin wood for dey Missus. Wouldn' have to work in slavery time 'cause dey had somebody to feed dem. Dat de difference, dey have to work for what dey get dis day en time en ain' be satisfied wid it neither.

"Well, I don' know nothin 'bout dem cornshuckin dey used to have only as dey would gather de crop in dem days en haul it up to de white folks big old farm barn. Den dey would ax all de white folks 'bout

dere to send dey hands dere to shuck corn one night. En pray, dey would have such a whoopin en a hollerin en de like of a big supper dere dat night. My blessed Lord, dat was a big time for we chillun. One man would have corn shuck to his barn one night en dey would all help shuck corn to another man barn de next night. You see, people was more mindful to bless one another in dat day den dey be dese days. Yes, mam, neighbor been please to turn good hand to neighbor den.

"Oh, dere ain' been no end to fine victuals in dat day en time. You know dere was a plenty to eat in slavery time 'cause de people made somethin to eat den, but ain' nothin now hardly. Child, dis a tight time we gwine through dese days. I remember dey used to have plenty 'tatoes en bread en fresh meat every day en have heap of sheep en cows en goats all 'bout de woods den, but dere ain' nothin growin in de woods dese days. Now, if a man got a hog, he got it by de tail in de pen. No, mam, de most of de people ain' got nothin now en dey ain' got nothin to buy somethin wid neither.

"I don' know, child. I settin here in dis bed day in en day out wid dese old bare eye en I don' know how de people gwine. I don' study nothin 'bout dem. I know I don' care how or which a way dey gwine 'cause I studyin 'bout most all my days behind me now. Plenty people ain' livin good as dey used to live long time ago. Seems like de times is tighter en worsen den what dey used to be. Reckon de reason be dere was more made to eat den. Pa always tell we chillun dat it a sign de times gettin better when dere more made to eat, child."

III

Interview with Sallie Paul, age 79

Marion, S.C.

—*Annie Ruth Davis*

"I ain' tryin to remember nothin 'bout my mammy when she was a girl. I know I hear dem speak 'bout old Massa bought her en my grandmammy from off de block en raised dem to a good livin. Hear talk dat some of de colored people 'bout dere would catch old Harry in slavery time, but dere won' nothin snatchin nowadays 'bout my white folks. I mean some of de colored people would catch de devil in dat day en time 'cause dey come up under a rough boss. Just had half enough to eat en had to stir 'bout half naked most all de time. Not been took care of as dey should have been.

"Cose when we was chillun, de grown people would be force to punish us some of de time. Yes, mam, I do know what would happen to me, if I been get in devilment. I would get a whippin right den en dere. Nobody wouldn' never whip me, but old Massa en my mammy 'cause people won' no more allowed to whip anybody child den dey is dese days. My child done anything wrong den, you had to come to me 'bout it. I recollects, dey would whip us chillun wid tree switches round us legs. Den if dey would want to spare de punishment, dey would try to scare us out de mischief. Tell us Bloody Bones would jump out dat corner at us, if we never do what dey say do.

"Oh, I here to tell you, dey had de finest kind of enjoyments in dem days. It was sho a time, to speak 'bout, when dey had one of dem quiltings on de plantation. Didn' do nothin but quilt quilts en dance en play some sort of somethin after dey would get done. Colored people would have quiltings to one of dey own house, up in de quarter, heap of de nights en dey would frolic en play en dance dere till late up in de night. Would enjoy demselves better den de peoples do dese days 'cause when dey would get

together den, dey would be glad to get together. Oh, my Lord, dey would dance en carry on all kind of fuss. Yes, mam, blow quills en knock bones together dat would make good a music as anybody would want to dance by. Child, dey had plenty scraps to make dey bed clothes wid, 'cause dey Missus would save scraps for dem.

"Yes, mam, de white folks would furnish de colored people wid clothes for true in dat day en time. Dey couldn't let dem go naked. How dey gwine work wid bare back? Cose dey fine clothes, dey managed to get dat demselves. You see, white folks wouldn't give dem no Sunday frock, but one. I tell you, de cloth was better wearin' den. Dis here cloth dese days, wear it two or three times, de wind could 'bout blow through it. Oh, dey had de finest kind of silk in slavery time. Don't hear no silk rattlin' 'bout here dese days, but would hear silk rattle in slavery time just as same as would hear paper rattlin'. Colored people wore just as much silk in dem days as dey do now 'cause when dey had a silk dress den, it been a silk dress. Won't no half cotton en half silk. Goods was sho better den, child, I say. Like I tell you, when a man had a broadcloth suit den, it won't no half jeans. All de colored people, dat been stay on my white folks plantation, had dey own little crop of corn en fodder 'bout dey house en when a peddler come along, dey would sell dey crop en buy silk from de peddler. Dey been sell dey crop to anybody dey could. Dere was always a poor one somewhe' dat been need corn en fodder.

"No, mam, colored people didn't have no church of dey own in slavery time 'cause dey went to de white folks church. All I can tell you, we went to buckra's church en dey set in one part de church en us set in de gallery. Yes, mam, de white folks would see to it dat all dey niggers never chance to miss church service no time. En de slave owners would bury dey plantation niggers right dere to de colored people graveyard behind de church, dat was settin' right side de white people graveyard.

"I won't married till long time after freedom come here en when I get married, de colored people had dese here bresh (brush) shelters for dey church en dey had dey own colored preacher, too. Honey, I marry a Paul, a slavery one, but I didn't have no big weddin. Didn't want none. Just married dere to my father's house en I had a white dress dat was made out of cotton, all I can tell. Know it won't no silk. I don't know nothin more den dat to tell you. Dat de mighty truth, all I know, I had me a husband en dat won't no great blessin, to speak 'bout.

"Don't ax me, child. Ax somebody dat know somethin 'bout dem things people say is a charm. I say, dey is ignorant people what believe in dem. I know I ain't never wear nothin round my foot 'cause I ain't got no dime to spend, much less to be puttin it round my foot. I calls dat nothin but a foolish person dat would do dat, ain't you say so? I see a woman once wear a twenty-five cents piece tie round her ankle en I ax her what she do dat for. She tell me she had de rheumatism en she hear dat would cure it. I tell her I ain't had no mind to have no faith in all dat what I hear people speak 'bout. Dat won't nothin but a devil been talkin to dat woman, I say.

"My God a mercy, I tell you, slavery time was somethin. Dat been a day. Colored people didn't have no privileges den only as dey Massa would let dem loose on a Saturday evenin' en on a Sunday. But, child, dey was just as proud of dat as people is proud of a month dese days. Didn't have no more privileges in slavery time den dese people got now in dis here chain gang. No, mam, niggers belong to dey owner in slavery just like you got a puppy belong to you. Make dem go so far en den stop.

"What I think 'bout Abraham Lincoln? I ain't took time to have no thoughts 'bout him. Hear so much talk 'bout him till I don't know what he done. Hear talk dat he been de one dat free de slaves, but whe' de

power? De power been behind de throne, I say. God set de slaves free. De Lord do it. Abraham Lincoln couldn' do no more den what God give de power to do. It just like dis, I believes it was intended from God for de slaves to be free en Abraham Lincoln was just de one what present de speech. It was revealed to him en God was de one dat stepped in en fight de battle