

Interview with Rebecca “Miss Sula” Bowen

Narrator: Rebecca “Miss Sula” Bowen

Interviewer: Dr. Dionne Hoskins

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Project Name: Georgia Black Fishermen

Project Description: African American participation in marine-related careers began as early as 1796, when the federal government issued Seamen’s Protection Certificates to merchant mariners defining them as “citizens” of the United States effectively making maritime employment one way for Blacks to shape their identities. This project documents the fishery-related occupations of African Americans in coastal Georgia 1865 to present and gather information for future work that may ascertain the relationship between their decreased participation and changes in regional fish populations and the fishing industry.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Dionne Hoskins

Transcript Team: Michelle Duncan, PhD.

Abstract: On June 15, 2011 Dionne Hoskins interviewed Rebecca Bonds Bowen, better known as “Miss Sula,” as part of the Georgia Black Fishermen oral history project. Miss Sula was born in 1946 in Pin Point, Georgia—a small Gullah Geechee community founded in 1896, eleven miles southeast of Savannah, in Chatham County. Growing up, Miss Sula was often the primary caregiver for her younger siblings because her parents would leave early in the morning to either catch or pick crabs. In her early 20s, Miss Sula was employed as a crab picker but was persuaded by her mother to pursue her education for a better life. Miss Sula entered the nursing field and worked in various care facilities throughout Georgia. Miss Sula provides a detailed account of African American founding members of the crab picking and harvesting industry in Pin Point, Georgia. Among the names mentioned are her grandparents—Rebecca Famble and Syrus Sams—who were excluded from a documentary filmed about the crabbing industry. Miss Sula expresses her frustration with the documentary because it fails to acknowledge African Americans Benjamin Bond and John Anderson, who built the first cannery in 1900 and contributed to the industry prior to the White-owned A.S. Varn and Son Oyster and Crab Factory that was prominently featured in the documentary. She describes how her family and other Pin Point citizens were exploited by the Varn’s family and endured lack of adequate compensation, medical coverage, and security after “slaving away” their entire lives in harsh factory conditions. Miss Sula recalls seeing the women in her family stand all day in freezing buildings to keep the crabs cold, which left residual “cold in their bones” and other health problems. The “ugly side of crabbing” forced her and others in her generation to find better employment. Miss Sula recognizes that the historical records have excluded African American contributions. She regrets that there are no family photos of her grandfather building wooden boats in his backyard or family and community members picking crabs to share with their children and the world. However, she has her family’s oral history to pass on to future generations, which tells the stories and contributions of past Gullah Geechee generations.

Dionne Hoskins: So you were telling me that your grandfather was a fisherman and you were telling me that your mother picked crabs, but you were also saying that the most recent documentary, the most recent story, on crab picking, didn't talk about the breadth of people...

Rebecca Bowen: Yeah, the beginning, the FOUNDERS.

DH: Well tell me about the founders.

RB: You know the founders, you know ah, my grandmother, Rebecca Famble...Sams uh, my granddaddy, Cyrus Sams, Mr. Um, oh lord, Mr. Haynes..

DH: J. K. Haynes, no?

RB: No, Henry Haynes. Henry Haynes...oh God...Mr., oh lord, all these old people have died. Teresa Haynes, uh, Janelle Gibson, she worked down there. Elise Barnes, she worked down there. Um, Janie Martin, um ooh ooh the lady from Sandfly, what her name was? Now come on now, Sula. She's a Chisolm, oh lord... the Chisolms- the momma AND the daughter. They worked down there. It was a lot of people- ooo gosh.

DH: So how did people get started? How did, like everybody that you just named... were they all working as crab pickers at the Varn's factory, or were some of them crabbers that brought crabs over...?

RB: Only person who brought crabs over, went to get crabs was my granddaddy Cyrus Sams and Mr. Haynes.

DH: Ok.

RB: They went to get the crabs, they bring 'em in, they brought 'em in a like a little ferry boat. They handmade the boats.

DH: Yeah, they owned their own boat.

RB: Yes, they owned the boat. But first now, the Bonds Estate had a crab factory. Down on Ms. Helen/Ellen, um, down a little bit farther in Pinpoint which then that tore down. That was run by the Bonds and claiming as the Haynes and the Andersons.

DH: Ok, so that was a Black family that had...

RB: That was a Black family, that, the, crab factory that tore down.

DH: Ok, and I think I heard about that, that the father had built it?

RB: Yeah, um, the... Benjamin Bonds, all that came through Benjamin Bonds.

DH: Ok.

RB: And that they, they started THAT crab factory up. But see when we got to an age, it had, it was deteriorating. So see I cannot talk too much on that because I don't...

DH: It was gone by then.

RB: Yeah, it was gone.

DH: So, did, did they have...they had, they had captain's licenses AND they built their own boat? Your grandfather and Bonds?

RB: Yeah, I don't think back then there was so much a license and stuff. I think it was just choices, a job. Business that founded itself that you know go you know you go in the river because it wasn't, it wasn't rules and regulations like it is now, you got me? During at that time it wasn't none of that because... is wasn't NONE of that because they goes to get the crabs and they weighs the crabs and I guess how much bundles you bring in that's how you got paid.

DH: Ok.

RB: You see what I'm saying? And it wasn't like, you know, government, USA inspected or da da da da da. Yeah, cause Mr. Archie [A. S. Varn Sr.], like I said, when they would pick everything was sterilized, everything was like, you know- health. Purpose because you know you had the health department to come in to check and you know with that because that's like-food sealing and going out.

DH: Um hmm. Yes ma'am.

RB: So he did it all the right way because you know when they, when had my grandmamma, when they picked, she would go pick up the bundle and she would have this little room where she would go back and weigh 'em put the caps on them and they would put 'em down in these ices. You know they had these big old boxes. So she would pack 'em down in the ice so... they would get like the "fittles" out of the crabs, they would get the lump, the regular crabmeat and claw meat. So it was all, you know, it was like 3 or 4 different types of meat ...

DH: What was the first thing you said?

RB: The fittles... that's what's like the little stringy crabs. When they pick 'em, they were like stringy like. Ok, the lump is that chunk.

DH: Oooh. Uh huh.

RB: Inside the corner.

DH: That back meat.

RB: Uh huh. In that corner, you got me? Then it would be crab meat- that would be the one

that they pick with the crabs that just come out the crabs. And I don't even have a crab to show you...

DH: Oh, but I understand what you talking about.

RB: You got me? You got what I'm saying? And then the claw meat. So there was 2 different, and then they would do like fingers. They would leave the claws on the crab and...leave the fingers on them.

DH: Umm hmm.

RB: That's what they would call fingers. So it was like you know it was several names for the crabs that, you know, was produced out there. And there were people buying them.

DH: Like, how much were crabs, like your, how much were crabs going for? How much was your granddaddy getting for crabs? Or how much was Mr. Varn selling them for?

RB: Now you know, that's a good question. But I knew it was under labor.

DH: Ok.

RB: But I knew they made pretty good money because we lived, my grandmother lived a pretty decent life.

DH: Ok.

RB: You know, it wasn't like a poor life.

DH: Gotcha.

RB: You know what I'm saying so it like had to been something, some kinda money they were making, but I remember when we used to work at the crab factory it was like 25 cent- you got me? A pound.

DH: Wooo. And how long did it take to pick a pound?

RB: From day and night them people would pick. And I mean crabs would be up, they would go clean the crabs, then they would sit down and pick crabs. You got me? But if you got 30 or 40 or 50 employees at tables picking so you, you good to go.

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: You got some fast pickers and you got some slow pickers but he produced that crab meat out. You got what I'm saying? And was making plenty money. The man who made the MONEY was Mr. A. S. Varn.

DH: Umm hmm.

RB: You got me? The people that worked it wasn't so much a money but they figured it was a job.

DH: Ok.

RB: You got me? Because I used to hear my daddy talking to my momma all the time, "woman why you, you, you, you wanna go in that wet up factory" and whatever however but it's one thing about out here- is that when you become a family group, you ARE a family group.

DH: You mean out here in Montgomery?

RB: No, to Pin Point. And when you like doing what you doing with your family, you know, you enjoy it. You know like some people eh say I work, I work at a company if I don't work, if I don't like working I wouldn't be there. So they end up working, you got me? But when we got a little older and got more knowledge and understanding about that crab thing down there and to me it was very ugly because I saw my momma got up every morning to go down there and slave. Because then I had to be...I was the oldest girl and I had to be the one to take care of the family while she was out there and you know- working. And take care my brothers and all them- do my momma, on my momma. My grandmama now, she was cool. She had a daughter and that was our mother.

DH: Ok.

RB: You got me? So it was ok, she could get up and da da da da da. But my momma- I've seen her got up every morning and the truck came to pick her up to go. They had the truck to pick 'em up...

DH: What time was this?

RB: Ooo, what year?

DH: No, like in the morning was it like early, early in the morning?

RB: They go like 7, yeah 7 in the mornings.

DH: Hmm.

RB: The mornings. 'Cause they pick up so much. They picking up White Bluff, Sandfly and Pin Point.

DH: Oh! So Mr. Varn had a bus that he... Oh.

RB: Had a TRUCK that Mr. Sammy, Mr. Sammy Wiggins was go round picking them up. Pick up the pickers.

DH: Ok.

RB: It was like a company. It was like a company.

DH: Wow.

RB: And they would go down there and you know they would go down there and then they would pick the crabs and da da da da da. That's how we learned to do deviled crabs. You know and fried crabs. All kind of ways of what you could do with the crabs because you know you learned through them. And they you know, they were like natural born pickers. They were PICKERS.

DH: And so you said you picked a little, too?

RB: Yeah, I picked a little, up until I got ...my momma said "Oh God- you got to get away from here." I tried it. But I couldn't deal with it .

DH: Oh. How old were you when you...?

RB: I was like about what, 23, 24.

DH: And your momma said you had to get away from here why?

RB: Because she said that wasn't the type of job for me.

DH: Oh.

RB: You got me?

DH: Um hmm.

RB: It was like a younger crew came in. You know and it wasn't nothing like the older people. And you know, you know how our Black folks is... like we gossip and da da dada da or whatever whatever so that just, that wasn't my head.

DH: OK.

RB: You got me? That was so she said get on from there and not to come back down there no more. And I didn't come back down there.

DH: What'd you do?

RB: I went into the nursing field, worked to nursing homes and I worked to the University of Georgia and I just branched out and got a better field.

DH: Wow.

RB: Yep. You know, sometimes when you say you gotta branch out something out there better for you. And it was.

DH: Hmm.

RB: There is was. I went. I branched out. You got me? And a quite a few of us branched out, you know, didn't do it but they, they picked. My cousin next door she picked, she picked. And she could pick some crabs. And it's just you know, it was just, they gave them. But you know like I said the older and the smarter you get and the wiser you get and you understand life... you know that was a raw deal there. Because I feel that everybody got the over -- you built a big founder and boom here it is and these people gotten sick even through my mother and I can name several other mothers that when they got sick, if they daddy, my daddy didn't have a good job working for ILA my momma would have been in a work of trouble.

DH: So your daddy was a longshoreman?

RB: Yes, my daddy was a longshoreman. My family's longshoremen.

DH: Wow.

RB: My brothers and all is longshoremans.

DH: Now, what, how did they choose longshoreman, just ... is it coincidence or ...?

RB: No, my daddy was working for Smith and Kelly. It was a guy who does windows and all and they used to live over on Burnside [island] so he decided to give my daddy a job. Smith and Kelly was down part of the longshoreman. So that's how he got to become a longshoreman. My daddy was actually a builder, a constructor. He built, he built our home.

DH: Wow. THIS home?

RB: No, he built this house but I had it restored over. It's a lot changed but he founded this place.

DH: Wow. Ok, so you said your dad, your cousins. So your granddad, your granddad didn't encourage your dad to go into fishing or did he, did your granddad say the same thing to your dad?

RB: Daddy wasn't interested in that. They was too knowledge.

DH: Oh.

RB: See, you know you got way back. You got what I'm saying? You, you know...way back.

DH: That wasn't his head to do.

RB: That wasn't his head to do. He would go in the river, they would go in the river for fun and pleasure, you got me?

DH: Oh, ok.

RB: But my granddaddy Cyrus Sams, made his LIVING out of the river. You got me? By doing those crabs. You see, so I mean, this is, this is, I mean really, this is the HISTORY. Those people got up 5 o'clock or whatever that tide they would not go to bed until they watched that TV and find out what time the tide was and when they found out what the tide was they would go in that river and by the time that tide coming down they be done come back up over here. But they would have crabs. Oysters and whatever however. Yeah.

DH: Mm hmm. Oh wow. You know that's really interesting.

RB: Yeah, but the interest part about it and the sad part about it is that they were a living for them but it wasn't nothing was accumulate for them.

DH: Ok.

RB: Out of the whole situation.

DH: NO security just like you were saying with when you got sick, you were just sick.

RB: You were sick. It was no social security, no nothing. They was just paid under the table and boom bam boom.

DH: Wow.

RB: You got me? And then I mean when it came to our knowledge of knowing these things and we thought it was ridiculous. You know?

DH: Mm hmm.

RB: So that's why in the behalf it's... only thing that we could say Mr. Archie was a good man-far as giving them a living – and giving them a job. But back that time, our ances-they weren't like ILLITERATE, you got what I'm saying? But they... living there, you had to have transportation to move on.

DH: Ok.

RB: So they didn't have transportation you know, 'cause my uncle, Mingo Bonds, he had a truck that he would pick 'em up, take 'em to the grocery store downtown and... and...

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: So they could buy grocery and lah da da dis and that. But they it was like not too many people driving and moving on so I guess to them in they head they thought that was a good thing, for them. You know to ...

DH: Because they didn't, they could be independent, they could go to work and...

RB: They could get up and walk right on down there and go to work and didn't have to... you know...worry about shuttling anywhere. But to me, growing up, even all of that with what they produced for him, and gave HIM- that big founder down there- what have they benefitted out of it?

DH: Mmm.

RB: Now everybody wants to know the history, you got what I'm saying, but the history- these people done dead and gone, and this man still got a big foundation. That where everybody died and gone it wasn't nothing benefitting to them.

DH: MM hmm. Do you think the community, I mean I can hear how you feel about it...are there, is, are there members of the community that are upset about that? That they are celebrating that there are documentaries celebrating the crab factory, but nothing celebrating their family whose labor built the factory? I mean, are people upset or is it just...

RB: You know, some, some people are very much upset. It's a lot of us upset about it. But then some people feel that benefitting anything out of it...some people just like to be SEEN. And not realizing what...what's going on.

DH: Ohhhh. Real? Oh.

RB: You got what I'm saying? Some people set up a mountain and end up it explode. But the truth is the light. You know what I'm saying? And this, this is about the truth. You know? And I know it would move a mountain because this is the truth. Because there's is a whole lot of people that worked in that cold crab factory down there, legs amputated, I mean maybe diabetic and blah de blah de this and blah de blah de that but still yet if they didn't have anything to help them or could have get, you know, disability or da da da da they'd have been in bad shape.

DH: Mmm.

RB: But you done grewed a whole big business.

DH: On these, on these people.

RB: On these people, if you understand what I'm saying.

DH: I do, and no one...NO ONE has said this point of view. No one has said that. Uh huh.

RB: On these people... you got this whole big BIG blash and not nobody that died you could have contributed even two, three, four, or five hundred dollars to or anything a week to say here...

DH: For your funeral, for your health insurance, anything. Wow. I...

RB: Ok. Alright. Now see now that I done growed up and I'm not gonna bite the tongue.

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: Got me? Like I said, Mr. A. S. Varn was a cool man- we were cool but he still yet were looking out for him. You got me? He did little things but it ain't like- you see on tv now its 2011, the um..the boss....Meet the Boss? When you the boss, when he found out how hard a person done labored.

DH: He changed.

RB: He changed and he contribute. You got what I'm saying? He'll pick 3 or 4 of 'em out and make the family better da da da da da whatever however. You got me?

DH: Yeah, I've seen that TV show!

RB: So these are people done DIED!

DH: Mm hmm.

RB: You got what I'm saying? And still yet have not benefit anything out of the deal. Now here you everybody want the history!

DH: Mm hmm.

RB: You got me? And I went down to the crab factory not too long ago. I went down to Algie [A.S. Varn Jr] to buy some crabs. And I see "Well Algie, who done painted all the Black people on the wall here?"

DH: Ahhhh...

RB: You went down there? You saw that?

DH: You know what? I... I saw it but I...it didn't register. Yeah.

RB: So see I...I'm I'm very, I'm very observant. I observe. I observe things.

DH: I didn't paid attention to that Miss Sula!

RB: Yes. I did. I DID.

DH: Ahhh.

RB: And I asked him I said, "Well Algie, how come you got all the Black people painted outside of the crab factory?" I said, "What purpose does this make?" He couldn't even explain it himself.

DH: Hmmm.

RB: You got me? So I guess he had the SCAD students and stuff to come down and ask some questions about the crab factory so... you going on blib blib what they say behind the iron curtain. If it wasn't for Obama bringing out what he bring ...came to become our president a whole lotta stuff he is bringing out. You got me? And I use to hear my grandmamma and all of them say ohhh behind the iron curtain.

DH: Hmm.

RB: If the iron curtain...whatever it 'xposed it would be something. You see what I'm saying? So like, you know. Everybody they have to pay their indebtors and pay their part in life. You know, and God shows some of it. You got what I'm saying but then yet still, look what you 'cumulate.

DH: Mm hmm. Cause they... I mean... that...

RB: I mean 'cause for Pin Point to be a Black neighborhood, you've got property, you've got land, you've got just as much as what the Black people had in there and it was a Black community so how did YOU get there?

DH: You talking about the Varns?

RB: Yes.

DH: Or you talking about all the other ones too?

RB: Uh yes. I'm talking about A. S. Varn.

DH: Ok. How did THEY get there?

RB: How HE get there? You got me?

DH: Yeah.

RB: Yeah, uh, as MY history, as MY history and I cannot reveal or say what I know that I'm talking about because I don't know what I'm talking about because I don't even know myself how he got there but verbally out the mouth of people listening said it was something about a lawnmower. This guy had owed somebody for a lawnmower or something and which the guy was supposed to be our cousin. They said, and he sold the property or or didn't couldn't pay the bill or something and that's how he got that spot, you got me? So I, you know I don't know.

DH: Um hmm.

RB: You know because I'm just listening at people talking

DH: At what they say.

RB: And just like tell the other ones in Pin Point -- I born 1946. You know and um, I born before you. SO how do you know so much?

DH: [Laughing]

RB: If you got what I'm saying?

DH: I hear what you're saying. [laughing]

RB: How do YOU know so much and nobody else know? You got me? Because this was back time with these old people!

DH: This before them.

RB: Yes! It was before them so you undoubtedly had to hear somebody talking because you really don't know.

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: You know what if you understand what I'm saying -- you really don't know.

DH: I hear you. I understand.

RB: So but I could talking about coming to the age when I know and some of my grandmamma and them when it was dirt road in Pin Point and when we made our own baseball. We used to have to make our baseball out of socks and dirt. Like I told my granddaughter she they say yes they got dolls where they now ya'll pay all this much money and they talk pee eat and all this stuff...

DH: [breaking up with laughter]

RB: We used to pull up the grass out the ground, shake the the grass off the hair... and learn how to plait it. That' show we learned how to plait hair -- with grass we pulled up ut of the ground...And used to plait. Wash it and everything.

DH: Wow.

RB: Got what I'm saying?

DH: I hear you.

RB: And we used to take like the the the big old leaves out like those big old things out that grow in the thing we used to cut em up and talk about we doing collard greens and making our little, you know, and its, see now it's the different now. I asked my granddaughter the other day do ya'll play jacks stone? She said grandmother what is jacks stone? I said oh my God! The girl don't know how to play jacks stone. So see one day she came in -- she in Atlanta -- we got

my nieces and all we got them in the middle of the kitchen floor. I bought – I went and FOUND the jacks stone. They big jacks stone now but I want the little ones ...

DH: You want the little metal ones! I member them.

RB: So I go across from Medical Arts to get it from that little ummm...

DH: That little Macks 5 and 10?

RB: YES! Girl, them things didn't even knewed how to play jacks stone!

DH: mmm..

RB: You got what I'm saying? As of today! So see how mind twists? And see how mind goes?

DH: This is a new generation.

RB: This is a new generation. But it's weird, you know? And it's nothing that...all I could say is two people that I know – Mr. Isaac Anderson he used to build the boats his daddy started, Charles Anderson, he used to build, they used to build they boats and go into that river.

DH: Wow.

RB: And that's I...my recollection of that of knowing that part. And my momma and them slaved in that crab factory. So I'm bout angry with the crab factory.

DH: I hear it and it sounds like you're, you're justified. I would imagine...

[Break in audio]

DH: Who should we be talking to to hear the true story about crabs and fishing and Black folk in Pin Point, and Montgomery and Sandfly?

RB: We didn't have too many fisherman's down here. The only somebody were fishermen growed down here were White folks. They had the big prom/prawn boats- and got they pron boats and stuff.

DH: Now when did they come? I haven't heard anything about the White fishermen. When did they come into Pin Point, Sandfly?

RB: They ain't never came into Pin Point and Sandfly. They was...

DH: Oh they been up to Lazaretto Creek and up on Tybee.

RB: Yes, they were high up above, you got what I'm saying? But we talking -- if you talking

history we talking about way back.

DH: Mmm hmmm.

RB: You, know when these old people used to build boats and go in there and bring those crabs in to Mr. A. S. Varn.

DH: Now who were the boat builders? You told me about Mr. Bonds, you told me about your grandfather, Sirius Sams...

RB: No, my gran...CYRUS. C-Y-R-U-S.

DH: C-Y-R-U-S. CYRUS.

RB: Cyrus Bonds. Cyrus SAMS.

DH: Cyrus Sams.

RB: Mmm hmm.

DH: Who else were some boat builders?

RB: Mr. Anderson...

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: Oh God...who else lived back there um... Isaac Anderson. All them build boats. All of em.

DH: And these are wood boats?

RB: Yeah. They built they own boats!

DH: Wow.

RB: They built them. Actually built they boat in they backyards.

DH: Wow.

RB: And I tell you, the boats now ain't like the boats that they had. The boats that they had were like a ferry boat... with the little tin top, the top you know? And it was like ... it wasn't shaped like the boat that they building you know the boat?

DH: It was kinda squared off or...

RB: Yeah, like a, like a box.

DH: Ok.

RB: And is was what they, back that time, as me, eh...I born '46.

DH: Uh huh.

RB: And coming back to time to see my granddaddy them this the type of boat they had to go in the river. And then years years years and its gotten a little better. You got me? But they built their boats.

DH: Wow I just, I think that's incredible.

RB: And Mr. Isaac Anderson, he knew how to build boats.

DH: Does anybody have pictures of these people or pictures of these boats?

RB: No, no. Because you never thought today that it would be...

DH: A big deal?

RB: Mmm hmm. A big deal.

DH: [laughing]

RB: You got what I'm saying? You never thought today.

DH: Yeah, it was just work I guess. Everyday life I guess.

RB: Yeah. But then you know, you're digging into history. And you know we all was blindfolded and and and didn't appreciate in the end how our parents died from the crab factory with the colds and stuff in they bones, you know?

DH: Mmm hmmm.

RB: You know what I'm saying? And it's just that you know, they did this, you know? And to me, if you could've had SCAD come down there and put a whole picture on the wall, you could have had some very much interest in the creative stuff these people done.

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: They did the boats, should've been pictures. They picked crabs for the crab factory, should've been pictures. You got what I'm saying?

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: There should've been pictures of... with what that labor was being about. You got me? So,

see now it's everybody searching and seeking. You got me because it's it's it's it's it's really it's really no one that could say way back that time, you know, that it was being... it was too many crabmens because it wasn't at because it wasn't that many crabmens.

DH: Oh! Ok.

RB: And it was from Pin Point. You see what I'm saying? The crabmen came from Pin Point. There, over here, this side it's a historical... these were rich people.

DH: Hmm.

RB: You got me? You got plantations around here. So it was not too many, just the opposite way, like my grandfather. He's from off of um, Skidaway Island.

DH: Ok.

RB: He's a Bonds.

DH: Ok.

RB: And my granddaddy was a yardman. See? It was a opposite direction. And he'd take the river. But my momma daddy, he was a fisherman.

DH: Uh huh.

RB: See what I'm saying? So see it was ... you know people all went all different types of ways and were doing different types of things.

DH: I see. Now have you told me about your momma's daddy?

RB: My momma, my momma daddy is Cyrus Sams.

DH: Ok, got it got it.

RB: My DADDY daddy is Solomon Bonds.

DH: Solomon Bonds, Got it got it. So you have ...

RB: Now he was the one that work on the plantation down here.

DH: Now what plantation is down there?

RB: It's the um, you go straight on down and it's a... it's the end. Can't go no farther.

DH: Ok. And you said that was the Turner's?

RB: I don't know, I done forget if it ...if they the Turners or whoever they ... whatever they last name... But you'll see the big old sign when you get done there, when you turn. Cause this had been a long long time. You know my granddaddy done died...

DH: Ok. Yes, ma'am.

RB: It was like, whatever, however...but then anyway. I didn't today, instead of uh, keeping up with the history of reading and whatever- you need to know how to read – all that's come in to play, a big part. You never know that your family today would have been on the market.

DH: Mm hmm.

RB: If you understand what I'm saying? That you have to...you know?

DH: Uh huh.

RB: SO at that time ... like ya'll computerizing everything now and da da da da da da. You would've been dictating all of this stuff.

DH: Yeah, we would have been writin'...yeah!

RB: You got me? And you would have been PREPARED. For this here... you know of your family and coming up as your family history.

DH: Yes.

RB: So now that that's a change that's why they got these computer and my insurance man told me say "Rebecca," for my house insurance he said, "Make sure you pick pictures and you take da da da da all of this and da da da da this. You got me? So back that time when we had that knowledge to know today that they would... was gonna be ...

DH: Important?

RB: You know, important. I would've did all this.

DH: Well you remember a WHOLE lot.

RB: You got me but you know I don't wanna like...make it like I'm angry about anything it's just I'm not angry, it's just that I just hope no more makes mistakes like that.

DH: Oh, ok.

RB: You got what I'm saying? And and you know, because you never know what's value.

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: You got what I'm saying? And this is the whole part of the situation that- you know- my momma then enjoyed what they did. My grandmother enjoyed what she did because I'm quite sure they wouldn't have did what they did. I know my grandfather enjoyed what he did. You got me? But as when they got older and we had to take care of them, that was a different story.

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: And find out what they ailment is. You know we young, we don't know we got cold in the bones, arthritis and all this kind of stuff until you get older and understand this kind of stuff. You got me? So then when it came to that point, to me, when we had a big thing at the community center this was my speech. You know what I'm saying? That they SLAVED, they were like slavers and in the end, there were no benefits.

DH: Mmm. Did you take care of your mother? And you mentioned...

RB: We had to. Yes!

DH: I mean since you had the nurse's training...

RB: Yeah! Mmm hmup I gave up my life for my mother.

DH: Hmm.

RB: I was staying in Pin Point. We had a big thing about that so I came back here with my momma and took of my momma and we built a ramp. We did everything and gave her a beautiful life.

DH: Mmm. That's wonderful.

RB: Before she leave here. You know what I'm saying? It was like sad situation because we talked about it. If my daddy didn't have the type of job that HE had, she'd have been in a world of trouble.

DH: Mmm hmm.

RB: You got me? I mean well we probably would have gotten help for her. We were gonna do everything we could do for my mother but in saying that were her life- she worked to the crab factory until the end. There were no more crab factory.

DH: When did the crab factory close?

RB: Now you asking uh

DH: [laughing]

RB: I could find out! I could find out.

DH: Ok.

RB: I DEFINITELY can find out. I definitely will find out.

DH: Well you'll hear definitely you'll hear from me again. We're gonna send you a copy. We're gonna write down ...take this and listen to it. We're gonna write down everything said and we're gonna mail it to you so you can read it and you can make that it's saying exactly what you wanna say.

RB: Okay. I can get all that for you. Will definitely to been on the right manner. I WILL do that because I will ask when that crab factory was closed.

DH: Well I appreciate that.

RB: But like I said, I wasn't even interested in the crab factory cause I was like angry.

DH: Mmm Hmm.

RB: Because of those people have slaved there and they anything in the end.

DH: Do you have children, Miss Sula?

RB: Yeah. I have four boys. DH: What do they do?

RB: One is a lawncare, he does lawncare business. I got one he's in... I got another one um um Hank, he's a tree cutter. Jerry, he's just a problem child like everybody else have in their family.

DH: [laughing] But ain't none of them fishing, ain't none of them crabbing.

RB: That's not not even they style! You know what I'm saying? Them children said not me!

DH: [laughing]

RB: C'mon Imma let ya'll see grandmamma and granddaddy. I got some pictures.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Michelle Duncan 4/18/2022

Review by Molly Graham 4/25/2022