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Interview with Bonnie G. (Cole) Willis (FA 17)

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Interviewer's tape no.: 83.1.1-83.1.2 WKU FL, FL & OHA Accession no.:

Interviewer: J. Sharli Powell Address: 137 Aspen, Hereford Texas 79045

Interviewee: Bonnie G. Willis Address: Richardsville, KY

Place of interview: livingroom, Willis home Date: 22 September 1983

Other people present:

Equipment used: Panasonic Cassette Recorder, model RX 1810

Reel-to-reel tape: Brand: Size reel: Tape Mil: Speed:

Cassette: Brand: Memorex C-30/C-60/C-90/C-120 (circle size)

Amount of tape used: (Side 1) (Side 2):
 two tapes; 83.1.1.1 filled, 83.1.2 has 20 minutes on side A.

Brief description of interview context and tape contents:
 Mrs. Willis discusses her life and quilting as a part of that life. Topics discussed include biographical information, learning to make quilts from her mother and at quilting bees, the materials used in quilts and the processes involved in making three kinds of quilts: string quilts, quilts pieced by pattern, and appliqued quilts. She also discusses tobacco farming.

83.1.1

SP: Okay, good morning again. This is September 22, 1983. I am out in Richardsville, Kentucky in the home of Mrs. Bonnie Willis. We're going to be talking today about her background and about the quilts she makes. Mrs. Willis, I've told you about putting this in the archives at Western Kentucky University. Is that okay with you?

BW: Fine.

SP: Okay, Mrs. willis, I'm going to ask you some real easy questions to start out. I would like to know the proper spelling of your name so that I can be sure I have it in my records right.

BW: B-O-N-N-I-E G. Willis, W-I-L-L-I-S.

SP: And what was your maiden name?

BW: Cole.

SP: Cold?

BW: C-O-L-E.

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FA
 17

SP: Do you mind telling me when you were born?

BW: (laughing) April 29, 1914.

SP: Okay, and where was that?

BW: In Warren County.

SP: Was that in this area, or was

BW: No, it was across the river from here, now.

SP: What was the name of that called there?

BW: Well, it was Guy, Kentucky.

SP: And what is it called now?

BW: Well, there was a post office there at that time, Guy, Kentucky. And I went to school at Roland Springs. The just still call it Guy.

SP: Okay, so when did you move over here?

BW: Well I couldn't tell you exactly. It was before we married and we were married in 1939.

SP: Where did your husband grow up?

BW: Here, in Riverside.

SP: So you finished school over there in Roland Springs?

BW: Richardsville.

SP: Oh, you finished over here. How old were you when you got married?

BW: 24.

SP: Okay. Have you ever worked outside the home?

BW: No.

SP: What's been your family occupation?

BW: Farming.

SP: Okay. Do you have any children?

BW: One.

SP: How old is your child?

BW: 42, I guess. No, he was born in '42.

SP: Okay, so he must be a son. And grandchildren.

BW: Five.

SP: Five grandchildren. Okay, and how old are they?

BW: Well, two of them are sixteen, almost sixteen. Two are, one of them just turned twenty, and the other one is eighteen. Now these are two families, understand. And we have one four.

SP: Are these boys, girls?

BW: Two, three boys, and two girls.

SP: Okay, and your parents, what were your parents occupations?

BW: Farming.

SP: Where did they come from?

BW: They were, oh, originally, I think my daddy's people came from Virginia. I believe, I don't know for sure, now.

SP: What about your mother's side?

BW: They were born in Warren County.

SP: Did your mother make quilts?

BW: She sure did. She had to.

SP: She had to?

BW: Well, what I mean, it was just economical. We had to do things like that. You know you just needed to do things like that.

SP: So, did she make, what kind of quilts did she make?

BW: Well, actually then there were just mostly string quilts. 'Cause we had to use what she had, you know.

SP: So, what were these made out of?

BW: Oh, just patterns of, pieces of material from things that she'd sewed for us.

SP: Okay, so like your clothes. Did you, so you watched her do this when you were growing up?

BW: Yes.

SP: Did you ever help her do that?

BW: Oh, yes.

SP: About how old were you when you started helping her do this?

BW: Well, I was thirteen when I made my first quilt.

SP: But had you helped her on quilts before that?

BW: Oh, yes. My mother would sit down and of course we liked to sit down with a needle and sew with her.

SP: Were your grandparents living when you were growing up?

BW: My grandfather was. My grandmother died when, in my early childhood days.

SP: Was this on your, uh

BW: Daddys side.

SP: Daddy's side. So he lived right around here then.

BW: Yes.

SP: What was his occupation?

BW: Farming.

SP: Did your grandmother, I know she wasn't living when you were a child, but did she make quilts?

BW: Well, I don't know about that, but I would almost say she did because back then people had to do that, you know, in order to have cover for winter.

SP: Okay. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

BW: Two brothers and two sisters.

SP: Were they older, younger?

BW: I was the third.

SP: Right in the middle. Did any of them make quilts?

BW: All of them did.

SP: Your brothers and your sisters?

BW: No. Just my sisters, of course.

SP: Okay. Were they younger or older?

BW: There's a brother and sister older and one younger.

SP: Boy you're split up! Did you ever help a younger sister with quilting?

BW: Well, we'd piece quilts together, you know a lot of the time. The younger sister didn't take a part in quilts like I did, though. So we have though, she does now.

SP: And your other sister?

BW: Yes, she pieced quilts, too. She'd dead now.

SP: What about other relatives, any of them quiltmakers?

BW: Oh, yes.

SP: All of them, or

BW: Well, I'd say most of them.

SP: Are there any in particular that stand out in your mind as being quiltmakers?

BW: Well, I just can't think of anybody special. Back then, we just, we quilted. We'd go from one house to the other and quilt. My mother and them, now were were just children, young folks, I mean. Now we would go with the older folks to the quiltings. We'd maybe meet at one house one day and the next day we'd go to our house. And we just quilted in the neighborhood.

SP: So these were just your neighbors, not necessarily family members.

BW: That's right.

SP: About how often did you do this?

BW: Back then, almost once a week.

SP: Oh, really?

BW: Now, what I mean by that, we'd go to, maybe go to our house one

one day, then we'd go to somebody else's house maybe the next week.

SP: So, can you sort of tell me what one of those days was like if you went to somebody's house?

BW: Oh, we just had a lot of fun. You see, most of them were older than we were. There was three or four of us younger people that went too. And it was real fun because we uh, we had our dinner and well, the one that had the quilt in made dinner for everybody. Course, we all tried to quilt the best that we could and especially us young folks tried to do as good as the older folks' quilting.

SP: And that's how I got started quilting.

SP: About how old were you when

BW: Well, this was after I got older alright. This was on up when I was seventeen. Sixteen, seventeen, something like that.

SP: Did you ever go to quilting bees before that just as a child and not participate in the quilting?

SP: Oh yes, yes. See then, back when my mother was quilting she had frames that hung from the top of the house, you see, and the whole quilt would be out. See, you could quilt all around these quilts. And many, there just could be several people quilting at the same time.

SP: About how many people would you have quilting?

BW: Say eight, maybe anyway. Most of the time be that many.

SP: And what did the children that weren't taking part in the quilting do while the mothers were quilting?

BW: Play, just played.

SP: Played, and you didn't get into anything you weren't supposed to or anything?

BW: (laughing) I suppose so, most of them do.

SP: What do people talk about when they're quilting? What kind of subjects come up?

BW: Well, I don't know that I can remember what subjects. Everybody always talked about their neighbor. What I mean if they had sickness or things like that. They were concerned about each other. Everybody, we grew up in a neighborhood that was concerned about each other. And, you know, there was sickness in the neighborhood, that was the conversation. Just things like that.

SP: Where'd you get the patterns for your quilts?

BW: As I say, most of them weren't just patterns. A lot of the time we would just cut a pattern about six inches square out of a paper and you'd just start your strip on a piece of paper and you'd fill out that paper. And then you'd cut around the pattern of your paper and sew that together. Then after you'd sewed it together, you got to pull off all that paper, you see, and throw it away. We didn't have a lot of patterns then, now these patterns have come up a lot of them since then. A lot of them were pieced in little blocks just say, maybe it's two or three inches, something like that.

SP: On the paper?

BW: No, not, it wouldn't be on the paper.

SP: Oh, okay, let's go back a bit to making those on the paper. So you sewed directly to the paper instead of sewing one piece of cloth to another?

BW: You'd just put your material down here like this on this piece of paper, maybe put across in the middle here. Then you'd sew this one and turn it back over this corner. And the same way on this side. Then you'd cut out to fit your paper. Press them, then cut them out to fit your paper. And that would just be what we called a string quilt.

SP: Okay, then maybe I'll get you at some point to show me how to do that so that I can take pictures. Because I think that that's going to be a hard one for us to get on tape of how we're going to explain how to do that. But I really want you to tell me, because I don't think people do that very much anymore.

BW: Well, I don't think they do either. Course now, as I say, they have a lot of patterns and everybody shares their patterns. If we get a pattern for a new quilt, each, anybody's that's interested in it, we share this pattern.

SP: Did you ever get any magazines back then that had patterns in them?

BW: Well, I guess we did, but as I say, we had to use what we had. We didn't buy materials for a quilt then, you see. I mean this is back in my early days.

SP: Yeah, I was just wondering. I know there were some floating around and I wondered how many people really used them.

BW: Yeah, well, of course, I'm sure we had patterns, all right. Now the first one that I pieced was on this paper. And now we set it together with a little pink print or a percale or something like that. And you can do that with those pieced on the paper like that.

SP: What did you use for the backing to the quilts?

BW: (laughs) A lot of times we used sugar sacks and feedsacks and things like that. Back then, I'm talking about back in our earlier days, now, when my mother quilted.

SP: Yeah, what, when you got those sugar sacks and feed bags, were they just plain domestic or were they

BW: Sometimes they'd have writing on them and we'd have to soak them in water and you know, maybe Clorox and, well, it'd take a long time getting all this print out of them. Sometimes they'd be mostly plain. We bought sugar in 100 lb. sacks back then.

SP: About how big is a 100 lb. bag? How much fabric do you get out of it?

BW: Well, it'd be about a yard square, maybe a little bit over.

SP: So, for the back of the quilt, you'd have to use several.

BW: Uh, mostly, I believe we used four, maybe five. You'd have to put a half on each end to make it.

SP: What did you put inside?

BW: Cotton.

SP: Bought batting or

BW: A batting, yes, but it wasn't polyester like we have now. I'm still talking about back then.

SP: Right. I'm still

BW: Well, and a lot of times it would have little fleeces in this cotton. It wasn't white cotton like it is now. Anyway, it'd maybe make it hard to quilt through sometimes when you'd use that.

SP: What are you calling a fleece?

BW: Well, I'd say maybe just the little pieces of the cotton, you know, where they've made the cotton, real cotton, you know what I'm talking about?

SP: So were they hard?

BW: Yeah, hard.

SP: Matted? And so this was the kind of cotton that you went out
and bought?

BW: Yeah. Now my mother has made cotton. You know, carded it or what-
ever you call it.

SP: Do you know how she did that?

BW: Yes, I know how, but I couldn't do it.

SP: Can you tell me approximately how she did that?

BW: She would just do it in little pieces of course, which would have
to be patched up in the quilt.

SP: Like about a foot square or something?

BW: Yeah, I'd say, or some of them would be bigger. It would be
like the cards you have. I don't remember what size they were.

SP: So they're like, the cards, what you're calling the cards are
the things with the little needles?

BW: That's right.

SP: Did she go out and buy those cards or were they something that
she could make?

BW: No, they had to, I'm sure they were bought, but they were bought
back before I can remember. They were there at home. And she
didn't do this all the time because she could buy the cotton.
It would be a big roll of cotton, you know, but it would still
have these little pieces in it sometimes. It was hard to quilt.
And it wasn't white, I mean it was a, well, it just wasn't
white.

SP: Like the unbleached domestic color or something like that?

BW: Yes, that's what I'm talking about.

SP: So now you said you use something else.

BW: We use polyester now.

SP: Why did people switch to that?

BW: Well, it's easier to quilt and then, now people make more fancy quilts and it's a cotton that will kind of puff up when you quilt with it, makes your quilt kind of puff up. And now you kind of like for them to do that. Then they were just made for warmth.

SP: When do you think people started making quilts less for warmth than for show or fancier or whatever?

BW: Well, I guess, really I don't know. Before I married, now people had begun to make patterns because we began to share our patterns then. And I made this little square quilt up there, the stamp quilt, before I married. But now I made those from, people would bring me in [their scraps] after they had cut their patterns out of it, you know, and there'd just be little tiny pieces they'd bring for that.

SP: Do you have any reasons why people switched to making fancier quilts?

BW: Well, I think they made them as I say, they made them then for warmth and something they had to have. As a necessity. Now they make them for show maybe more. And you know, just, really I don't know, just for show mostly, I guess you'd say. And a lot of people sell quilts.

SP: Do you sell your quilts?

BW: Yes.

SP: Do you make them specifically to sell?

BW: No.

SP: How come you make them then?

BW: (laughing) Well, I just love to. That's my hobby. That's just my hobby and it has been ever since I was a child.

SP: About how many quilts do you make in a year?

BW: Well, my trouble is that I start too many. (laughs) Don't finish them up. I'd say, well, since Christmas I've made two quilts. I've got one of them set together and I haven't set the other together. But I quilted three this winter that I had already pieced, you see.

SP: Okay, you were telling me before I turned this on that you just tied up some quilts you made out of a different fabric.

BW: Well, I had made, a lady gave me a great big sack of double knit material. So I just sat down and made me twelve little throw quilts. The children like to have them for watching television, you know, or throwing across the couch. So I have made twelve tops. So this week I have tacked four of those tops. And they're made out of this polyester. Just scraps of that, too.

SP: I'm curious about how you're telling me about making quilts and that you really seemed to separate the two. You know, you told me about your fancy quilts but you never told me about these.

BW: Well, they were mostly now, they were mostly just like mama used to make, only string quilts, you know.

SP: And those are more?

BW: Well, they're just older quilts. And all of our old quilts. Now we'll buy material a lot of the time to make, say, our patterns that we want. I have a Heritage quilt that we, in Homemakers we had a pattern for a Heritage quilt. I'll show it to you after awhile. It has, well, it just has a lot of the old patterns in it.

SP: Can you tell me a little bit about what Homemakers is?

BW: Well, it's just a place where we study. We've had a lot of art in Homemakers. And quilting, we have lots of lessons on quilting.

SP: Is this a club?

BW: A club, yes.

SP: Is it a local club?

BW: Yes.

SP: About how many people are involved in it?

BW: Well, I'd say about twenty members belong to the Richardsville club. Course there's clubs all over Warren County. Different clubs.

SP: Do, you said you had quilting lessons, who teaches those lessons?

BW: We get them over at the extension office and then we bring them back to the club. We have to go to the extension office and get the lessons. And then, say two will have to give the lesson then down here to the rest.

SP: Is this a written thing?

BW: Part of it will be on paper, but we have to tell what she tells us, you know.

SP: Oh, I see. So a couple of you will go and she will explain everything to you and then you come back and tell the others?

BW: That's right. And demonstrate.

SP: That's interesting. What kinds of things do you learn through that?

BW: Well, we've learned quite a bit through Homemakers, now. Of course, we did decopaging and, well I can't, Needlepoint. And we've had lots of lessons on different things. It's not all quilting, understand. Quilting's just a lesson, maybe one lesson out of a year or something like that.

SP: Oh, I see. Okay, do you want to start telling me how to make a quilt?

BW: Well, if I was going to start, I would start out with a pattern, a needle, thread, scissors, and the material.

SP: Okay, if we start out then, if you can tell me what kinds of each of those things you would use. What kind of scissors would you have?

BW: Well, you want good sharp scissors. And your pattern. To make a pattern where it will hold on your material, if you will put sandpaper on the back of your, on one side of your pattern. When you put the sandpaper down on your material, it won't slip when you want to cut out your pattern. Then you cut so many blocks. You have to know whether you're going to set this quilt together with something, one way or the other. Say if you were piecing it in blocks, whether you're going to block it together with a solid block of material, or if you're going to

strip it together say, with a two inch strip around this block. You'd have to know which you were going to do. And then you'd piece so many blocks, ever how many that it takes to fit your bed, and then you strip it together, block it together, or sew these pieces together, either way you want to do it.

SP: If I just picked a pattern, how would I know how many pieces I would need to make?

BW: A lot of the patterns have, if you buy a pattern, a lot of them tell you exactly how many pieces to cut of each kind of material. Say, if you had three colors to cut.

SP: What if I didn't buy a pattern, what if somebody just gave me, you know, [and said,] "These are the pieces, put it together." How would you go about figuring that out?

BW: When you had pieced maybe two blocks, you could just lay them on your bed and go up through there to see. Lay both of them down and then just turn the other one over. And go on up your bed to see how large you have to have for your bed.

SP: Go ahead and tell me more.

BW: Well then, I guess the next thing after you get it set together, the you're going to have to have your cotton and your lining. Now we used to buy lining, but lining is hard to get now. And real expensive. And you can buy a sheet, a percale sheet. Now, some sheets are too thick to quilt through, because you've got to pull your needle, the knot of your thread through between your cotton, your quilt, you see. You don't want to leave your knots on the bottom. And sometimes we just buy sheets now. And the way I do, I lay my, an old sheet on the floor and I

I lay my lining down on this sheet. Then I spread my cotton out on this lining. Then I put my quilt top on top of that. And I pin this in my frame then on each side.

SP: So you're laying it down here in the living room floor.

BW: That's right. And pin it in both frames. Now, my frames have a piece of material that I can pin this to, this quilt in there to, it's tacked onto my frames. Which makes it easy. Now back in the days when we first started, they'd tack the quilts in the frame. But I sewed me a piece on this frame and then I can just pin my quilt on it. Then you roll up one side of it. And then you start quilting from the other side and you roll that side under to keep the top and the bottom stretched good, you see. One turns up and the other, under. Where you quilt you've got to turn it under, you see.

SP: Okay, so the back part will be turned up and the front under. And how do those stay tight?

BW: Well, my frames have just a little turn thing and when you pull them over you lock it in that little round block there. And you can pull it up, just real tight. And then on the ends you'll put a piece of material to hold it tight around your other frames and that holds it up real straight.

SP: Who made your frame?

BW: We did.

SP: You and ?

BW: Just here at home.

SP: Just here at home, so you, maybe you and your husband?

BW: Yes.

SP: It's interesting. I see so many kinds of frames and they're all a little bit different. they're almost as interesting as looking at the quilts. (laughing) So, what kinds of things are you looking for? You told me that the backing, some sheets are too thick. If I were to go out to a store today to look for a sheet to put on the backing, what sheet should I get?

BW: A percale.

[end of side A]

- BW: Use the end of their thimbles to push the needle through. Now I don't. I just push with the side. Push my needle through with the side. And to make my stitches.
- SP: Do you like a thimble that fits you pretty snugly?
- BW: Yes. And I like the old thimbles. I don't like these plastic thimbles like we get now.
- SP: The old metal thimbles?
- BW: Uh hm. They have deeper holes for your needle. These you buy now don't have these holes like that, like our old thimbles did.
- SP: So you can really hook
- BW: Hook your needle in better. Hold your needle better.
- SP: (laughing) Maybe that's my problem with using a thimble! What about on the underside of the quilt, when your doing the quilting and it comes through on the bottom side, do you use your other hand?
- BW: You just have your other finger. You can tell when it touches your other finger, it's ready to come back up through.
- SP: Ever stick yourself?
- BW: Sometimes. (laughs)
- SP: You can see I'm a novice quilter! What kinds of materials do you use for the top now? You said you bought a lot of your stuff now.
- BW: Well, you can't hardly find just cotton now. Now that's what we used to use. Just plain cotton material, percales and things like that. But you can't hardly find the cotton material now. Most of it has a little polyester in it, but it's not bad. You buy mostly solid material, maybe to set one together with.

You don't, really, I don't buy a lot of the other way unless I'm going to make just a quilt maybe out of two or three colors or something like that.

SP: Have you saved up scraps now for years so that you have them all?

BW: Yes, and people know that I quilt and neighbors have brought me in sacks of material that they would have. A lot of people don't quilt now.

SP: So, everybody thinks of you and sort of

BW: Yes, they've really been good.

SP: Isn't that nice of them? And the batting, is there a particular brand of batting that you tend to stick with? I know there's several different kinds.

BW: Well, yes, there's really two kinds of this polyester. Now, I like the fluffy kind. Now they do have a kind now which is on the market. You can't hardly find the fluffy kind now. But it's more in a blanket like and it doesn't puff up as good when it's quilted.

SP: Can you tell me how to make appliqued quilts?

BW: Yes, I do that a lot now. I've made several appliqued quilts. You put your material, cut your blocks first to the size that you want it. And then cut your pattern. Now I usually take my pencil and real lightly go around where I want my pattern to go. I have my pattern all ready on this ? Then I lay my material on there and then, we used to do this on our hands, put it all together. But since later I learned to do it on the machine so I do most of mine by the machine. But if you were doing it by hand, you've got to turn it down,

this piece you're appliqueing on. But I go to the machine, mostly for a faster way of doing it. And just do the round with the machine, with this little stitch, little tiny stitch, you know.

SP: Is it, what kind of stitch is that?

BW: I forgot.

SP: Is it a zig zag stitch?

BW: Yeah, zig zag stitch. But you do it real close around the edge of it.

SP: That's almost like a satin stitch?

BW: That's right.

SP: What kind of stitch did you use when you hand did it?

BW: Just whipped. Just real closely around the edges of it.

SP: So did that show?

BW: Not as much as the machine did.

SP: So you said that you didn't have to turn it under. So you just stitch right around the very edge of it?

BW: That's right. And do it close enough that the edge doesn't show. But now if you're whipping it down, now you've almost got to turn it down, because you can't. But now they have, we have, back earlier we didn't think anything, but we didn't have any machines to do this, and we used an embroidery stitch. Can't think of what that stitch was. But anyway you do it real close together with embroidery thread.

SP: Did you use a matching color of thread?

BW: Sometimes we'd use black, and do altogether black, and sometimes we'd use the color that we'd want. Like the material.

SP: Did you use a fancy stitch for doing that?

BW: No, it was always the same kind of stitch.

SP: Did you ever make crazy quilts?

BW: Well, that's what we'd call those that we'd make on these blocks. They'd just be crazy quilts. That's what we called them. Now, I don't know, there may be a crazy quilt pattern now, I don't know. But when you made these just on the pieces like that, that's what we called crazy quilts.

SP: So this is the string quilts you called crazy quilts?

BW: Uh hm.

SP: So, just out of curiosity, what's your favorite kind of quilt?

BW: Well, I've made nine Ohio Rose patterns. Because, well, I have sold several of those. That's the reason of it.

SP: So a lot of people think that's

BW: Well, it was just a new pattern then and I sold several of them. But I don't have any, just a pattern that I love any better than I do another. I like to try new patterns.

SP: You said the Ohio Rose pattern was a new pattern. Back when?

BW: Back when I first started making those. The Ohio Rose is what I'm talking about now. Now when I made those, and I have made nine of those, but I've sold most of them now.

SP: When was that that you started making them?

BW: Well, I'll say within the last ten years.

SP: What's your current favorite pattern? You said you like to try new things. What are you working on now?

BW: Well, I'm making the Grandmother's Basket right now. And it's made like you're making a Flower Garden, only it has a different pattern in it.

SP: Okay, so that one's pieced.

BW: That's pieced. You have to do all that on your hands. Now some of these others, you see, you could sit down to the machine and quilt, and piece, I mean.

X SP: About how long does it take you to piece a Flower Basket?

BW: I started at Christmas.

SP: And you've been working on it, now, about

BW: Well, it's already finished and it's been finished a month or more. And I had some pieces left from that, from that one, and I've made a Pickle Dish and I only like one block having it finished up. But I haven't got it set together. But it was made from a pattern from my Basket.

SP: So, you take those patterns from a lot of these quilts, you take the same pattern and you adapt them for another quilt.

BW: Yes.

SP: And you keep going on like that. So, when you, I'm going to back up a little bit to when you start cutting out your patterns. When you do that, do you cut out your patterns with a specific quilt in mind?

BW: Yes, yes.

SP: If you were sitting down to do that, do you cut out patterns for the whole quilt at one time?

BW: Yes, and most of the time I cut, it I know what I'm doing, what I'm fixing to make. I usually cut out enough pieces to make this quilt before I start piecing them. And then I can dip down in my box sitting here and I can pick them up when I set down to rest anytime.

SP: Do you ever start making blocks or something for something that you don't know what it's going to be when you finish it?

(laughter) You know what I'm talking about?

BW: I know what you mean. But I don't. I think most of the time I've kind of known what I was going to try to make out of it anyway. (still laughing)

SP: What about quilting? Where do you get your patterns for doing the actual quilting?

BW: Sometimes it's on the pattern, or on the paper that comes around the batting. Sometimes there are. But most of the time, I just, if I'm doing something kind of fancy, I just cut it out by my own notion of whatever I want.

SP: And how do you get this pattern onto the quilt?

BW: I put it on with a pencil, very lightly with a pencil. Because I don't like the marks to show on my quilt when it's finished.

SP: At what stage, do you sit down and

BW: Just kind of as I'm doing it.

SP: This is after it's in the frame?

BW: As I'm quilting, say when I roll this cotton, this will be. After it's in the frame I'll do this first row that I'm going to fix. Because I can see better, maybe my lines, because I don't want them to show on my quilt when I get through.

SP: How do you get them, do you make them so you don't have to wash them out?

BW: Just real light.

SP: It would just about make you go blind, wouldn't it?

BW: (laughing) No, you can, after you get used to it, you can

kind of do that alright.

SP: Maybe my eyes just aren't very good.

BW: One thing I didn't tell you about was after you take your quilt out you've got to bind that quilt. And you sew your binding say, you can buy binding or you can cut it out of material. Now, what I like to do is to cut it crossways of the material or to the bias of the material. I never like to bind it with it straight down the material. If my quilt is real straight, if you've got a straight piece on the outside, that might work out alright. But if it's pieced up to the edge of your quilt it's very hard to sew a straight piece on there without it puckering come down through there. And if you'll use the bias it won't. It'll just stretch out down through there as you go. And then you sew it on the front side, turn it over to the back and then whip it on. And then your quilt is finished.

SP: A lot of times people will put them in their dryer for just a few minutes on fluff to fluff them up to show the puffing of your quilts. Now I don't know if you've ever heard of that or not.

SP: No, that's something. So, when you're putting together a quilt now, what kinds of materials, what I'm getting at it what kinds of colors are you after?

BW: Well, it all depends on where, if you're going to keep the quilt, where you're going to use it. Sometimes you'll want to fix it for your own room. And as I say, I sell quilts if anybody wants them and I don't, if I make them for myself, I try to make them to use with the color of my room that I'm going to use them in.

SP: Do you ever make quilts for your grandchildren?

BW: Oh yes, I've got quilts put away for all of them.

SP: What kinds of quilts do you make them?

BW: Well, I started this grandson who was just twenty the other day before he was born. I made him a dog quilt and a cat quilt. And of course, I have made him other quilts since then. Anyway, that was before he was born. And I made my two little girls a Colonial Girl pattern for them. One each. And the other boy, I have set aside for him, too.

SP: What kind of quilts?

BW: A Sunflower, for one.

SP: Is that an appliqued one?

BW: No, it's pieced. Sunflower.

SP: How do you decide what to make them? Do they pick out patterns that they like best, or??

BW: No, I just started quilting these when they were little. Now I have, for two of them, my own grandchildren, see this is two families of children, And my own grandchildren, I have got painted quilts. See, we took this painting in Homemakers. And I've made these pictures for this painting out of coloring books the children had.

SP: What?

BW: I'll show you one of those directly.

SP: Yeah, I want you to tell me a little more about how you paint quilts. Do you, how do you get the pattern on there and

BW: Well, you just cut out your block just like you would any other. Say a white block. And then you'd do this painting on it.

You can almost do it without drawing on top of it. You can put your picture underneath this and draw lightly your picture. And then color it with colors that don't wash out.

SP: Is this a special kind of colors you get?

BW: Yes. We got these from LeeWard. But I can't tell you exactly what they are. But anyway, they are the kind that doesn't wash out.

SP: Do you order much from the LeeWard catalog?

BW: No, not now. We did then, when we were making these. I made them when they were small, too.

SP: So you used to order from LeeWards.

BW: Uh huh.

SP: Are there other places that you used to order from?

BW: Not very much. This was just craft material that we ordered from LeeWard.

(sound of low-flying helicopter)

SP: Sounds like we're being invaded. Do you do other things?

BW: Oh yes, I've made such as that dog. (pointing to dog made of white yarn sitting on top of piano nearby) And cats, I've made them. I made enough Red Riding Hood dolls to buy a rug top put on my living room floor down at the lower place. Before we moved up here. That was, it cost about \$240 something then.

SP: How many Red Riding Hoods was that?

BW: (laughing) I don't know how many Red Riding Hoods that was, but that's how I bought my rug for the living room with.

I made dolls and sold them at \$10 a doll then. Of course, they're a lot more now.

SP: What were they made out of?

BW: Well, it had the Red Riding Hood on one end and the Grandmother on one side of the other end. And the Wolf on the other side.

SP: There were three sides?

BW: Three, it would be three sides. The Grandmother would have a cap over her head and when you took that cap off, it would be the Wolf's head on that side.

SP: That sound's great! So you could tell the whole story.

BW: Yeah. It was just for children, you know. The Red Riding Hood story. It would be Red Riding Hood and then you'd just

SP: flip her dress, you see, on the other side. And then that's the Grandmother. And you had a grandmother dress on that side, with grandmother material, you know. And then the wolf would be on the side. And when you took her cap off, she had a little tied cap on, you know, and then when you took that off, the Wolf was on the back side of that.

SP: How did you find out how to make them?

BW: Well, just had a pattern. (laughs)

SP: How did you come by the pattern?

BW: I don't remember now. You know sometimes you gey, as you say, now you find them in magazines and things like that. I don't really remember. Seems like I got this from a neighbor, though.

SP: What kind of other things do you do?

X BW: Well, I've made the Kangaroo with the little kangaroo in the pouch. And I've made the Scotty Dog, and I've made the cats with the big long tail.

SP: So, these are almost all things you could sew together?

BW: That's right. I've sold a lot of them.

SP: Where do you sell these things?

BW: Just anywhere somebody'll come in maybe and see them.

SP: So, do you take them out and put them in shops?

BW: I have. I have had some. And I've had quilts on display several places.

SP: Where was that?

BW: Well, I had one in the Arts Center not very long ago. And then I had, two were sent to Western, you see. Now they bought those up there, though.

SP: So they're in the collection?

BW: They were up there. I don't know if they're still there or not, but they were in the Western Museum.

SP: Are there people that buy your quilts other than ?

BW: Well, the last two or three that I've sold have come through the people have found my name in the library at Bowling Green. And they've called me and come out to see them from seeing them in that.

SP: In the library, where in the library?

BW: At Bowling Green. We had, you know, these books that we had from, well, Dr. Kenneth Clarke and them made a book. And I have a book like that. And then I guess these others came from Archbold. The book she made.

SP: So, just looking at these on quilting, and they see your name on them and

BW: And there's a copy of them, they tell me, in the library.

SP: It's funny to think how far these things stretch. Do people ever take your quilts and show them?

BW: Yes. I had a lady had one of them on display. She had a log cabin home and she called and wanted to know if I'd let her have one of them to use on the bed during this sale. Course it wasn't for sale, but she had her log cabin dressed up to sell. It was an auction. So she borrowed this quilt to use on the bed. It was a Colonial Girl quilt.

SP: So, for her to dress the place up a little bit, make it look nice and homey?

BW: Uh hm.

SP: I'm trying to think here of what we've covered and whether we've left anything I'm trying to get. One of the things I wanted to ask you about was the specific quilts that you made. Do you have any favorites?

BW: Well, I just can't think of really a favorite. I just like to make all of them! I mean if I get started at one, I just really love it. Now I have this Heritage Quilt that I don't have quilted I'll show you directly. But now, I'm really fond of it. Not that it's that pretty, but it's, it has the old different patterns that we used to use when our mothers and them did have patterns. It would be patterns they were using, you know back then.

SP: So, a Heritage Quilt. It's sort of talking about heritage?

BW: Old patterns.

SP: I see. It sounds nice. What about that Postage Stamp quilt?

BW: Well, as I told you, it has over 17,000 pieces in it. It's not a large quilt; it was made for a half bed. I wish that I had made it larger, but I didn't. At that time, I didn't need it

that large. So, it has 545 pieces in one square of it, that I'd say is a little bit over a foot wide on the bed. Aren't they? A square?

SP: Yeah.

BW: I don't believe it would be 18 inches, maybe 16 inches. It would be 545 pieces in that one block. And I started that one winter. That was just before I married. And when we, back then when we would go places to stay all night, we would take our quilt pieces and quilt. That's what we did for entertainment. Instead of a lot of things like they do now. If I went somewhere, like I say, I was older than a lot of people when I married. And when I'd go and stay all night with some of my neighbors that were married, they would be piecing quilts and I'd take my box of quilt pieces and we'd, that's the way we got a lot of work done like that. We quilted together, I mean pieced together as well as quilted together.

SP: So, where'd you get your fabric?

BW: Well, people (laughs) brought it to me mostly. That's the one that everybody'd bring me their scraps after they'd cut through them. Now another way that I like to cut through my pieces, if I have a box of scraps, I will maybe cut a full box, four different patterns that I can get out of the piece that's left. I cut the large ones first. Then I'll take a smaller pattern that I can get out of the piece that's left. Then I say, maybe I've got four quilts started from maybe just cutting through them. Then when I get through with them I'm through with my quilt pieces.

SP: So you're cutting out four at a time?

BW: I'm cutting out four maybe at one time. Now some of these pieces

won't have four pieces in them. But when I have a piece that's big enough to cut one of these four patterns that I've got, I will cut it out. Then I just get rid of that, because I don't need to use anymore of that, I mean.

SP: So, about how big were the squares on the Postage Stamp? Not the squares, but the pieces.

BW: Well, I'd say they're not an inch, are they?

SP: Well, they're not an inch when they come out.

BW: I don't know, it wouldn't be, I don't believe it would be hardly an inch. The block, I don't believe would be hardly an inch

SP: square. I don't know for sure.

SP: I think that was made in a day when stamps were smaller than they are today! (laughter)

BW: That's right. Yeah, that's right.

SP: You're talking about postage stamps, you're talking about 3¢ stamps.

BW: I would say about, hardly an inch square.

SP: So people could pass you on real small pieces.

BW: Yeah, that's right. After they had cut through theirs, as I say, like I did. Well, they'd have all those little scraps that I would cut through.

SP: So this is the winter of 1939?

BW: Uh, it would be about '38. I married in January of '39.

SP: So that was right to the end of the depression.

BW: Yes it was.

SP: So you'd want to use up just about everything.

BW: We used everything.

SP: Can you tell me a little bit about what that was like at that time? While you were making this quilt?

BW: Well, it was just a time when people had to use what they had. Instead of going out and buying something. Like as I say, that a lot of people do now, which I do myself. I buy more material than I used to. But, I don't buy a big lot of it. But we just couldn't do that then. We had to live. Just a hard time for everybody.

SP: So, do you think that in this particular quilt there was, that that might have been reflected in what the materials were?

BW: You mean what kind of materials? It was all print of course. Course, this polyester wasn't heard of then. All that kind of stuff. And now I quilted this quilt the first year after our marriage. And it was 13, it took 13 spools of thread to quilt that quilt.

SP: Oh, my goodness.

BW: And I put all this down on paper back, you know, when I was putting it together and everything, so I could remember that. That we used 13. And we had a quilting to do that. And older people came and helped me quilt. (Phone is ringing in the background, interview is interrupted.)

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SP: So, whatever possessed you to make a quilt with 17,000 pieces?

BW: Well, I told you I didn't marry as young as a lot of these other girls did, and I had to have something to do. We would sit up at night. And as I say, when I'd go visit some of my neighbors, we'd take our quilts and work on them like that. And I was living at home with my mother. My daddy had died and I was living there with her, and she'd piece quilts and she had quilts of her own and we'd just quilt together, you know, at night. Or anytime we'd get time to.

SP: What were you doing the rest of the time so that you didn't have time to do this? What kept you busy?

BW: (laughs) Well, just regular routine. Work. Just washing and ironing and gardening and, you know, things like that. Stripping tobacco. We raised tobacco. We worked with tobacco, hoeing and stripping.

SP: How much land did you have in tobacco?

BW: Oh, maybe three acres. Or something like that at that time.

SP: I don't know anything about growing tobacco. Will you tell me a little about it?

BW: (laughing) I wouldn't know hardly what to tell you. Course you have to do your plant bed first. Sow your seed. Burn your plant bed, then we did. Now they chemical the plant beds. But they would burn them, maybe with logs or piling a bunch of treetops and things like that together, you know and burn that. And maybe, if they used logs, they'd have to go back there in a little while and roll those logs to burn all the land, all the ground under this plant bed. Sow your seed.

And then it would have to be covered with canvas. And then the plants began to grow then. About the time you think you'll set it out, well, you take this canvas off. Then you pull your (phone rings-pause for phone call.)

BW: I'll quick go ahead and tell you about tobacco.

SP: Yeah, why don't you finish telling me about tobacco?

BW: Well, then you have to transplant this tobacco, then in the fields. And then, maybe it grows. There's a lot of things have to be done with it, such as spraying and then it's got to be topped. And you know they use a lot of chemicals to keep you from having to do a lot of work on it. And then it's cut, put in the barn and dried out. Then we'd have to strip them. The tobacco.

SP: So, you were talking about you and your mother, did you have any help doing this?

BW: Yes, of course all of us would, you know, gang up together maybe the family and strip tobacco together. Sometimes it'd be so cold we'd have to have a fire. Sometimes we wouldn't have any fire and we'd nearly freeze to death!

SP: What time of year do you do that?

BW: In the fall, really in the wintertime. We usually tried to get through before Christmas if we could. Had to have a season for tobacco to come in season.

SP: When do you plant this?

BW: Well, tobacco is almost a thirteen month crop. You see, you have to start, say well, usually we used to start in January, February. If we had to burn the bed. But as I say, now they chemical so many of them, they don't have to start that early. By sometime in March, they sow the seed.

SP: What's burning supposed to do?

BW: Kills the weeds and things that come up in the tobacco field, and everything.

SP: So one of the reasons that you would start with a bed like this, is that you just got the plants out of the other one?

BW: Well, they'd have to be started to be planted, re-set you know. They, well they just won't grow hardly. You couldn't just set them out, plant, a tobacco field would be so big you couldn't just plant it in the field, you see.

SP: How big is a tobacco seed?

BW: (laughs) Oh, you can barely see it! You can barely see it. They're real little. Smaller than a turnip seed, if you know what that is.

SP: That's small.

BW: Say you take a spoonful, I think they say, heard Joe say a spoonful to a hundred yards a leveled off spoonful for a hundred yards of bed, you know.

SP: So how much tobacco seed would you buy, how much tobacco seed would you use?

BW: It'd just depend on how many beds you're going to fix. It comes in packages of say, won't have very much over a spoonful. When you buy the package which has the seed.

SP: I've been a farm kid all my life, but I've never been around tobacco! (laughs)

BW: You've been lucky! (laughing)

SP: I grew up around cotton, that's what grew up with. Cotton and corn and wheat.

BW: Oh, I just remember one time that my mother had just a little bit of cotton in the garden. And that's when I remember my mother showing us how to card this.

SP: I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me.