

Name of Oral History Project: Adair County Research: One Room Schools

Tape # 1 of 2

Name of Narrator: Ora Lee Jones

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Date of interview: March 14, 1998 Place of interview: Columbia, KY

Equipment used: Cassette

Tape used: Brand: ; Amount: (side 1) full; (side 2) full

Brief description of interview context and tape contents: The interview took place in the home of Ms. Ora Lee Jones. Main discussion is over one room schools Ms. Jones has attended as a student and as a teacher. One brief interruption in interview.

Rubo: This is March 14, 1998. I am Aileen Rubo in the home of Ms. Ora Lee Jones in Adair County. What was the name of the school you attended as a child?

Jones: Little Cake, until I was ten years old my parents moved to Campbellsville.

Rubo: What is your fondest memory of that school?

Jones: Of Little Cake. Oh my, why I have so many I don't know if I could have a fondest or not. I just loved my teachers. My one teacher especially, Ms. Annie Sanders, and she lived to be 93. She just passed away a couple of years ago. And I have a little tea, a percolator a little tiny percolator about this tall [six in] that she gave me when I say I was about eight or nine years old and I had all those years. So many things but that one stands

out really, really with me. And I just loved her dearly. She was left handed and I can remember oh I wish I could, I wish I were left handed like Ms. Annie.

Rubo: What did your school look like outside?

Jones: Well it was a, just a one room of course and windows were on both sides, not just on one side, so we had cross ventilation and out front not a porch but just a step. Over to the right was a drilled well with a pump in it. Where we pumped water have you seen that old type pump? Okay and just a rather large area for us to play in. One big Sycamore tree stood about the middle of the school yard. That was a place that we all gathered around that for our talks and plays and so on.

Rubo: What did the inside of the school look like?

Jones: Boards up front, chalk boards up front. Stove about half way down the side, was a chimney and the stove was there. And we only had one stove, so on real cold days we had to gather around the stove to more or less keep warm. A recitation bench we called it, just one long bench like this up in the front out in front of the, we called them black boards back then because they were black. When a class was called, if the third grade class was called for reading, the third graders went up and sat on that bench. The teachers desk was there near by, and the students' desks then were, if I remember correctly we had about three. Maybe we had just two sections. The best I can remember the school had maybe 25 students sometimes it may have gotten up as many as 30. They were small, they were small schools of course. That's just about it.

Rubo: What subjects did you study?

Jones: Spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, health. Now we didn't have writing books as such, but we had writing lessons, classes in which we were taught. It was cursive writing too. It didn't begin as printing it began as cursive writing.

Rubo: What was your favorite subject?

Jones: I don't know if I could. I just love school. English and reading. Math, I like math. I like spelling. Maybe I better choose. Reading I guess is my favorite.

Rubo: Tell me how your days started before school.

Jones: How what?

Rubo: How your days started before school.

Jones: Before school, you mean in the mornings. Well, my mother always prepared a breakfast for us. Then we just a, we always lived near the school. No farther then about halfway between the curb you came around up here. We were about that far from the school. and so all we had to was just walk down through the field, our house was up in a large field. So all I did was just get ready for school in the mornings. Came home for lunch, but oh my, if it was snowy or something in the winter time and it was cold, we got to take our lunch and that was a treat for us.

Rubo: What things did you do after you got home from school?

Jones: I had a few chores to do. Like helping my mother. If it were in the spring time, and our schools you know closed early, maybe I would help her some with some gardening things, taking care of the chickens her and so on. And I had some house work to do. Just things like that. We had chores to do in those days. And we had play time to. When we weren't busy we had play time.

Rubo: Tell me about some of your friends and classmates?

Jones: Friends and classmates. You still thinking about when I was a student? The most of my friends, I guess, most of them have passed away. See, I started to school young. When I was 4 years old I started school. It wasn't called a preschool then it was a school. I just wanted to go and there was nothing to bar you from going. So several of my friends, many of them have passed away. But still , I still see a few of them occasionally. Of course we have a lot of fun talking about, reminiscing of this time and that time.

There's not much more, I guess, other than that. I know several of them's children, of course I still am aquatinted with and still know and see occasionally. Just things like that.

Rubo: As a child, what kind of things did you do to have fun with your friends, your close friends?

Jones: The close ones, to go spend the night with them, and then they would just come and spend the night with me. Just the usual, as kids will do, whatever we decided to play or if we would like to get off to a little place to ourselves and talk things just between us and things like that. Of course we didn't have movies to go to. We didn't go in to town very often, so its just being together I guess.

Rubo: What was the usual daily school schedule when you were going to school?

Jones: The beginning and closing. Began at eight in the morning, closed at four in the afternoon. We had morning recess and a lunch period and an afternoon recess. It was from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon.

Rubo: What kind of things did children pack to school with them?

Jones: What do you mean by that?

Rubo: Lunches

Jones: Lunches for school, well some of them brought their vegetables, cooked of course. We didn't have a kitchen, a place to cook. But some brought their vegetables. Beans, potatoes, corn, and of course cookies . I don't remember, some brought milk, but you see schools began in July and a so unless we had some way to keep their milk from spoiling which I can't remember anybody too much bringing milk. We just drink the water at the school. Apples, out of our own orchard, peaches and such fruits like that. Apples and peaches and pears. Apples and peaches and pears and grapes. Those were fruits that people had on their own farms and could bring. Children could bring chestnuts, go into the woods and get chestnuts.

Rubo: What would be a special treat in your lunch?

Jones: What would be a special treat in a lunch? I don't really know. A special treat in our lunch. Well it wasn't every day that you would, that you could bring cookies or what ever, cakes or what ever. So maybe just certain days. Maybe that would be a special, special treat. And in watermelon time, some had watermelons to bring and cantaloupes some did.

Rubo: How did your lunch compare to what other children were able to bring for lunch?

Jones: Oh I think they brought about the same. And if one had something that another one didn't have and you wanted to exchange something with them, why we would. I'll give you this if you want this then and we did that some times.

Rubo: Tell me about things that went on during lunch time?

Jones: Oh, well we ate lunch I guess as quickly as we could so we'd have a play time. See we had one hour for lunch. Playing ball, playing this, playing that. Playing different games that children don't play now of course. But that was mostly it. Sometimes, sometimes we might of just wanted to sit around and talk but most of the time it was a play time. Even inside now, inside in the winter time we had a...[interruption, visitor came in back door. Tape was not turned off.] Inside in the winter times, we popped popcorn, I remember, in the winter times. That would be the time to pop the popcorn, during the lunch.

Rubo: What did the girls do during recess?

Jones: What did the girls do during what hun?

Rubo: Recess.

Jones: Recess. Oh the girls and boys, we usually played games together. Now, sometimes the boys would want to a game to themselves and the girls would want a game to themselves. And of course when a little, you'd have to be a little older maybe the larger girls well the smaller girls had to stay away. They would talk about their boyfriends or whatever. So they'd get off in their little, little group to themselves, but other than that I don't remember anything too segregated I guess with that.

Rubo: What do you remember about traveling to school and back?

Jones: Well like I said we walked and. Now are you thinking about after we moved to Campbellsville or that wouldn't be in the one or two room schools? I was in the one room school until I was ten. Then my parents moved to Campbellsville. What do I remember?

Well, I mostly walked. I couldn't tell you too much about that though. and most children did walk. Of course if it was real, real bad maybe schools would close, but it wasn't to often now that schools closed. Had to be really really cold, bad, severe weather.

Rubo: How did teachers discipline students when you were a child?

Jones: Well, the paddle was used if you needed it. It wasn't an abusive something at all. but there wasn't too much spanking. because I think the children had respect for their teachers and so did the parents have a lot of respect. But they knew that if they disobeyed that spanking could come.

Rubo: What holidays were celebrated at your school?

Jones: You mean by that now as a time off or, as a celebration in school?

Rubo: Celebration in school.

Jones: Oh okay. Christmas stands out as the most celebrated to me. Of course, Thanksgiving was, but more emphasis was put on Christmas holiday than any time.

Rubo: What kinds of things did you do on Thanksgiving at school?

Jones: On Thanksgiving at school? Well the pilgrims stood out very much during Thanksgiving. So I can remember some skits, some plays, that we did have, we do have and the parents would be invited to come. Just very much like it is, I guess, still is today.

Rubo: How was Christmas celebrated?

Jones: With was a Christmas program. And the practice would start with some Christmas programs early, early. And that would, that would really attract the attention of the parents, the Christmas program would. They would come.

Rubo: What was the Christmas program like?

Jones: What was it like? Well it, of course the birth of Jesus was a part of it, and then along with that there would be called a recitations, poems and things that children would recite. Readings of different kinds. All and all it was just a general mixture, I guess you'd say. But the one thing it certainly did center around the birth of Jesus.

Rubo: What special events if any were centered around school?

Jones: Oh. The one big social event was the pie supper.

Rubo: Tell me about the pie suppers.

Jones: Tell me about the pie suppers. The girls would bring pies. They would have beautifully decorated boxes that their pies were put in and the young man would bid see on buying pies. And sometimes the young boys would make up that they were going to, they would call it, run somebody's pie up so high. They would keep bidding different ones and they'd add a little more to keep the boyfriend from buying the pie or to make him spend a lot more to get that. And then we would have, at the pie supper, they would have the prettiest girl contest. Girls would be nominated or suggested to be the prettiest girl and the men then would spend their money toward giving the money to who they thought was the prettiest girl. Of course it would just be tallied up on the board, this girl and this girl and if somebody gave a dollar towards this one or two dollars or five dollars and then at a certain time then for it to close, the one that had the most money was chosen to be the prettiest girl.

Rubo: What was the typical price paid for the boxes?

Jones: Typical. Well I'd say some of them would go as high as maybe as high as fifteen dollars. Something like that. Not all of them did now. Especially if times weren't quite as



flourish. Two dollars or two and a half or something like that, but like I say if they would keep bidding you know bidding, bidding, bidding to keep a boyfriend, pay more for his girlfriend's pie it'd go on up.

Rubo: Where were you a teacher at a one room school?

Jones: Where? You want me to name all of them? One of them 1939, was my first year teaching and I taught at a school, Tabernacle. It's right over this way as you go toward, it's not there any more of course. And I taught at up here in this community. And the next year Miller Field. Then I taught at Whites and that was the year that Therman and I married. and he went into service nine months after we were married. And I taught four years at Sprout Springs, you were there. Then after he got out of the service I started teaching up here again. I went up here because the school was right up here. And I taught there fourteen years. And schools were consolidated. And I taught down at Shepherd, you came from Columbia up highway 206 didn't you. And you passed that school. I taught there twenty one years until I retired. Of course that wasn't a one room school but that's were I taught a... Some of them were two teacher schools. Miller field was a two teacher. And I was the teacher in the upper grades, five through eight, until consolidation.

Rubo: What is your fondest memory of teaching at a one room school?

Jones: We had so many fondest memories though. My trying to help all the children prepare themselves for their future lives and of course we didn't have the things to work with, the materials and so on now as teachers have now. But some wonderful, wonderful boys and girls came out of those schools. And, so I think I we should remember the good

times that we had and the love that I had for them and the love and respect and things that they had for me. It's just a wonderful experience.

Rubo: How did the subjects that you taught as a teacher compare to the subjects that you were taught as a child?

Jones: How did the subjects that I taught as a teacher compare? Well the basics, I would say, were very much the same. Except we still, I had more teach with then the teachers that I had. But basically, the basics, and you don't do away with the basics ever, but now, let's see I've been out since 85 and now if I were to go back into a class room now I could see so much difference in you know the computers and all such things as that. But I would say there wasn't a great deal of difference. More subject matter, naturally as things go on. There's more, more and more new things to be put into to teaching.

Rubo: As a teacher what kinds of things did you do, have to do before going to school?

Jones: What did I have to do before going to school? Well, you mean around my own home. Since it was just my husband and me I didn't have to do as much as some of the teachers who had children of course, but I was just the basic host. Prepare breakfast, get myself ready for school. And I always went to school rather early because I like to be there when my students came. And I didn't rush home in the afternoon either. So, just the general preparation, I guess just like you do before school.

Rubo: What things did you do after you got home from school?

Jones: After I got home from school? I had maybe a few things to do around the house. and mostly I'd say, since we didn't have children I just prepared our meals and maybe we

would go out for a, visit some friends and things like that. And I always had a lot of paperwork to do at night.

Rubo: Do you have any fond memories of particular students?

Jones: Any fond memories in particular students you mean? A lot of funny things that maybe some of them, that we still laugh about when we get together. I don't know any, maybe, maybe one no one more than the other. I had one, one student that's a very well known heart doctor now. Have you heard of Doctor Bob Green? You may have, you may have not since your. Doctor Bob Green. An excellent, excellent little boy. Then just whole, whole families. You know some of them the whole family of children would come to you when I taught up here fifteen years. So the whole family would come, would come to me. And just so many things. I don't know if I could just point out any one in particular or, over a lot of the others.

End of side one

Beginning of side two

Rubo: What kind of things did you bring for lunch as a teacher?

Jones: As a teacher? Well, for one sandwiches. It was mostly sandwiches. Peanut butter and banana was one of my favorite sandwiches. And I would take, well we had our own meats of course. A lot of times I would pack my ham sandwiches. And I'd take some fruit of some kind, apples. Their was a store near by, Mr. [unintelligible] had a store nearby and we could get drinks up there. And when I taught at Spout Springs. Did you see the Spring while you were over there? We would take drinks and some of the kids could bring them too. That water was so cold. We had a place there were we could put

our drinks in that, and they would be just cold, cold, cold by lunch time for us to drink.

So it was just mostly just the average lunch. I'd say I was calorie cutting.

Rubo: How did the children's lunch time while you were teaching compare to your lunch time when you were a child?

Jones: I would say very similar. Maybe some of them had better lunches than others.

Some lived close by so that they could go home for lunch because we had an hour lunch period. So I would say it wasn't too much different.

Rubo: What did the girls do during recess?

Jones: What did the girls do during recess? They liked to play ball right in with the boys some. There were some games that the girls would like to play to themselves. And as I say, girls like to be off to themselves sometimes and not be bothered.

Rubo: Did you live close to the school while you were teaching most of the time also?

Jones: Well the farthest had to drive was maybe, looking at mileage, maybe five or six miles was the farthest I had to drive in one and two teacher schools.

Rubo: Tell me about some pranks that children played.

Rubo: Pranks that children played while you were going to school.

Jones: Pranks that they would play on each other. Maybe sometimes hiding their hats or coats or something like that. Just hiding things from them and acting so innocent, you know as to not know where they are. I don't know as I remember too many, too many pranks.

Rubo: When you were young you mentioned ball games and other games, do you remember more specifically about the games? What kinds of games or?

Jones: What kind of games that were played? The baseball was one. Then finally the basketball. Of course, it was an out door court. We had a basket ball goal. And of course running games were some of the games they enjoyed playing. There would be ones divide into teams. And several of the games involved running. Which was good, that was really a form of exercise for them. All different kinds I guess.

Rubo: How was discipline different when you were teaching then when you were going to school?

Jones: How were the disciple, are you still talking about the games now?

Rubo: Disciplined.

Jones: Disciplined different, how were disciplined different. Basically when I was teaching we could still, one or two teachers could, we could still spank if we needed too. We didn't resort to spanking if there was other ways to deal with the child. But we could still do that. Parents would go right along with it if their child misbehaved in school, was defiant. They went along with you. They wanted them to mind, we say. And to follow the rules of the school. So I'd say it wasn't to much different then.

Rubo: What social events were centered around school while you were teaching?

Jones: We still had the pie suppers. We had the Christmas programs. We had Halloween programs, too. Course during, we dismissed for holidays more when I was teaching then we did when I was going to school, Thanksgiving and so on. So that we...

Rubo: What kinds of things went on at a Halloween program?

Jones: What kind of things went on at Halloween programs? Sometimes we have a, we'd call it a Halloween play. And they would dress you know as the spooks and the witches

and the so on. Parents would come in of course to see all that. Now the Valentine Day was a big day with us in the schools when I was teaching. I don't remember that so much when I was going as a child, but Valentine Day was the big day in the morning two teacher schools when I was teaching out in the. We had our Valentine boxes and of course our cookies we brought and made and we brought in and things like that. Just very much like you had when you were in school.

Rubo: What old timey remedies do you or your family and friends still use?

Jones: Now? Do we still use them? I don't think of very many right now. I don't know if you call this a old Timmy remedy or not. I mean doctors will still recommend gargles for your throat like salt water and things like that. Really, I don't guess we use to many now.

Rubo: What are signs you've heard of which tell a death will occur soon? Signs that are thought to foretell death.

Jones: Signs that are thought to foretell death? You mean now or back then?

Rubo: Back then.

Jones: Back then. I don't recall any foretelling death. People used to say Friday the 13 was a day that, we say when it came and went Friday the 13 just be careful with all that. And go in one door and when your going out go out that same door. Things like that. I've heard people say now don't clean under the bed, don't sweep under the bed when somebody's sick. Just that, I mean we never practiced things like that but you heard all those superstitious things I guess. Turn around and go back if a black cat crosses your path. Superstitious.

Rubo: What customs with regard to burial have changed over your lifetime?

Rubo: What customs with regard to burial have changed over your lifetime?

Jones: What customs with regard to burial? I guess embalming is one of the big customs that have changed. People didn't, you know burials were soon after a person passed away. And so I'd say embalming was one. When we think about floral arrangements. I can remember as a child attending funerals and their might be one or two floral arrangements and that would be all. Flower girls, they used to have to carry the flowers into the funeral and then carry them back out and they would be taken of course to the burial and that's not done any more. The florist puts them in a van now and takes them. I don't think of any other changes.

Rubo: What--

Jones: Excuse me yes I do. Most of the time the corpse was kept in the home, and now of course it's in the funeral home.

Rubo: What customs with regards to burials have remained constant over the years?

Jones: What customs have remained constant? Are you still referring to burials?

Constant over the years. Well, as we've said now the, I think the depth that a grave must be is still the same, I think. Of course the funerals as such are still very much the same.

Other than that...

Rubo: What was the most memorable funeral you attended and why?

Jones: The most memorable funeral? Would that mean outside my family?

Rubo: Either.

[air vent comes on near tape recorder]

Jones: I don't know whether I could say it was my mother's. Maybe so. Because then, when mother passed away of course home was not the same after Mother's gone. And Dad lived fifteen years after mother lived. And when he passed away, it's just totally different when you don't have what you refer to as home to go back to. Other than that, I...

Rubo: How much do your attitude or attitude toward life affect your ability to deal with being sick?

Jones: How does mine? I try to keep a good attitude and positive attitudes are always best, as long you can keep the positive side. In most everything I think.

Rubo: How many black residents live in or around the Knifley area?

Jones: Now or then or when?

Rubo: Both, Before.

Jones: How many black residents. Number wise would you say?

Rubo: Approximately.

Jones: Well, I'd say between 50 and 100.

Rubo: Has that number stayed constant to now?

Jones: Till now. Not right here in this area, it's much, much less. Practically none right up in this area here.

Rubo: Describe race relations across the years between whites and blacks.

Jones: If you live near black people then, there wasn't the, [unintelligible phrase], there wasn't the friction or the so called hate as they speak of now. To me it isn't hate that



there is now. It was just neighbors so to speak. They would help you out and you would help them if there was a need.

Rubo: What is the warmest relationship you know of between a black and a white area?

Jones: What is the warmest relationship? Well that I know of it's just like a say its just treating each other, forgetting the color of the skin.

Rubo: What is the worst relationship that you've heard of between a black and a white in the area?

Jones: I don't really know I can answer that one. I'm not that familiar with some of the bad relationships that you say.

Rubo: Were there ever any lynchings in this area?

Jones: Speaking about the black people? Not that I know of.

Rubo: Who buried the black people and... who buried the black people?

Jones: They buried their own.

Rubo: What were customs that they had in burying people that were different?

Jones: Now I think most of their burial time was in the, late in the afternoon. I think I heard my mother and dad talk about that too. Instead of being buried in the early afternoon hours, they would bury them late in the afternoon. I don't know why, but that seemed to be a custom of theirs.

Rubo: To what extent were the black people buried in the same cemetery as the white people?

Jones: In some cases they were. The Tabernacle school that I referred to, there's also a church there and the black people were buried at the lower end of the cemetery I'd say.

And the white people were in the front area. And that's the only one that I can point to right now that I know about. There probably were some in other areas, but..

Rubo: What church did your family attend?

Jones: Christian church.

Rubo: Describe a typical revival meeting.

Jones: Describe a typical revival? Well, it was a more or less a one time year revival and would usually last from 10 to 12 nights. And crowds would be large, very large. The minister would stay in a home and he would be invited out for meals at the different homes.

Rubo: Have you ever attended a Brush Arbor meeting?

Jones: Brush Arbor meeting, I don't think so.

Rubo: What were some typical songs sang in church?

Jones: What were what?

Rubo: What were some typical songs sang in church?

Jones: Typical songs sang in church. There's Power In the Blood, and In the Garden, and What a Friend we Have In Jesus, When We All Get to Heaven, Just as I Am, just the regular. As you say, those were the typical ones.

Rubo: Where were baptizings held?

Jones: In the river or in a creek that was near by.

Rubo: Describe a typical baptism?

Jones: Describe a typical baptism. Of course the candidate for baptism the minister, they would wade into the water along with the minister. And they would say the baptismal

ceremony. Other than that it was just as they do as today. Of course after the confession is made in a church, then they take them to the water for a baptism. I'm sure it's just very much like today. You know how baptisms are today except there inside in a pool now most of the time, aren't they. Now some still, I think some people, some churches still even still go to the creeks or the rivers for baptismal services.

Rubo: Can you describe the interior of the Giles Cabin?

Jones: Not too much. Now I've only been in it a few times. And you said you were in it today. You haven't even seen pictures of the inside of it? There was a, of course as you say its... I can think of one two, I guess you would say the living quarters, there was a fireplace and mat. The floors were not real, real rough neither were they real smooth. There was a open stairway. Now I don't, if I remember right maybe a couple of bedrooms upstairs, maybe one downstairs. As I said I haven't been in it not more than a couple times. I really can't give you a very good description of the inside of it.

Rubo: Describe the exterior.

Jones: Of course it's log and with the chitin in between the logs. There's a, I guess we would call it a side porch and a front porch. I don't know, I wouldn't know what to tell you. But you saw the building yourself. You have a pretty good guess of you know the length of it the width of it. I'd say a typical log house I'd say of several, several years ago.

Rubo: Can you tell me about the Giles' lifestyle or standard of living in comparison with the community?

Jones: Well I really can't. I just don't know that much about their style of living.

Rubo: What were some occasions that called for guests in your house while you were growing up?

Jones: Some occasions that what honey?

Rubo: Called for guests.

Jones: Called for guests, well when Birthday times came along we would have birthday parties. And as I said during revivals different ones would come and stay all night so they could go to the revivals. I had two older sisters and they had their parties, whether it was birthday parties or whatever. Young people then, there were a lot of partying to go, you know somebody would, their parents would give them permission to have a party and they'd invite friends to come. And it was right there in the home, well sponsored and so on. So that was, people I guess would go, there was more visitation between people at that time then there is now.

Rubo: What kinds of things happened while entertaining guests?

Jones: What?

Rubo: What kinds of things did your family do to entertain guests?

Jones: To entertain guests. Well, playing cards games was one form of entertainment. Such games as rook and such games as that was a entertaining game in those days. And I'd say that was one of the...

End of side two