

David Aaron Gethers

A Short History



BERKELEY COUNTY
LIBRARY SYSTEM

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Berkeley County Library System
Moncks Corner, S.C.
through interviews with
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beginning in September 2014
through February 2017.**

I

BIRTH TO SERVICE



ONE

The Beginning

I was born was at Cedar Hill¹ on June 6, 1923 to Elouise Cooper Gethers (1898 - 1982) and the widower, Reverend Octavius Allen Gethers (1892 - 1932). Named for my mother's brother, Dave Cooper, I didn't have a middle name. My mother was from Cherry Hill², my father, from Cedar Hill.

My Papa attended Allen University³ in Columbia and was a Reformed United Methodist minister and a farmer. He owned about one-hundred-and-fifty acres of land and the big two-story house where I grew up. There were two chimneys in the house: a chimney for the fireplace in the center of the house and a chimney for the cook stove in the kitchen.

Daily Life

Back then, few people had electricity or indoor plumbing. Our water came from a tall cast iron, pitcher pump in the yard. You had to push the handle up and down to get the water to come out. If the pump lost its prime, you had to pour water in

¹ Cedar Hill, a community north of Macbeth, now under Lake Moultrie

² Cherry Hill, a community about 4 miles NE of Moncks Corner on State Rd S-8-376

³ Created out of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church's desire to educate newly freed slaves, Allen University was founded in 1870 as a private, Christian, liberal arts, Historically Black College and University (HBCU). <http://www.allenuniversity.edu/about/>

the top of the pump and push the handle up and down until there was suction again to pull the water up from the well. Our commode was an outhouse, our bathtub, a washtub in the kitchen. Mama heated the water on the stove.

My Mama and Papa worked all day long. I remember my Mama being a bit sickly, but she still worked. There were animals to feed and water. We had a big gray horse, a bull, a rooster, chickens, cows, mules and hogs. Papa used the mules to plow the fields so he could plant corn, cowpeas, oats and cotton. He harvested each crop when it was ready. There were meals to cook, clothes to wash and iron, children to look after, firewood to collect and chop, hogs to slaughter and meat to cure.

Since there was no electricity and no such thing as “running” water, water was pumped by hand from the well and carried to where it was going to be used. Cooking, cleaning, bathing, washing clothes, and filling the animal’s water troughs was a lot of pumping and carrying water. Firewood heated everything: the house in the wintertime, the cook stove every day, and water for washing clothes and bathing.

In the morning or midday, I would go out to the hen house with a straw basket and collect the eggs. I always checked for snakes before I put my hand in the nest. I saw many in that chicken coop. They would swallow eggs whole and then fall out of the nest onto the ground to break the shells! When we heard the chickens making a fuss, Papa would go out, even at night, and check for snakes. If he saw one, he would kill it with a hoe or run it out with a stick.

We had hogs. The pen was a little way from the house since hog pens are smelly. We had hogs, sows and piglets. There was a shed for them to get under, a slop trough and a water trough for them. The piglets were cute. Sometimes they would get out of the pen. Us kids had a lot of fun chasing them down and putting them back.

Papa raised the hogs to sell and to butcher for us to eat. When he butchered a hog, he divided the hog into cuts of meat, and then put the meat in a barrel of salt to cure it. In thirty days or so, he would take the meat from the barrel, rinse it

with water and hang it in the smoke house. The smokehouse had two rooms. One room was the smoking room. A fire of hickory and oak was lit but only allowed to smolder/smoke, not flame up. The other room was for storing the smoked meat. Mmm mmm, it smelled so good. The meat was primarily for our household, but Papa did sell some of the cured ham. He also sold some of the cows, but not the calves.

There was a barn to store feed for our horse, cows, mules and the bull. You had to be on the lookout, too, when you were in the barn. Rats came into the barn after the corn and oats. We had barn cats that killed the rats, but snakes came in after the rats, too. If a snake saw you, it tried to get away. Still, you didn't want to run up on one.

The horse and mules grazed in the pasture during the day. The ten or twelve cows went into their pen made of wire and wood posts. We brought all of the animals into the barn in the evening to feed them, keep them from going astray, or being stolen. The horse, the bull and the mules each had their own individual stall. The cows stayed together in a big stall.

Cotton, corn, oats and cowpeas; these were the crops my father grew. Father fed the oats and hay to the horse and mules. The cows ate hay. The cowpeas were not for the cows! We ate them and they were delicious. In the winter, the hogs ate dried corn still on the cob. It fattened them up.

Corn wasn't just for the hogs. Mama cooked corn when it was fresh. When the corn dried on the cob, she scraped the kernels off and took it to a gristmill⁴ not too far from our house. The ground-up corn was grits!

Washing clothes was much harder back then. With no electricity and no washing machine, washing clothes was an outside job. For detergent, Mama made lye soap out of hardwood ashes from the fire and rainwater. She mixed it in a jar. After it sat for a while, she scooped the lye off the top. Then she mixed the lye

⁴ gristmill - a machine for grinding, crushing or pulverizing any solid substance (grain), especially the customer's grain. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/gristmill>

with rainwater and pig fat. She poured it in a pan and let it sit for a day or two before she cut into bars. We used this soap for bathing and for the laundry.

Once the washtub was over the fire and filled with water, Mama waited until the water was hot before she flaked off pieces of the soap. Then she added the clothes. To move the clothes around in the water, she used a long pole. After that, she moved the clothes to another tub and scrubbed one piece at a time on a “glass” washboard. She wrung out the clothes by hand before putting them into the rinse water, and then wrung them out again after rinsing them before she hung them on the clothesline. What a lot of work.

Mama usually ironed the clothes on another weekday. Ironing was harder than you would think. Irons were made of cast iron and shaped like the bottom of an electric iron, only thicker. The handle was made of cast iron, too. To iron, you had to have a fire in the chimney. You put the iron near the chimney, facing the fire. You heated more than one at a time so you could swap the iron you were using with a hotter one.

My mother could sew. Our rope beds⁵ did not come with mattresses. You had to make them. She would cut ticking⁶ to fit the size of the bed and sew it together like a pillowcase. She stuffed the ticking with cornhusks and cotton then stitched the opening shut. It was ready to put on the bed. My mother could quilt, too. Some of our clothes were homemade, but we had store-bought ones, too. She mended socks with holes and clothes with tears. Back then, people did not throw out clothes and shoes. If someone could mend or repair something, they did or had someone do it for them.

Mama was a good cook. I remember her grits, eggs and butt meat and I remember we loved bologna, too. She fixed ‘sweet potato poon’⁷ during the holidays. On Saturdays, Mama prepared the meal for Sunday. There was no work

⁵ A typical rope bed had ropes in a cross hatched pattern connected to the bed frame that formed the suspension of the bed. Atop this would be placed a tick mattress or two. <https://www.gcv.org/Our-Blog/entryid/295>

⁶ Ticking - a strong linen or cotton fabric used in upholstery and as a covering for a mattress or pillow <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ticking>

⁷ See recipe at http://www.cooksrecipes.com/sidedish/mama's_sweetpotato_poon_recipe.html Mr. Gethers' mother also added orange zest to the top.

done on Sunday. That was a day for church, visiting and resting. Moomah⁸ often visited us on Saturday. We loved to see her.

My Father

Our church was about four miles from the house. Papa's parishioners dropped by anytime someone was sick and needed prayer or if someone had died. He wore a tie every day, even when he was plowing a field. His church members expected him to look the part at all times. Another man, last name of Fashion, used to wear a tie every day, too, but he was not a minister.

I remember these things about my father. He was a tall man and weighed about two hundred pounds. He wore a tie every single day, loved to visit and was always bringing something home with him from a church member's house. He had many friends, including Jewish Charleston wholesalers where he bought supplies for his mercantile store⁹. He drove a horse and two-seater buggy that we rode in every Sunday morning to church. When he bought the Ford Model T, that's how we got to church. When I rode in that car, I felt like it was going real fast!

Childhood Memories

By 1932, we were a family of eight. I had five siblings: Harry Albert, Octavius Allen, Jr., Ethel, James and Alma. I also had a half-brother, born in 1921, Francis Wright, who did not live with us.

For fun, my cousins, Lee Gadsden and Henry Gethers would play marbles, jump rope and things like that. Even though they lived two or three miles away, we still managed to get together. There were also two boys nearby, Boy and Buster Samuels, who were my friends. I remember it being hotter then. It was probably because we didn't even have an electric fan.

One of my earliest memories is of Christmas when I was five or six years old. I got up first. Santa Clause had left the gifts. I opened my gift. I think it was a shirt but I

⁸ grandmother - MooMaah Pronounce the vowels with the "o" sound like in "who" and the "a" sound like in "at"

⁹ Octavius was a prosperous merchant until no one had money following the depression after WWI.

<http://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21630953-depression-1920-21-has-much-teach-modern-policy-makers-searing-twenties>

can't say for sure. I decided to change it and switched the names. As far as I remember, no one said anything about it.

The oldest relative I can remember is my MooMaah, my mother's mother. Her name was Mary Cooper (1860 - 1933). She was serious. If you did not listen, you would get your behind whipped. She would say, "If you sweep that yard¹⁰, you better do it right." She had advice, too. *If you want something, ask for it. Don't take nothin' that don't belong to you. Do what you are supposed to do.* My uncle, Harry Gethers, also had some advice. *Don't steal and watch your back.*

When I was around six-years-old, I swallowed a nickel. My mother sent me to the store get a box of table salt. The store was about two miles away. I carried the coin in my mouth and swallowed it. I got scared I was gonna get a whippin.' I didn't want to go back and tell her so I just kept walking to the store, crying the whole way. When I got there, the people in the store asked me why I was crying. I told them what happened. The owner must have felt sorry for me because he bought the box of salt for me. I had the salt, but I cried all the way home. I didn't get a whippin' or nothing. She told me to watch my bowel movement. I retrieved the coin the next day. Mama told me to be more careful with money. After that, she always tied up coins in a handkerchief when she sent me to the store.

First Grade

I stayed with Moomah when I started first grade. Papa believed in education and Cherry Hill school was the most advanced in the area. On Saturdays, my mother took my brother, Harry, to one of my Papa's aunt's home, so we could see each other. The aunt's house was about halfway between Moomah's and the house near Cedar Hill. I think it was six or seven miles.

¹⁰ ... [traced] the origin of the swept yard back to West Africa, and explores how it changed over centuries, from slave yard to a now-dying way of life in the rural south. Instead of attempting to grow grass or other ground covers in the hot south often on red clay, rural southerners would sweep and tamp down that clay until it baked hard as a rock, reducing dust tracking and making the space suitable for yard work. Houses, hot during the day, were abandoned and people moved outside to shaded yards where they could do the washing, cook, eat, butcher animals, and do other heavy work in the shade of trees. Cottage Gardens and Swept Yards blog post by Sharon Astyck 2010 <http://scienceblogs.com/casaubonsbook/2010/02/02/cottage-gardens-and-swept-yard/>

Danger

My mama coached me to be on the lookout for white men. I already knew to be afraid! I had 'big' ears that heard everything. More than once, I overheard my father telling Mother news of white men catching and beating colored men, women and even children. Those overheard conversations gave me nightmares. If I saw a car coming, I was to get off the road. There was a ditch that ran the length of the dirt road. I would jump it and hide in the scrub if I saw a car coming.

What I didn't know at the time was that white people in the area knew my father and would never harm me. My father was well respected and liked. I sure am glad I did not know anything about the Ku Klux Klan¹¹ as a boy. Before I went into the service, I read about the Klan in the newspaper but I never saw them gathered. Later in life when I first saw them in their long robes and hoods, I thought they were funny people.

The walk seemed much longer than seven miles. I would run as long as I could, then walk until I caught my breath again, always looking over my shoulder to see if a car was coming. The road was not highly traveled, but I was on high alert as if I were walking down a highway. One or two cars might pass while I was walking. When I saw a car, or people walking and I thought they were white, I got off the road and hid in the woods until they had passed.

On the way back from visiting Harry one Saturday, I looked back and saw a boy on a bicycle. I hid in the woods. When he got close, I saw he was a colored boy so I walked back onto the road. He said he had been looking at me and all of a sudden, I was gone. His name was Henry Gibbs. He had ridden that bicycle all the way from Whitesville¹² just to visit his cousins. He was about two years older than I was. He asked me my name and asked me where I lived. I told him. He said,

¹¹ From 1867 onward, African-American participation in public life in the South became one of the most radical aspects of Reconstruction, as blacks won election to southern state governments and even to the U.S. Congress. For its part, the Ku Klux Klan dedicated itself to an underground campaign of violence against Republican leaders and voters (both black and white) in an effort to reverse the policies of Radical Reconstruction and restore white supremacy in the South. At its peak in the 1920s, Klan membership exceeded 4 million people nationwide. <http://www.history.com/topics/ku-klux-klan>

¹² Whitesville community is approximately 13 miles from Cherry Hill [as the crow flies].

“Come on, I’ll give you a ride home.” I was real surprised! I didn’t have no idea two people could fit on a bicycle.

I was able to attend school in Cedar Hill after I finished the first grade at Cherry Hill. My Moomah treated me good, but I had been so homesick!

My Father Dies

I was nine-years-old when my Papa died. It was sudden and unexpected. He was only forty. He was buried in the Woodlawn Plantation Cemetery,¹³ the plantation where several generations of his family had been born into slavery. When Santee Cooper created Lake Moultrie, his grave was not relocated. He now rests at the bottom of the lake. Years later, I learned that he died from an aneurism in his subclavian artery.

After he died, we moved to Cherry Hill to live with my Moomaah, Mary Cooper (1860 - 1933), my grandmother. There was no way for my mother to run the house and the farm alone. The Cherry Hill Community took a day to help my mother move from Cedar Hill. They brought wagons and moved all of our household goods and all of our livestock, except the horse and one mule.

Cherry Hill

Although I was only nine, I became head of the family. I watched out for my brothers and sisters, and helped my mother on Moomah’s farm. Both she and my mother were hard workers. Moomah grew everything. The only things I remember her buying from the store were sugar, flour, milk and bread. Mama raised chickens and grew cotton, corn and peanuts to support us. I helped tend to the chickens, hogs and cows.

¹³ This cemetery was located one and one-half miles from the plantation house on Woodlawn Plantation, owned by C.P. Gourdin, in St. John’s Parish, Berkeley County, SC. The area was nine miles north of Bonneau and seven miles southwest of Russellville on Black Oak Road. At the time of inventory, February 17, 1939, this old slavery and servant burial plot was still in use although badly overgrown with trees and brush and not maintained. About two hundred graves were recorded, nineteen with markers. CEMETERY RECORDS: a documentary of cemetery or burial ground reports and grave relocation by Santee Cooper from the project area. 1939-1941. pp. 193, 194. Prepared as a Public Service by The Berkeley County Historical Society, 1986, Moncks Corner, SC, 29461.

It was hard when Moomah died. Looking back, I really missed her. She was only with us for a year. The family buried her the next day¹⁴ in Cherry Hill Cemetery. I really missed her. Moomah had six or seven children. She left her land to them, about thirteen acres apiece. Uncle Ed was in charge of the estate. It seemed like he gave my mother thirteen acres of the worst land for farming. We continued to live in Moomah's house.

Working for Uncle Ed

I worked for my mother's brother, Ed Cooper, on his farm during the week as a ploughboy. It was very hard work, especially for a boy. He paid me \$1.25¹⁵ each week, but if I borrowed the mule to plow my mother's fields, even if it was one day, he did not pay me for the week. Whatever money I earned, I gave it to my mother. She gave me a \$0.25 cents allowance. You won't believe this...I used to bank \$0.10 or \$0.15 cents of that in a small condensed milk can. I kept it under my bed most of the time. (Not that I had to worry about my brothers or sisters taking it, they weren't like that.) I saved up the money to buy clothes and a pair of shoes when school started back.

Cherry Hill Classroom

Cherry Hill Classroom¹⁶ was diagonally across the street from my Moomah's house. Moomah donated part of the land for the classroom. The building served as the church and the school. The Classroom had a steeple with a bell. When the bell was rung, it almost always meant there was a death in the community. It was

¹⁴ Embalming was not commercially available until the 1930s. Without refrigeration or embalming to slow the decomposition process, at room temperature the body decomposed rapidly and was unsanitary.

<http://www.elementalnw.com/embalming-faq/>

¹³ In 1934, \$1.25 was equivalent to \$21.93 in 2014. ● One dollar in 2014 would be worth \$0.07 in 1934. Dave Manual.com. Inflation calculator

¹⁶ School was built ca. 1876. Land donated by John Campbell for a building that would serve as both a school for African American students and as a church for the Cherry Hill community. A one-room school for grades 1-6, it became a public school within the Berkeley County school district in the early 20th century. (Reverse) By the 1920s, attendance here had grown enough to require a one-room addition, which was built on land donated by Mary Ann Cooper. Daisy Pasley and Pansy Cooper were the first teachers in the expanded school. The school closed after the 1954-55 school year, when many rural schools in Berkeley County were consolidated. Rededicated as Cherry Hill Community Center in 2011 [from South Carolina Historical Marker]

an alert for everyone to come to the church. A very few had a telephone so this was the only way to get in touch with everybody.

The Cherry Hill Classroom also served as our church. We went to prayer service on Thursday nights and Sunday mornings. Early on Sunday mornings we would go to the service at the Cherry Hill Classroom. It was more like Sunday school. I remember the singing and the organ. I can't recall any of the songs, though. There was a lot of praying. Church always seemed to last too long.

After Sunday school, we went to the big church in Macbeth, Mt. Carmel (the site is under the lake now). We walked the six or seven miles. There was an organ at this church, too. People got dressed up to come to church. We had Sunday clothes and shined our shoes for church. Our clothes were not expensive, but you had better not play in them.

Each family went to their own home for dinner after church. On Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's the whole community would have "dinner on the ground"¹⁷ at the Cherry Hill Classroom.

The classroom was on the left side of the building. Students had to supply the firewood for the big woodstove. There was no such thing as a lunchroom. My mother supplied a lunch for all the children and the teacher, about thirty in all. She made cornbread, sweet potatoes and soup for us. She was not paid. She looked on it as her charity work. One teacher taught four or five grades all at the same time. I remember I was good at spelling and not so good with arithmetic.

The Picnics

Every Fourth of July and Labor Day, the community has a big picnic across from the classroom. You had to pay a small admission to come in. A big band played

¹⁷ ...it probably stems from the idea of a picnic-like communion on the ground at the cemetery." He also points out that at this time most cemeteries were communal and not affiliated with a church. Jabbour says that people he interviewed during his research asserted "dinner on the ground" is the correct phrase. *"It seems probable that the original sense of the phrase was a 'dinner spread on the ground like a picnic'"* in a cemetery. <https://nourishingdeath.wordpress.com/2014/05/26/decoration-day-and-dinner-on-the-ground/>

music. Concession stands¹⁸ sold fish sandwiches, chicken sandwiches, pickled pigs feet, grapes, boiled peanuts, homemade ice cream, sodas, and things like that. People looked forward to it. They came from far and near. People in Moncks Corner would even walk to it. It was a time to visit and catch up on the news with your neighbors and those who had moved away.

The school district did not fund Cherry Hill Classroom or any colored¹⁹ schools until after I was grown. The proceeds from the Labor Day picnic admission and concession stand fees paid the schoolteacher's salary and school expenses for the year. The schoolteacher, an unmarried young woman, usually stayed with the more well to do members of the community who could afford to take them in, usually Uncle Ed or Uncle Sam Cooper. The Fourth of July picnic proceeds profited the people running the concession stands.

The Radio

Even though we didn't have electricity in our community, my grandmother owned a Zenith radio.²⁰ It was the first radio in Cherry Hill. We did not have electricity yet. A small steel windmill provided the power. I enjoyed listening to the westerns. These are some of the radio shows I listened to: The Lone Ranger, Tom Mix and his Wonder Horse, Amos 'n' Andy, Sergeant Preston of the Yukon, Death Valley Days, Hoof Beats with Buck Jones, Jack Benny, and Dick Tracy.

Growing up in Cherry Hill, we had cats, but they were barn cats, not pets. I did have a dog. His name was Spot and he was white and black. We would hunt old possum and coons at night and squirrels during the day. I used my father's

¹⁸ Anyone in the community who desired to have a concession stand paid a fee. The concession stand operator kept the proceeds from sales.

¹⁹ Usually considered offensive, **Colored** was adopted in the United States by emancipated slaves as a term of racial pride after the end of the American Civil War. It was rapidly replaced in the late 1960s as a self-designation by **black** and later by **African-American**, although it is retained in the name of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In Britain it was the accepted term for black, Asian, or mixed-race people until the 1960s." NPR The Journey from "Colored" to "Minorities" to "People of Color" by Kee Malesky 3/4/2014 <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/03/30/295931070/the-journey-from-colored-to-minorities-to-people-of-color>

²⁰... Zenith radio joined with Wincharger Corporation of Sioux City, Iowa for a promotion. Anyone purchasing a Zenith farm radio received a coupon for 66% off on the purchase of a wind generator system. http://www.antiqueradio.com/Mar02_Russell_Windradio.html

shotgun. Shells weren't that expensive, but if you didn't have much money... You know, I earned a sharp shooter medal in boot camp. I must have been a pretty good shot when I was hunting back then.

The Great Depression

I grew up in the Great Depression²¹, but did not know it. We had plenty to eat, had to work hard and had little money. Just about everyone I knew lived the same. I thought that was just the way it was. Later, when the WPA²² was established, my mother got a job in a sewing circle in Moncks Corner. She walked the two miles to catch the bus that stopped at the end of Cherry Hill Road. In the evening, when the bus dropped her off, she would walk the two miles home. After working all day, she still had a farm and household to take care of. I must have been eleven or twelve years old.

My friends were Dan, Ben and Janie Lee Campbell & Lee and Cliff Lambright. Lee was my hero. He was about four years older than me. He was a fellow that liked to wrestle and box and all the kids were scared of him. We would get together at school during our "break." We played marbles and the girls jumped rope. After school, there would be a little time when we could play. Life was pretty fun back then.

On Saturday, I would go into Moncks Corner with my uncle Ed. He had a barbershop on East Main Street, about a block from the railroad tracks. I worked as a shoeshine boy. Everybody thought I was Uncle Ed's son. Sometimes I would make a dollar, sometimes fifty-cents, which I gave my mother. When peanuts were in season, I sold little bags of them to people on the street. My first cousin, Dan Roper, was a barber in the shop, too. He always gave me a quarter to take home with me. I kept a little money for my savings and gave the rest to my mother.

²¹ The Great Depression (1929 - 1939) was the longest -lasting economic downturn in the history of the Western industrialized world. It began soon after the stock market crash of 1929. www.history.com/topics/great-depression

²² WPA - The Works Progress Administration. The WPA was one of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs. It was a work-relief program to help people during the Great Depression. It began in 1933 and ended in 1943. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/dustbowl-wpa/>

When I finished 4th grade, I went to R.A. Ready School²³ in Moncks Corner. Would you believe...one day I saw a boy on the playground who looked kinda familiar. He looked at me, too, and said, "Hey! I know you. I gave you a ride on my bicycle." It was Henry Gibbs. We were happy to see each other again. He was a big boy. I never have any trouble with anybody. Nobody aggravated me because he was my friend.

The school was at the intersection of Hwy. 52 and E. Main Street. To get there you had to cross the Tail Race Canal. It was a flat bridge. It went across from what is now the boat landing and Gilligan's restaurant. It was a five-mile walk to the school from my Moomah's house. Colored schools did not have school buses. One afternoon, I was waiting for a ride home at the front of R.A. Ready School. A car hit and ran over me. It did not stop. Someone took me to the Berkeley County Hospital. I spent thirty-one days there, in a coma. This was not my first brush with death. Before being hit by the car, I was working with a metal file in the barn. I was by one of the cows and it kicked me. The file went in underneath my chin and through my tongue. Our neighbor, Willie Campbell, pulled it out. I can't remember who took me to Dr. Evans'²⁴ office in town. The office was almost behind Law & Mims store.⁷ The doctor took a look at wound, soaked a cotton ball in iodine, used a Q-tip to plug it in the wound and sent me home. When our family still lived in Cedar Hill, I also survived a fever that kept me in bed for a couple of weeks.

Home Remedies

Growing up we did not go to the doctor like people do today. It had to be very serious. Home remedies and patent medicines [over the counter] were what we used. I remember 666TM²⁵ Tonic. Whether you had fever or constipation, you would get a dose of 666TM. If you got the mumps, a slice of [pork] butt meat was tied around your jaw. You kept it on for three days. If your tonsils were bothering

²³ R. A. Ready Elementary School was located on the same lot as Berkeley Training High School. (NW corner of Main Street and Old U. S. Hwy 52 North in Moncks Corner)

²⁴ Dr. Walter Evans (1891-1967) was the first black physician in Berkeley County. He treated both black and white patients, respected by both.

²⁵ 666TM patent medicine marketed by the Monticello Drug Company and has been around since 1915.

you, you got a teaspoon of salt and pepper (dry, not moistened). You grew certain weeds and plants in your yard for home remedies. One was called a 'fever' bush [lemon grass]. It helped bring a fever down when boiled in water. Another weed was boiled in water to help bladder problems. If you had a bad cut that wouldn't stop bleeding, you put a cobweb on it. Red clay and Watkins liniment are some other "cures" I remember.

Berkeley Training High School

When we finally got a school bus, our community had to buy it. The school district sold their used buses to colored schools. The community knew some of the mechanics that worked in the bus maintenance department. The mechanics knew which buses were in the best condition, so the community bought one of those.

I saw my first movie, *Gone with the Wind*, at Berkeley Training High School²⁶ in 7th grade. We watched it over the course of three days. At that time, colored people were not allowed in movie or drive-in theaters²⁷. This was before desegregation.

Basketball

I was on the basketball team. (That Moses Fashion was a great basketball player!) We traveled to Kingstree, Summerton, Lake City and places like that. We often played in Manning, too. When we got back after the game, we had to find our own way home. We didn't have someone waiting to pick us up from the school like kids do today.

Five or six of us were from Cherry Hill. We usually walked home together. I didn't feel like walking home that night. I knew that on Tuesdays, there was a livestock market in Moncks Corner. People from Cordesville were at the market. The way

²⁶ Berkeley Training High School was located at intersection of Main Street and Old U. S. Hwy 52 North (North West corner) in Moncks Corner. First called Dixie Training School, the three-room school was built during the 1918-1920 period. In the 1930s, the name was changed to Berkeley Training High School. It was one of 500 training schools established for the education of colored people.

²⁷ There were no movie houses in Moncks Corner at that time. If there had been, Jim Crow law would not allow them to sit with the white people. If there was a balcony, the colored people paid for their ticket at a separate entrance. The colored people must sit there, no matter how many seats were available downstairs. Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States by Douglas Gomery, page 158, Google Books

to Cordesville went right by Biggins Church that was near my community. I asked Mr. James Anderson if he would give me a ride that far after the stock sale closed. He said he would. He and some other men were sitting around drinking, so it was a while before he was ready to leave. He and the men were laughing, talking, and drunk. I started banging on the cab window when they passed Biggins Church but they paid no mind, just kept driving. When the truck slowed down at Witherbee, I jumped out. Dan Roper, my cousin, who worked at Uncle Ed's barbershop, lived on Dr. Evans Road. I about going to his house to get a ride home but I didn't. I knew he wouldn't take me home until morning. I couldn't spend the night there! My mother would not go to bed until I got home...I had to walk. As the crow flies, Witherbee is about 8 miles from Cherry Hill. Walking on paved and dirt roads, it is a bit more than twenty miles. I'm glad I didn't know that then.

I got home about 4:00 a.m. My mother was still up and worried sick. That walk was through the woods in the dark. I ran until I was out of breath, walked until I caught it again, and ran again, over and over, until I finally got home. Uncle Ed was aggravated and went to see James Anderson. James told him, "I heard him knocking but I was going to take him all the way home on my way back from dropping off the other men!"

Trips to Charleston

I wasn't worked to death every day. Uncle Ed drove to Charleston about once a month on a Saturday. I went with him sometimes. He drove a big Ford cargo truck. He picked up orders for three area stores in Cordesville and for a plantation near Mepkin Abbey. He collected the money and their lists and delivered the things to them on the way back from Charleston. Uncle Ed traded with several Charleston stores and wholesalers.

I was about fourteen or fifteen. I had saved and saved until I had enough money to buy a suit. I think I saved \$15.00 or \$20.00 dollars. The next time Uncle Ed went to Charleston, I went with him. He took me to Dumas' new store on upper King Street. Dumas²⁸ still had his downtown store. That store sold everything you could

²⁸ M[ende]l] Dumas & Sons Founded in 1917 <http://mdumasandsons.com/about-us/>

think of: luggage, jewelry, suits, clothes, shoes, work boots, uniforms, dungarees, coats, things for sports, hats, ties, belts, musical instruments and more. They sold things I had never even imagined.

I found a brown three-piece suit and tried it on. I liked it pretty good. I took it to the counter to buy it. About that time, Mr. Dumas asked Uncle Ed, "Is that your boy?" Uncle Ed replied, "No, that's Octavius' boy." Mr. Dumas said, "That's Octavius' boy!" I remember Mr. Dumas being a rather short man. He jumped up from behind the counter and told the clerk to wrap it. The clerk wrapped it up in brown paper and string and handed it to me. Mr. Dumas gave me that suit. He had done business with my father and had really liked him. It was such a surprise! However, I think my mother was even more surprised than me when I came back home with the "suit" money.

WPA

Even though my mother was sickly, it did not stop her from taking care of our home, our garden, and us. When the Works Progress Administration (WPA) began to provide jobs, my mother worked in Moncks Corner in a sewing circle. She would walk the two miles to Biggin Church and catch the bus that came around to pick up WPA workers. She worked all day, rode the bus back to Biggin Church and walked home. She still tended to everything that we were unable to do. She stayed strong to make sure we had enough to get by.

Driving the School Bus

When I was old enough and had my license, I drove the school bus. I had some bad luck with that bus. We had to push it half the time when we got to the clay hill at Fashion Town²⁹. The last week of school, the brakes went out. I told one of the community members in charge of the bus. He said, "You're a good driver. You can make it." He didn't want to spend any money on the bus so close to the end of the school year.

²⁹ Fashion Town - a community about one-and-a-half miles SW of Cherry Hill.

Driving the bus on the way home from school, I was tailgating this lady with a bunch of children in a station wagon. She was making a left, so I went to go around her on the right. I couldn't run over those children! The bus hit a pothole and I lost control. The schoolchildren were screaming as the bus skidded right up to the edge of the canal. It was a scary thing. It felt like it happened in slow motion. When it stopped, the right side of the bus was tilting toward the canal. I told the children to go to the back of the bus and use the emergency door to get out. I used the emergency door, too. If we had tried to exit through the front, the bus would have teetered right into the canal.

The lady in the station wagon saw it happen but did not stop. She must have been scared. She had turned off before crossing the flat bridge to look at the Santee Cooper project widening of the canal. She didn't stop to look. She just kept on going.

No one asked if we needed help. We all walked the two-and-a-half miles home. I probably told my mother about it before talking to any of the men in charge of the bus. I know those men were thanking the Lord that the bus did not go in the canal. One of my uncles used his truck to drag the bus off the bank to bring it home.

Santee Cooper

My first real job was with Santee Cooper³⁰ when I was in the 10th grade. I worked after school from 4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. I got paid \$0.50 cents an hour! I worked as a cement mixer. I mixed the cement then poured it into a hopper. Then, men pumped it under the dikes to reinforce them. Working with cement was not that hard but it was steady. After being at school all day, it was hard to keep up your energy until 11:00 p.m. I was thankful that two men from Cherry Hill also worked that shift. I always had a ride home.

³⁰ Santee Cooper - South Carolina Public Service Authority was granted permission to dam the Santee River, divert its water into the Cooper River, clear land for two large reservoirs, construct a hydroelectric plant at Pinopolis, and sell electricity to residents in surrounding counties. Work began on the project in 1939.
<http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/santee-cooper/>

The cement dust...no matter how much you washed, it clung to you. At school, as the day wore on the children would laugh at me. That cement dust would come out of my pores and make me look gray.

Now, there was no time for me to be Uncle Eddie's ploughboy. I would rather work after school and get paid real money. I still plowed my mother's field on the weekend, though.

The summer before 11th³¹ grade, I had another Santee Cooper job. I worked from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. planting grass on the backside of the dikes (the side away from the lake³²). The work was hard and hot but I made \$0.45 cent an hour. That was more than my teacher's salary! That first paycheck felt like a million bucks.

CCC Camp

During my last semester of high school, I was already on the lookout for a job. I was 17. I had heard about the CCC Work Camp³³ in Witherbee where they were making turpentine. I knew you lived at the camp and could come home to visit sometimes, but you had to be 18. I wanted to do anything but keep plowing those fields, so a buddy and I went and signed up. I could wait until my birthday in June. I was a kid. It never crossed my mind that it could be dangerous. My mother was so upset she cried. She didn't want me going to any work camp. She thought it was dangerous. The next day I had to go back and take my name off the list. It was a good thing, too, even though I didn't think so at the time. Black men came from all over the state to work at the camp. There was always something bad going down and fighting all the time. I am not talking about black against white. The black men caused all this trouble on their side of the camp!

³¹ At that time, graduation from high school occurred after the 11th year. There was no 12th grade.

³² Lake Moultrie

³³ Formed in March 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps, CCC, was one of the first New Deal programs. It was a public works project intended to promote environmental conservation and to build good citizens through vigorous, disciplined outdoor labor. Close to the heart of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the CCC combined his interests in conservation and universal service for youth. He believed that this civilian "tree army" would relieve the rural unemployed and keep youth "off the city street corners. Also known as "Roosevelts Tree Army"
<http://www.history.com/topics/civilian-conservation-corps>

Law and Mims

I graduated from Berkeley Training High School³⁴ just before my 16th birthday. At that time, people graduated after they finished the 11th grade. I worked behind the counter in the grocery section of Law and Mims General Merchandise³⁵ store in Moncks Corner. Stores were not self-service at that time. People came in and told the clerk what they wanted. All the goods were on shelves behind the counter. As the customer gave the grocery order to the clerk, I collected the items and bagged them. The clerk was in charge of the cash register. I worked there for about two years before I entered the Army. I had registered to enter the Army in Moncks Corner when I was 18 years old, but I was not called up until I was 19.

³⁴ Berkeley Training High School was located at intersection of Main Street and Old U. S. Hwy 52 North (North West corner) in Moncks Corner. First called Dixie Training School, the three-room school was built during the 1918-1920 period. In the 1930s, the name was changed to Berkeley Training High School. It was one of 500 training schools established for the education of colored people.

³⁵ In 1918 the Law and Mims Mercantile Company was organized by George W. Law⁽¹⁸⁸³⁻¹⁹⁴⁶⁾ and James W. "Bill" Mims⁽¹⁸⁸²⁻¹⁹⁷³⁾. It was located on the North East corner of East Main Street and Railroad Avenue.