

Avondale Mills Project

Interviewer: Edward Akin

Interviewee: Ruby Daniels and Mr. & Mrs. Wilbur Wade

4/7/1981

A: This is an interview with Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Wade at his home--at his home in Birmingham, on April 7th, 1981. Because he is hard of hearing, I'll be writing questions for him and then he'll be answering them.

W: The first place I started working in was the Stonewall Cotton Mill from 1923 'til 1927. I was a cloth boy.

[LONG PAUSE]

[Why did you rate Avondale as the best of the mills you have worked in?]

W: When I was down there. They treated everybody well down there, but they wanted you to work, though. I worked all time and the boss he watched what I done. What about the most backward mill I worked at? That was Winona. Why did I leave Stonewall? It was the boss! The boss went to Winona and came back to Stonewall and got me and carried me over to Winona. I stayed there about six weeks, then I went back to Stonewall. That [Winona] was the most backward mill I worked at. It had a great big ol' steam engine with a whole lot of ropes on it—great big ol' ropes. That steam engine, it had a big wheel that had two burns on it with ropes on it way up in the mill. It pulled the whole mill. _____ (??) had two at the same time. Have you ever heard of one of them...one of them big steam engines with the ropes on them? They used to have one down there at Avondale.

[LONG PAUSE]

[What, in particular, made Winona backward?]

W: Because--cause them looms, they was mostly —they was mostly made out of wood. I think I had about twelve looms, but I couldn't run them mostly made out of wood.

A: Because I read this [biographical questionnaire Wade had filled out] and his experience just covered everything.

Mrs. W: Yeah, he really does.

W: You know what that is?

A: Those are uh...uh reeds.

W: Reed hooks.

A: Reed hooks, uh-huh.

W: That's the kind [of reed hook] they give us down there at the mill. They give us them down at the mill and the handle broke off one of them. I put that handle on there. That's a homemade one. I made a lot of them. I hand made a lot of reed hooks, though.

A: Mr. Wade has shown me four different kinds of reed hooks, one of which is homemade.

W: Didn't miss a day. Where is that. See if I can find it. [FLIPS THROUGH A BOOKLET] Yeah, that's what I was fixing to show you. Yeah, I wanted to show you one of them shuttles that was in that old mill at Winona. I never did work in nothing but the weave shop. Sixteen years. That's the kind of loom I worked on down there, Thompson _____?? head, that's a magazine, put four coils of thread in there, in the magazine. [THUMBS THROUGH BOOKLET] That's one of the best pickers they ever made right there. This is like the one we had down there.

A:Mr. Wade is showing me through a booklet of-of different types of-of loom things that have improved the process.

W: Them Draper looms there. We had two_ of them down there [Birmingham]

A: The Draper loom, one of the more modern ones that he worked on.

W: That's the kind we had down there.

W: Yeah. That's the type shuttle we had in the ones at Winona. They did not have no batteries on 'em . You had to put the filling in by hand. Shuttles fell down in there. You had to pull out, put it all, put the quill, and push it back down in. You had to feed the shuttles by hand in that mill in Winona. That's one reason I call it backwards. There were no automatic loom. Automatic went to filling in the shuttle itself. You had to pull it out, pull the spindle, put another in there and put it in-put it in the loom.

W: [POINTS TO PAGE IN BOOKLET] It's a box loom. There are four shuttles in that box. There's the kind I worked on at Avondale. [FLIPS THROUGH BOOKLET] That's a box loom. It's a box loom picker.

A: Okay.

W:He was making them pickers like that. Them's made out of whale hide. It smelled "ugh." They tore up—they're put together with rivets, see. It's a box loom. All of them I worked on down there in old Shirley town in Starkville and Kosciusko .

A: So...

W: We were over there about eighteen years. Didn't we—yeah.

A: Who—who was the owner at Kosciusko?

Mrs. W: I forgot his name. [TO MR. WADE:] Who was the owner of Kosciusko?

W: Huh?

Mrs. W: Kosciusko.

W: Kosciusko.

Mrs. W: Who owned that mill?

W: Who owned the mill? Robert Sanders

A: I'd talked to another fellow over in Mississippi who worked there.

W: Ol' man J. W. Sanders, who was his father, he owned them a long time. When he died, his boy Robert Sanders...

[Was he a hard boss?]

W: "Head boss"?

A: Hard...was he a hard boss?

W: Who was the head boss? Robert Sanders.

Mrs. W: A hard boss?

W: Huh?

Mrs. W: Hard?

W: Was he hard? Hard boss? What is a hard boss?

Mrs. W: Make you work.

W: No, he was no hard boss.

A: No.

W: He shut that mill down, but it run...it run all the time during the war, Second World War. It run all the time. But after the war, he was ready to shut it down, and he did shut it down. And Robert Sanders, he came to Kosciusko, he was getting ready to start it back up. But he got sick while he was there and they carried him to the hospital there at Kosciusko and he died there. After he died, they never did start that mill back up. And then-and then ol' man J. W. Sanders, that was Robert Sanders's daddy, you say about twenty-five mills in Mississippi. You know that mill right over there—not Avondale—there's an old cotton mill back over there. Do you know it?

A: On Vanderbilt Road?

Mrs. W: I think that's where it was at.

W: It's an old cotton mill. It's still there but they got a warehouse in it.

Mrs. W: That's it.

A: Yeah.

W: You know where it's at. Go down there even with the Southern Railroad tracks there and come back up this way and see it down there.

[Did you know Robert Mulligan?*

*Robert Mulligan was a man who worked in the Sanders' Mills.

W: Robert Mulligan? Where did he work at?

A: Kosciusko

W: Kosciusko? I didn't know any Mulligans there.

A: That's the guy I'd talked to over in Mississippi. I-I think, though, that he worked mainly at other Sanders' mills.

Mrs. W: Uh, huh. Probably so.

W: Have you been to Sylacauga?

A: Not yet.

W: I know 'em down there. [TURNS PAGES IN BOOKLET]

[LONG PAUSE]

[How did you start weaving?]

W: I already knowed how to weave when they put me to weaving. When I was working at Stonewall, I was a cloth boy there, sometimes I would do all the batteries. Do you know what "doing batteries" is? Someone lives right up there, Mrs. Glass,. She was a __ (??) she worked down there with me. Mrs. Glass, she filled batteries down there. Do you know her?

A: No.

W: I don't know what her first name is. She lives in that house straight over there.

A: Okay. [TO MRS. W:] Do you remember her first name?

Mrs. W: Alice, I think. Alice

A: Alice?

Mrs. W: Uh, huh. I think it is.

[LONG PAUSE]

A: With all this stuff [Wade had just brought in his reed hooks]—I brought my camera, and I'll probably have to get a new roll of film because I'd like to get a picture of these reed hooks, and some of this stuff he's telling me about.

[TAPE CUTS OFF]

W: It's got "J. B. Wade" on there [REFERS TO TIME BOOK IN HIS HANDS].

A: Uh-huh.

W: It's my brother. He got killed in a car wreck on the Natchez Trace. He used to be boss at Sylacauga. This is the time book what he kept over there. He wrote the names of the people and kept time while he was boss over there. [LISTS EMPLOYEES IN BOOK, INCLUDING RUBY DANIEL]. Them is weavers.

[How did you come to be a weaver?]

W: The way I got to be a weaver, I lived in Stonewall. I was a cloth boy. And they didn't stock the mill all day; they had a weaver who would go home for dinner, for about an hour. I would run the looms while he went home for dinner. I was a cloth boy, and I didn't have to work all the time. So whenever he would go home for dinner, he would have me run those looms. Know what kind of cloth they made? That mill in Stonewall is the only one running in Mississippi now. The only one I know of. Know where Stonewall, Mississippi is?

A: Un-uh.

W: About twenty miles south of Meridian.

[What were your work hours?]

W: Eleven.

W and A: Worked eleven hours a day.

A: At Stonewall?

W: Uh-huh. They didn't stop off -they did stop off for dinner. You would go home and eat dinner at twelve, come back at one. That would make it a twelve-hours day, start at six, get off at six. Know what I made an hour? Nine cents.

A: Nine cents?! Unh!

Mrs. W: [LAUGHS]

A: Nine cents an hour.

W: We worked twelve hours a day for one dollar. Bet you couldn't get nobody to work for that now.

A: Un-uh. No.

W: Made for nine cents an hour! They paid off every two weeks. When they did, I got a blank slip nearly every time. I owed them money. I didn't draw nothing all year.

[What about a company store?]

W: Yeah, they had a company store. They had a company store and they would write a ticket, you know, like these food stamps. They had one cent, two cents, fifteen cents, on up. And when you got everything, they would tear some of those coupons out of the book. My daddy—my daddy and one of my sisters they would go out there and always write tickets on me all the time and bought things in that store and they never did owe me nothing. I never got to it to stop. After I got that stopped, I started drawing money. I wasn't but about fourteen/fifteen years old. See, I started working at the cotton mill in Stonewall about three months before I was fourteen years old.

Mrs. W: It was fourteen last time I checked it was fourteen .

A: Fourteen. I have asked him how many in his family were living at Stonewall.

W: They was most all of us lived there, I think. I had four brothers and five sisters. [TO MRS. M:] Some of them is dead, ain't they?

Mrs. W: They wasn't then, though. I think you had one sister dead.

A: And all of them worked there in the mill? Do you know?

Mrs. W: No, I really don't know. I know this one, that book belonged to, he worked there. And another brother lives in Temple. He worked there. But I don't know about his other brothers and sisters.

A: Now, in the family, where was Mr. Wade? Was he one of the older ones or one of the younger children?

Mrs. W: Who me?

A: Yes.

Mrs. W: He was next to the youngest. Uh, he's got a sister younger than he is. But he was next to the youngest, I believe.

A: And so—uh, I need to check his thing. They had been farming before they moved in to Stonewall?

Mrs. W: Uh, huh. Yes.

[TAPE CUTS OFF]

A: Mr. Wade is showing me a time book that his brother kept while he was, I guess, what, boss weaver at...

Mrs. W: Sylacauga.

A: At Sylacauga

Mrs. W: That's it right there.

A: And he is also going through another book that explains the process of the old shuttle box looms. And here he has a picture of his...

W: All of us lived at Stonewall, but this one, it's my oldest sister. She lives at Hattisburg -be eighty-nine in August. [POINTING TO PICTURE:] That is my oldest brother. He lives at Tupelo. He's eighty-seven.

A: Uh, huh.

W: This one's dead. He's dead. That's J.B. Wade; the one that wrote this book.

A: Yeah, yeah.

W: Yeah, he lived at Stonewall awhile . He's the one, him, and him-they the ones that got us started in the cotton mills.

A: So your two older brothers.

W: He's now down in Jasper County, near Heidelberg, Mississippi. He-he went off in the First World War. He lives in Tupelo there. When he come back from the Army, he met a girl in Stonewall, he married her, then he let her go in that cotton mill at Stonewall. Boy, I think both been better off if they'd stayed on the farm.

A and Mrs. W: [LAUGHS]

Mrs. W: He's got a sister who lives in Jackson.

W: This one, he went to Laurel, Mississippi and married a girl who worked in a cotton mill there.

A: Mm, hm. [TO MRS. W] What-what's his sister in Jackson—what's her name?

Mrs. W: Um, Mrs. L. A. Cockrell.

W: He died in 1946. J Edgar. He lived in California. He went to the Navy in the First World War. He lived in California. He has three daughters. I never did see them.

A: Mm, hm.

W: He died in his sleep and they cremated his body and carried him out into the Pacific Ocean and scattered them on the water. _____ (??) The children of my oldest sister live in

Hattiesburg, Mississippi, now. That's Shaddix. She lives at Godkin, Mississippi. Have you ever heard of – have you ever heard of Canton, Mississippi? Ain't that close to Jackson? I remember going through there.

A: That's right

W: My sister's, Shaddix. She lives at Jackson, Mississippi, and she worked in the cotton mill for a long time. She was a smasher hand.

A: The one in Jackson was a smasher hand.

W: This one, she died in 1978. Born in ...She died in 1978, she was a smasher hand. She was a weaver and loom fixer. That's me. That's my boy, there. That's him there. He's forty-one now.

A: Mm, hm.

A: All of us worked at Stonewall but this one.

A: So, the oldest sister was the only one not living at Stonewall?

W: And this one the older lives at Stonewall. We all got started in the cotton mill by going to Stonewall. It's a nice place. Wish I lived there now. Best water I ever saw - artesian wells for our water. That was a cotton mill town . The cotton mill owned the whole place. See? I think that mill is still running.

A: I'm asking: what was the rent at Stonewall? Rent?

W: What was rent? I don't know, they just took it out of the payroll. Wasn't much. My sister stayed there. Don't know much about it. The rent was steep in the cotton mill in Kosciusko and we stayed in the cotton mill at Kosciusko. It wasn't but about four or five or six dollars a month in Kosciusko. I think they got some type of factory in the cotton mill now. Do you know of any cotton mills in Mississippi? Huh?

A: No, not now.

W: Stonewall, I think it's still running. Know what keeps it running? Overalls.

A: Really?

W: They make overall cloth there. They made all of it denim .

A: I'm asking him: what happened to his parents by the time they had gone into the textile mill?

W: You mean my pa and..

A: Mm, hm.

W: My mother died in 1916. I don't-I don't think she ever did see a cotton mill. See, my mother, she went to college. My daddy, too. I think that's where they met. My daddy died in 1937, in Jackson ,

Mississippi. They buried him at Tupelo. My mother's buried on that old farm where we used to live, see? Lost my grandmother to ear ache my mother died. She had pneumonia. They carried a wagon home with my grandmother. Grandmother she was sick. She died the very night when she got there. I think she was in her forties. She may have been just about forty-six, I don't know.

[TAPE CUT OFF AS WADE EXITS TO GET SOMETHING]

W: That's old farm where my grandpa lived. And over there in that house right there – that's a tub over a well right there.

A: I'm asking him how he had lost his hearing. He said he had lost it a year after his mother died in 1916.

W: I stayed up with the measles in the bed for a month for a long time. It's called scarlet fever or something_ I seen this man, he come see us, one time and I see him he had five peas. See? He put one in each ear one in each eye one in his mouth and he spit out five peas. I believed he fooled me and I really tried it. See? I put peas in my ear put some in my eyes one in my mouth I tried to do what he did and it wouldn't work . Maybe that's what happened to my ears. I don't think that's what done it. They used to tease me. See? Them peas were raw they wouldn't make you deaf.[TELLS ABOUT THE MAN PUTTING PEAS IN HIS EARS AND SPITTING THEM OUT HIS MOUTH. THIS MUST HAVE BEEN A TRICK, WADE LATER PERCEIVED, SINCE HE COULD NOT CLEAR HIS EARS OUT BY THAT METHOD].

[LONG PAUSE]

W: Some of them..._____ (??) When my brother was boss head at Sylacauga, them was weavers: Robert Matthews _____ (??) she weaved on my job when I was fixing looms down there at Avondale. Do you know her?

A: I don't know her.

W: Dorothy Tyler. She was a tall woman who worked on my job down there .I don't know if that is her or not.

Mrs. W: Let me see that thing.

W: Do you know Brandon Kilgore?

A: Brandon Kilgore, un-uh.

W: He weaved on my job. [TAPE CUTS OFF] She didn't do no work in the cotton mill did she? I think she [Ruby Daniels] knows my brother Benny. He was her boss.

A: So your brother would have been Ruby Daniel's boss.

W: Right.

A: Mm, hm.

[Did your folks ever take off?]

W: You mean take off?

A: Just take a day off.

W: And stay off from work?

A: Yeah. [COUGHS]

W: You know a lot of folks take off quite a bit. Time they stay out they earned in. You-you any kin to Guinn?

A: Yeah, I'm...

W: How do you spell it? G-U-I-double N.

A: Mm, hm.

W: Gu-inn, ain't it?

A: Guinn, yeah.

W: What was his first name? I know, but I can't think of it right now.

A: Orville.

W: Orville, yeah. I used to talk to him all the time.

A: Called him-called him Windy.

W: He tied on warps down there. You know that?

A: Yeah

W: Tied on warps. He was on first shift and I was on second.

Mrs. W: There you are. [Mrs. D enters the room] This is-this is another cotton mill worker, Mrs. Daniels.

A: [To Mrs. D:] Hello!

Mrs. D: Hey!

A: [To Mrs. D] We've-we've been finding them all over.

Mrs. W: This is—

A: [To Mrs. D:] Glad to meet you.

Mrs. D: [To A:] What is your name?

A: [To Mrs. D:] Eddie Akin. I'm Mary and Orville Guinn's nephew. But you worked in Sylacauga most of your life?

Mrs. D: Uh-huh. I worked there back during the war, worked there for fourteen years.

Mrs. W: Look here, Mrs. Daniels. See here? [Shows time book to Mrs. D]

A: Mrs. Ruby Daniels just has come in. She worked at the Avondale in Sylacauga for fourteen years, as a weaver.

Mrs. D: I started work in Sally B. and then that closed down. I went to the-I went to the Central a little while, which was in the winding room, and I worked in Central a little while, but I didn't like winding in Central. So I went back to Eva Jane in the weave room filling batteries.

A: Mm, hm.

Mrs. D: And uh, so those are the only part of the mill I worked in. And what part did you work at?

A: Well, I'm- I'm just talking to people who worked at Avondale. I-I teach history and-and I've been...

W: [To Mr. D:] Do you know what them [reed hooks] is?

Mrs. D: Uh, no, I didn't weave.

[LAUGHTER]

A: But you knew about them.

Mrs. D: Yeah, I worked in the weave room after I come back from the Eva Jane I come back from Central then I went up there and worked in that part. But I worked-I used to be a winder, worked in the Sally B. in the winding room for a long time.

W: Do you know my brother, J. B. Wade? He wrote that book there. That's him right there [in this picture].

A: Mr. Wade's brother had been her overseer.

Mrs. D: What part of the mill did he work in?

Mrs. W: In the weave shop.

W: Got killed in a car wreck.

Mrs. D: That's Eva Jane weave shop? Now Eva Jane was a weave room. I worked in the weave room but uh, I worked on those uh box looms, when they put in those box looms. And uh, well, I worked in some of the other though just before they put that in. But I went to work on that because I liked it better. There were a lot of people I knew in there. And uh, I may have seen him, but right now I don't recall the name. I'm trying to think of who was...uh.....

A: Now, he went by what?

Mrs. W: "J.B."

A: "J.B."

Mrs. W: ... or Benny, Benny Wade. I believe he went by Benny.

Mrs. D: He was a weaver?

Mrs. W: No, he was boss.

Mrs. D: Ah, well, they had their boss man, then their second hand uh, over the workers. Then the other man, he had a bunch of them that he was over.

A: Does that book have a date on it, a year? Yeah, it does...

Mrs. D: I started work there in '42. I worked for fourteen years.

A: '52... 1952 was when this book was...

[UNINTELLIGIBLE SPEAKING]

Mrs. W: Well, Mrs. Daniels, he's got your name in it.

A: The name's on the book! [LAUGHS]

Mrs. W: Sure is!

W: Frank Walls, Albe Odum I worked with him worked with them a long time .

Mrs. D: Well, see, they uh...

Mrs. W: Let her see it.

Mrs. D: I worked ...

W: Frank Walls is a great big old boy. His wife ____ (??) used to fill batteries on my job in Kosciusko, Mississippi.

Mrs. D: Well, the overseer of the Sally B. when I went there was uh Manuel Boulger was overseer of the Sally B. at the time I went there. And then, of course, there was a second hand for each shift. And uh, I forgot their names right now, normally I know, but I can't think of them right now, but uh Manuel Boulger was over the Sally B and when that closed down he left there . Cummings used to be, Cummings was over the weave room there for a good long while, I forgot his given name but was uh head man in the weave room when I went there. Most of the time I went there. I'm trying to think of his name, I can't remember .

Mrs. W: Did you work there in '52?

Mrs. D: Yeah, I worked in there in '52. I guess I was working in the weave room. But I worked in the winding room though. The biggest part of the time I was there, until they closed down after Sally B.

A: Yeah.

Mrs. D: And made that a warehouse over there now.

A: Yeah.

Mrs. D: And uh, when they closed that out, then I went to work for about three or four months at Eva Jane. I didn't like—I mean over at the Central, and I didn't like it at Central. And so, I went back up to the weave room—because I knew the man that was in there at the time—and asked him to give me a job up there, so he did. So I went filling mattress in the weaving room now that weave room had a whole lot of people.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Mrs. D: And three shifts, too. During the war, they worked three shifts all the time.

A: Mr. Wade was telling about his first job over—well, his second one I guess over in Winona, Mississippi, where-where...

A: Where the weaving was done on wooden looms.

Mrs. D: When I started into it, weavers a many a time. I could have learned to weave in a little while, but I just—Well, back then you have, had to get real particular about the quality and all that, and so I didn't care about weaving.

A: The quality control stuff.

Mrs. D: Yeah. And the man who lived across the street from me was David Wyatt. Did you ever know David Wyatt? He lived right across the street from me. Well, I lived on one corner, and he lived right opposite me. He worked in there for years. And his son is David Wyatt, Jr. I don't know whether he is working in the mill or not? I believe he's at something else.

A: How many, how many of your folks worked at the Mill?

Mrs. D: None of them.

A: Just you?

Mrs. D: Uh, huh. My husband was disabled, he had arthritis real bad, we wasn't even able to work. I lived on Tuscaloosa Street and bought that house when the company sold the homes.

A: In about '50. I guess—'49 or '50?

Mrs. D: It was a duplex, the one I lived in. The woman who had lived there though, she had been there, oh and her aunt had lived in it. But uh, she was sick and didn't get to work over half the time. So they

didn't give her the opportunity to buy it. I was working regular all the time and they gave me the opportunity to buy the house, so I did.

A: What did you do, just knock a door between the two?

Mrs. D: No, I just left it a duplex.

A: Really?

Mrs. D: Uh, huh, I just had one daughter; and she was already married and gone from home.

A: So you just rented out the other side?

Mrs. D: Uh, huh, rented out the other half. And sold it to a man that worked as boss man over the spooling room, I can't think of his name. But his wife was that Mr. Wyatt's sister, but I can't think of his name. He was boss man over the spooling room for years and years, now. But he's dead now. He died after they bought that house from me. I sold them the house when I left there because the house was old and I knew if I didn't they'd give way fast. They were old houses. Those names are familiar alright. Now I know Riggins. Now, Riggins used to be- he was second hand on the evening shift of the weave room. I can't understand that. He lived out from Goodwater. It wasn't Charles Riggins. I got a picture, I've got a picture over there of a whole lot of the weave room people.

A: Good!

Mrs. D: And they made one, I think it was around Christmas. We had dinner and they made a picture of it. And Heflin Haynes, did you ever know Heflin Haynes?

A: I haven't gotten into Sylacauga yet. But I intend to.

Mrs. D: You don't know Heflin Haynes. Heflin Haynes, he was a head man too. He died too. He died of a heart attack. He was a boss of something there. He-he just come in the mill and work with the bosses. He didn't really have a boss man's job in that part of the mill.

A: Let me switch sides.

[END OF SIDE 1]

[SIDE 2]

Mrs. D: Hayes. Did you ever know any Hayes down there? Did you work at Sylacauga?

A: No. He worked here, but his brother was at Sylacauga.

Mrs. W: His brother worked at Sylacauga.

W: [A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFICULTY HERE BECAUSE I WAS TRYING TO TALK WITH MR. WADE WITH MRS. WADE AND MRS. DANIELS WERE CARRYING ON A CONVERSATION] You all need to get going the same way. It's a wonder that mill didn't fall down. It had loom on the first floor. In Tupelo Had them on that

second floor at that mill in Tupelo. They had looms on top, and spinning frames on bottom. Them looms all get to going one way at the same time and that mill would walk. And that I was telling you while ago was true. Most of them looms was made out of wood.

[SNIPPETS FROM OTHER CONVERSATION]

Mrs. D: Is his brother still living?

Mrs. W: No, his brother got killed in a car wreck. He had just retired.

W: Them pickers. We had to start them holes by ourselves, see. [SHOWING DIAGRAMS FROM BOOK]

A: Yeah.

W: After a while they would already have holes in them.

A: I was asking: Why were these looms called box looms that he's been talking about?

W: Because they had boxes on them. The box loom because...

A: Up on the side?

W: Its a box right there. Four shuttles in that box.

A: Four shuttles would go in a box.

W: That's why it's a box; four shuttles in one box. See?

A: Mm, hm.

W: See, they weaved different colors, see. Box, four colors that went into it had different colors in it.

A: Each of the shuttles...

W: Had one, on the bottom. Had one there, when it took, runs across, see?

A: Mm, hm.

W: When it comes back, a color comes down in that other box, see. Sometimes I'd have a loom that I'd work on it all day to fix it.

A: Yeah.

W: I'd go home change down; and the next day I'd go back and fix it in a minute. Find out what's wrong with it. Checks, checked. They had four box looms at Kosciusko, see. They checked cloth.

A: The-the box loom....

W: Lot of them didn't have but two sides in them. The box loom could make black and white or any color you wanted, see.

A: The box...[TO MRS. D AS SHE LEFT]Good to meet you.

Mrs. W: Come back Ms. Daniels.

Mrs. D: Okay.

A:[TO Mr. W.] The box looms would make checks.

W: We had box looms at Stonewall. Had awkward looms, that's a Draper; they made denim. Its made just like quill. White on one side and blue on the other side. [TO HIS WIFE]Did she know any of them people on there [THE TIME BOOK]?

Mrs. W: A few of them.

W: Does she know Benny?

Mrs. W: She can't place him.

W: Huh?

Mrs. W: She can't place him.

W: What, she don't know him?

Mrs. W: That's her name though.

W: It show___(??) was here boss a long time. The Draper don't have but one shuttle in it so it don't have no box. That's why it's called a box loom. That box loom has a shuttle box. The box loom moves up and down, moves up and down. Puts the color in that. You've seen that checkered cloth. You've got one in there. There's some checked cloth in there. [HE IS THUMBING THROUGH A TECHNICAL BOOK] That things on the bottom. I don't think I worked on any of them much. The kind I worked on was the other kind. See that, that's the hole to start the shuttle. If that hole ain't in the middle. I tried there that kind. One of them flying shuttles hit you. One would hit you in the head, see, and one in the back right on the bone, and made a hole in my back. That was at Stonewall, Mississippi: I was filling batteries.

A: I'm asking why did he end up going with Avondale, and how did he find out about—the job or Avondale?

W: Why did I go with Avondale? How did I find out about what?

A: About Avondale.

W: About Avondale.

A:The job.

W: I first worked down there in 1937, see.

A: Mm, hm.

W: They shut that mill down at Tupelo. I was working there. They made Tupelo shut down there. Every one of those looms had Darby's, twelve heads on them. They made Darby cloth there. And they-they went to strike in 1937, wanted more money. That cotton mill never made no money, just enough to pay them hands with. I didn't strike. Them hands, they struck. They wanted more money and the company couldn't pay them more money. Making about seventeen dollars a week, for five days. I was ...that was good money for that day, 1937; you could buy a loaf of bread for three cents. That easy in 1937. They went on strike and the company couldn't pay them no more money. So they finally just shut it down. Them hands, they went home, got their beds, and carried them up there and slept up there. The governor of Mississippi, I think it was White, you know?

A: Hugh White.

W: He come to Tupelo to get them to go back to work. They run him out of the mill. [LAUGHS] Know the reason I wasn't there? My daddy died at the same time as when they went on strike, that's the reason I wasn't over there. Jimmy Cropt, he started it all. Ever heard of him? He worked with me, weaving there alongside of me. We used to turn the boil on that floor a hundred times at night.

Mrs. W: You didn't tell him how you come to Birmingham.

A: He's telling how he left Tupelo.

W: Well, they shut that mill down at Tupelo. And, my brother, Benny-my brother Benny, him and another boy left Tupelo and come over here. He come over here and went to work down there, fixing looms that was Drapers. Down there then. And after he was over here a while, he got me over here, see. So, when I come over here, me and him boarded at a place down on Fortieth Street, with a boy named Bob, he run that filling station back over there. And my brother, he got tired of it, see, he got tired of it. He went on back to Tupelo then went to Kosciusko, see. I stayed on over there after he went on back home. Why did I leave down there? The reason I left down there: when I was working down there they had some little ole small box looms down there, for shuttles. Mr. Luman Cost calls me, ever heard of him?

A: Mm, hm.

W: He was my fixer. And John Moon was boss, ever heard of him?

A: Yeah, yeah.

W: I forgot what that second hand's name was. They say he got rich. Yeah. But John Moon was boss. The reason I left was that it was it was early in 1938, see. They throwed them box looms out, They wasn't much good anyway. When they throwed them out, they didn't have no work for me to do, so I went to Kosciusko, see, with my brother, and stayed there about eighteen years. Worked for Robert Sanders. Bill

Weeks was my boss when I first went over there. You ever heard of him? He used to fix looms at Stonewall, Mississippi. I worked at Kosciusko about eighteen years, they shut that mill down. And my brother Benny, he come over here, he went to Sylacauga. After a while I came to Birmingham. They said they moved some of them box looms, I think, from Sylacauga to this mill, see. And my brother followed them over here, see. When they shut that mill down at Kosciusko, I worked at Starkville a long time, see. I got tired of that, I had to travel a hundred and twenty miles a day to go to work, from Kosciusko, sixty miles each way. I come over here and went to work. I worked about a year and a half, then went back to Kosciusko, got homesick. So, I worked about three or four months and come back over here, and I been here ever since 19--December 1956. I worked about 15 more years down there, until they shut it down. They didn't want me to leave. They wanted me to go to Pell City and work. We never did go, see. We just stayed here and I retired, when I was close to sixty-three.

A: Mm, hm.

W: We stopped in 1971, wasn't it; that's when they shut it down.

A: I asked him if uh the box loom fixer was the most skilled job in the mill?

W: I think so. Does do the most work. Did you ever hear-did you ever hear about them box looms? They are doing like this on the box end all the time.

A: Yeah, I've seen them.

W: You ever hear about that. They pull the boxes , you see. They pull the boxes . When they change boxes. When that-when that box goes way up down there it has to pull that thread out a little from there when it goes-when it goes up, and when it comes back down there will be a loose thread that get up in the cloth, but they had-they had to hire a bunch of people down there to pull that thread out of the end of the cloth.

A: Mm, hm.

W: You know, I made them a thing to put all them looms and everything on them looms....side of the box I made them a thing and that took care of the problem. It put two or three people out of work they had a job pulling that thread out of the end of the cloth.

A: Did they give you any...?

W: They gave me fifty dollars for making that thing. [MRS. W LAUGHS]

A: Paid you fifty dollars!

W: The old kind with three levers on it with a string tied onto it goes straight down to the floor. One would come with the thread up to this box. Every time that shuttle box move one of them threads I would put one would come up to pull that thread back from getting caught, see.

A: Mm, hm.

They hired all them loom fixers one Sunday to go down there and put them things on. They did not have to add very much. All of that stuff was already on the loom, see. There's a boy from Germany come over here and he copied off of me and made them one better than I had, see. Small stubs. I never did read all that [REFERRING TO THE BOOK HE IS SCANNING]. It tells how all that supposed to work. I already know! HA! I _____(??)

A: [TO MRS. W.] Now, were most of the children raised in Kosciusko?

Mrs. W: Uh, yeah. We have two, and they was raised in Kosciusko.

W: Have you ever seen the loom running. Have you ever seen a four-box?

A: Yeah, uh over at West Point Pepperill in uh the Valley.

W: You see them down there; you been in that mill?...[A WRITES IT OUT] West Point Pepperill, I've heard of that. How many mills have they got?

A: A lot.

W: Have they got a lot of them? What about J.P. Stephens? He's got a lot of mills, ain't he? Where is Fairfax, North Carolina...

A: No

W:... Alabama? I've heard of West Point Pepperill, but I've never worked for them.

A: Mm, hm.

W: There's all the cotton mills I worked for right there.

[What do you mean by backwards?]

W: What I mean by backwards is that it has oldest stuff in it. What I mean by [AVONDALE WAS THE BEST MILL, REFERRING TO HIS BIOGRAPHICAL SHEET] that was that they had the most modern stuff. You've never seen a wooden loom, have you?

A: Un, huh.

W: [STILL FLIPPING THROUGH BOOK] That's a Norfolk loom...That's a Draper, ain't got but one shuttle in it.

A: I've asked him: What has replaced the box looms?

W: What has replaced the box looms? I wouldn't know. Did they replace them since 1971?

A: I don't know.

W: They had some new looms down there. They bought some brand new looms, paid about \$5,000 apiece for them. They weren't worth a darn! They had to throw them out. I think they was all electric. I never did work on them. They didn't have nothing to slam them off. They warmed up and suppose to stop in the middle. Supposed to have a brake on it. It would brake if that shuttle didn't get across. It had an eye on each end of it; if that shuttle didn't cross that eye, by the time it went up it would stop. It would hit the brake. But it didn't always do it, and it would tear them warps up---loom, too. They threw them out. Were brand new. I think they got stung!

[LAUGHTER]

A: I think they did, too.

W: That box, loom, what I worked on, I think it was the best. But they had some new looms down there before they shut it down. I never did work on them; I didn't want to. They run so fast, --wo-wo-wo— looked like a streak running that shuttle across. Had a shuttle all the way across, going too fast. They had trouble with them all the time. Them looms, what I worked on, Thompson and Olds, they was the best. They moved them upstairs. They put the new ones downstairs. After a while, I forgot what they done, they moved the new ones upstairs, see. I don't know exactly what they done down there, see. They had to tear one of them windows out, put them looms upstairs when they first bought them. I was working upstairs the last time, before we shut it down. We had them new looms upstairs, then they moved them downstairs, then they moved ours upstairs, see, them box looms, Crumpton & Orr. It was a good loom, yeah, not much trouble with it. [FLIPPING PAGES]. The best shuttle ever made. [FLIPPING PAGES]...That's exactly like the loom I worked on down there, with a Darby head on it. I think they put them Darby heads on them looms when I was down there. [FLIPPING PAGES]

A: I asked him: Did workers identify their reed hooks? And if so, how? Because these before us are so personal-looking.

W: Did workers I.D. their reed hooks? What does that mean?

A: Identify; personalize.

W: You mean, put their names on them? Oh.

A: Personalize, or the colors?

W: Colors, oh. We took the reed hooks home with us all the time; brought them to work with us, see. Everybody had a reed hook of their own.

A: Yeah.

W: Here...see here. [GETTING ONE OF THEM] It had a handle like this on it, but it broke off, see.

A: Mm, hm.

W: Somebody threw it away. I got it and put that handle on it there.

A: Uh, huh.

W: It was them down at the mill. They gave us these down there. That's a homemade one. I don't know where I got that at. Probably found it. I don't know how many of-how many of them I made. That's a left-hand. I'm left-handed. You had it back that way that's a left hand [WITH SLIT DOWN, IT BROKE TOWARD THE END TO THE LEFT]. If you are right handed you would bend it back that way. That's a right hand, bends over that way. I have to bend it back that way left-handed, see.

A: Yeah. But you have to bend each hook...

W: I made a lot of them. I made a lot of them, give them to somebody. You know how I make one of them? Have you ever seen them –have you ever seen them one of them thin places they pull the thread through before it goes through the shuttle? That old thin dime. Well, I'd get one of them, and put it in the vice, get up there and hit it, make a saw out of it .Saw that hole there. Then I'd get a sharp point and twist it, twist it, until I had made that hole there, see. Can't find no drill that small. Sometimes we had a drill that small, but it would break so easy. This is better than them. Simple. That's a lug there long lug and strong. That's a short lug [REFFERRING BACK TO THE BOOK] They used to make them out of cotton, weren't no good, they get soft . That's the kind they used when they had the mill _____(??)[FLIPPING PAGES] That's the kind I worked on there. It's got that thing up on top, see. That's a pick ball there. It come over long and carried the thing up. I never remember working on one like that. Them new looms is fixed like that. [FLIPPING PAGES] You going to write a book about the mill?

A: About cotton mill workers.

W: Did you see that show awhile back on the TV in Carolina somewhere and had Sally Field on it.

A: Yeah.

W: Did you see that?

A: *Norma Rae*? Yeah

W: I watched it too. They didn't show us enough of it. [LAUGHTER]

A: No.

W: I never see them looms running on that show.

A:Yeah.

W: [FLIPPING PAGES] That's the way them things worked; worked the harness up and down. Had some of them while I was there. Them looms at Stonewall had three harnesses on them. Make overall cloth there , see. Used to have three harness on it, always one up and one down---denim. You know about denim?

A: Mm, hm.

W: It's blue on one side and almost white on the other side, denim. That because they weave it topside up, see. One is always up, and one is always down, and the filling is gray. So that make it blue on top and white on bottom. [FLIPPING PAGES] I run that. I think they still making that cloth somewhere now. I worked on them things about thirty years. That's a Darby. It's a chain, runs under there with pegs on it. You ever seen one of them Darby chains? They used to make them as long as from here to that door [ABOUT FIFTEEN FEET]. They make them without looking at anything. You used to- had to hang them up, they were so long. Hang them on something and let them come down to the loom. Makes a pattern in the cloth.

A: Oh, yeah, yeah. I've seen that. Yeah.

W: Darbys. Them down there had twenty racks on them.

A: Yeah, it's almost like a pre-computer.

Mrs. W: Mm, hm.

W: I think I got some of them pegs [USED ON THE DARBY CHAIN TO MAKE THE PATTERN] out there in the car. West Point made towels that way.

A: Yeah.

W: Have you ever seen a pegger? [USED TO PUT PEGS IN CHAIN]? I got one somewhere; I made it; puts them pegs in that chain. It's in an old wooden box about that long put that long hooked together with a chain link, and its got holes in it. You put them pegs in them holes in the way you want to make a pattern, see. That's a Darby hooks. I used to carry them things around, and wash them in fifty gallon drums cut off that they had with gasoline, see. Then we wash them things out. Them Darby heads, we put them back together. They haven't used them in a long time. They get stiff with grease. [FLIPPING PAGES] We never put none of that stuff on. We had cans. [FLIPPING PAGES]

[DESCRIBING HOW HE CARRIED HIS REED HOOK. HE JUST PUT HIS UNDER HIS BELT IN HIS PANTS. BUT HE TENDED TO TEAR HIS SHIRT QUITE OFTEN. MOST WEAVERS CARRIED THEIRS IN A SPECIAL LEATHER BELT POCKET]

A: Mm, hm.

W: I don't need it. I don't need it.

Mrs. W: Why don't you give it to him if you don't need it? [REED HOOKS].

A: Uh, that technical stuff...

W: You can have this, and that too, if you want it.

Mrs. W: He won't never...

A: Well, now, this...[TIME BOOK] would

Mrs. W: You can have that, cause he won't never have no use for it.

A: Okay

W: I've had it a long time. That's the-that's the book my brother had at Sylacauga. You won't need that, will you?

A: I'd like to look over it.

W: I want to keep that.

A: But, uh...

W: Could you use that?

A: Yeah, I could. Especially the names.

W: You know any of them names in there?

A: I will. I haven't gotten to Sylacauga yet.

W: That woman tell you anything?

Mrs. W: She told him nothing.

W: Did she know Thelma Minor?

Mrs. W: She knowed some of them.

W: Thelma Minor, she worked on my job down there, a real good woman. Yeah. Brandon Kilgore, you know him? He lives at that same house with them and works up there.

A: I'm getting these names down.

W: I think he's still working at the mill in Sylacauga. [FLIPPING PAGES]

[TAPE CUTS OFF]

A: As I prepared to leave, Mr. Wade continued to talk about his experiences. He noted, as he had during the interview itself, that maybe it would have been best if he had never gone into cotton mill work. But he noted that his older brothers and sisters had gone into them mill at Stonewall. And that-by the time most of them had gotten in the mill work, he and his father could not keep the land going by themselves. And so finally, he went into the mill.

He pointed out that all of his older brothers and sisters, except the oldest girl, had worked in cotton mill work.

At another point he said that uh, his last year with Avondale he was up to \$3.78 an hour, with a lot of overtime involved at time and a half. But that after the mill closed down, the year after that was the

best year he had ever had, because in addition to fifty dollars a month he was getting from the Avondale profit sharing program and his Social Security, he was also receiving SSI benefits because it had been decided that Japanese textiles had played an important role in the closing down of the Birmingham mill.

He had showed me how several of these tools, showed how one made uh patterns by plugging in these plugs that he had discussed earlier in the interview. And also a picture was made outside of him holding his tool bag.

[END OF INTERVIEW]