

Wiregrass Black History Project, RG 298

Curley Bruner, Jr., Interview Transcript

Date Span: April 17, 2025

Biographical Sketch: Curley Bruner, Jr. was born in the Southside neighborhood of Dothan, AL, living there until Dothan razed Southside c. 1960 for an urban renewal project. Bruner attended S. Alice Street Elementary School, Montana Street School, and Carver High School. He then attended Alabama State College on a baseball scholarship from 1964 until mid-1966 when he enlisted in the US Air Force from which he retired in 1987 at the rank of Technical Sgt. After that, he worked for the Alabama Department of Corrections until retiring in 2010. He and Eliza Brown married in 1988 and had a blended family of seven children.

Organizational Sketch: The Wiregrass Black History Project is a collaboration between the Wiregrass Black History Channel on YouTube (by David "Mit" Kirkland) and the Wiregrass Archives at Troy University Dothan Campus. Funded in 2024- 25 by Troy University and the Society of American Archivists Foundation through its Catalyst Grant.

The Wiregrass Black History Channel will host edited versions of the interviews. The Wiregrass Archives will make the raw interviews available on its YouTube channel and create metadata records and finding aids that link to the project and to individual video interviews.

Scope / Content Note: Video interview transcript with Curley Bruner, Jr., who discusses his childhood in the Southside neighborhood of Dothan, Alabama, prior to its razing for an urban renewal project, c. 1958-62. He discusses his family's house, recreation, playing baseball for Carver High School, the William-Vorris Lumber Company, his parents' employment, and some of the businesses and churches in Southside.

Provenance: Interview conducted by Mit Kirkland and Marty Olliff. Provided to the Wiregrass Archives as part of the grant-funded Wiregrass Black History Project.

Processing Notes: Transcriptions made by MS Word AI, then edited by Dr. Martin T. Olliff. Revisions planned to update and correct transcriptions.

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Curley Bruner, Jr. Interview re: Southside, Wiregrass Black History Project, April 17, 2025

00:00:00 – 00:00:11 Mit Kirkland and Marty Olliff

Mic checks and chatter about being ready to roll camera

00:00:11 Marty Olliff

Off camera, I'm Doctor Marty Olliff, director of the Wiregrass Archives and Professor of History at Troy University Dothan Campus. I'm with Mitt Kirkland, who is the Chief Operating Officer of the Wiregrass Black History Channel.

Together, we are conducting interviews with people in Dothan, African American elders who have lived through the time of desegregation, the time of segregation, time of after the desegregation era, the Civil Rights Movement era. But we are primarily talking with them about their experiences in Southside. This is all in connection to a . . . a grant from the Society of American Archivist Foundation. That Grant is entitled "The Wiregrass Black History Project."

Today is April 17th, 2025, and we are conducting an interview on camera with Mr. Curley Bruner.

Mr. Bruner, do you give the Wiregrass Black History Project, consisting of the Wiregrass Archives and the Wiregrass Black History Channel on YouTube, permission to use both the raw footage and edited products of your interview?

00:01:49 Curley Bruner

Yes, Sir.

00:01:50 Marty Olliff

Thank you very much. I think that's all I need.

00:01:58 Mit Kirkland

Alright, Curley, tell me, what was it like growing up on the Southside?

00:02:03 Curley Bruner

Growing up on Southside, we was . . . we was poor, but our parents provide it for us.

And to me it was pretty good. We, you know, we . . . we did what we had to do and we . . . we had love. We looked out for each other. And if someone needed anything, we would provide for 'em. And then if we needed anything, they'll provide for us. But to me it was pretty good, but we was poor. (chuckling)

00:02:40 Marty Olliff

Would you describe your house? You were born in the Southside. What address did you all live at?

00:02:46 Curley Bruner

713 Bell St.

00:02:48 Marty Olliff

713 Bell St. OK. And what did that property look like?

00:02:55 Curley Bruner

It was . . . it . . . it was clean. But you know, you had, like, some of them with a substandard housing, as we say today. But they kept it clean. We cut our grass. And you know, we just kept . . . kept it together and we looked out for each other.

00:03:15 Marty Olliff

Can you describe the property and the house that you lived in?

00:03:20 Curley Bruner

My house was like . . . it was like . . . what we call shotgun house. But we had bedroom. We had a kitchen. And on the back of that house, my dad had a room built. And we had a bathroom. We have water, we had a hydrant.

And then we had a chicken yard, but I never can remember anything about an outhouse. But I knew there was one there at one time because it I could see the indication in the middle of the chicken . . . chicken yard.

00:04:01 Marty Olliff

Yes, Sir. And so you had . . . you had indoor plumbing, you had a toilet inside the house in that room that your father had added on.

00:04:09 Curley Bruner

Yes.

00:04:11 Marty Olliff

OK. And earlier we were talking about the size of the lot. And now that you are a fully grown man and know a lot more about property, you . . . remind me of what that lot was like.

00:04:26 Curley Bruner

It was like 100 wide. No, I'm sorry. It was like 75 feet wide and about 100 deep.

00:04:37 Marty Olliff

OK. So 75 wide, 100 deep.

00:04:39 Curley Bruner

It could have been more because we had enough to have seven or eight rows of vegetable and . . . and about 10 to 15 yards long.

00:04:51 Marty Olliff

OK, OK. And you kept chickens also?

00:04:54 Curley Bruner

Yes, we did.

00:04:55 Marty Olliff

How frequent was that among your neighbors? Did . . . did everybody garden and chicken . . . keep chickens, or did few people do that?

00:05:04 Curley Bruner

Now, as I remember it was quite a few. Yeah, quite a few.

00:05:11 Marty Olliff

Mit, you've got another question.

00:05:15 Mit Kirkland

What were some of your fondest memories of the Southside?

00:05:20 Curley Bruner

The fondest memory to me was on Thursdays when the . . . the downtown was shut down at 12 o'clock and all the grown . . . grown mens and so forth will come over to the schoolyard and we will play, and this is especially during the summer, and . . . and . . . and during the school year too, and we will play baseball against *them*. And they taught us well . . . how to play.

00:05:51 Marty Olliff

So it was the . . . the young boys against the adult men.

00:05:54 Curley Bruner

Old men! (Laughter) Yes, sir.

00:06:00 Marty Olliff

What . . . who are some of the people that you played baseball with in those pickup games?

00:06:07 Curley Bruner

There was Cookie's [Robert "Cookie" Potter] daddy, his uncles, and . . . and . . . and his cousin, name was Bubba Palmer. And I could . . . I remember him well because I was a catcher.

He would he would smash the ball in front of you before you could . . . you could even swing.

And then he got hit many times in the head.

00:06:36 Marty Olliff

Yeah. The injuries of baseball playing, yeah.

00:06:40 Curley Bruner

And then we had them guys over there on Lena St. They'll come through the fence, they wanted to play with us.

00:06:46 Marty Olliff

Those . . . those guys . . . now Cookie Potter talked about there being a couple of white kids and that's who . . .

00:06:47 Curley Bruner

Yeah. Richard Seaman and all those.

00:06:52 Mit Kirkland

OK. When . . . when you said they would . . . say like there were a couple of white guys that would look through the fence, you know, kind of give us a lead in, OK?

00:07:00 Curley Bruner

OK. Yeah. And there was a couple of white guys, namely, I knew of one, Richard Seaman, they would come and play with us. They wanted to play with us, us. So we let them play, and we have good . . . we had a good time. (chuckles)

00:07:18 Mit Kirkland

Marty, don't say um-hum. (crosstalk, Olliff, "okay, okay.")

00:07:21 Mit Kirkland

You got a question?

00:07:24 Marty Olliff

No, I don't.

00:07:28 Mit Kirkland

OK. You went on to play baseball in college. Tell me about that.

00:07:34 Curley Bruner

A very good experience. I was . . .

00:07:37 Mit Kirkland

Say like playing . . . Did you get a scholarship? OK, tell me about your high school. Then go to your college, OK?

00:07:47 Curley Bruner

Well, my high school . . .

00:07:49 Mit Kirkland

Tell us where you playing at?

00:07:52 Curley Bruner

Carver [High School, Dothan]. I played at Carver and I was a catcher. And . . . and Sonny Cooper, which was my cousin, was the coach. And then I left from there and went to Alabama State on the baseball scholarship and stayed at State 2 1/2 to three years.

And then therefore, I went in the Air Force and we was playing fast pitch softball then. And then I went in . . . into Europe and play softball and football, tackle football, in Germany.

00:08:32 Mit Kirkland

OK, uhhhh . . . How did living on the Southside help you become the person that you are today?

00:08:40 Curley Bruner

It taught me respect, integrity.

00:08:44 Mit Kirkland

Start off start . . . always start off with the start off with what I . . . start off with the question, like "Living in the Southside . . ."

00:08:53 Curley Bruner

Yeah. Living on the Southside, it taught me to respect the elders, respect each other, integrity, and . . . and love. Most of all love, yes.

00:09:10 Mit Kirkland

Anything else you want to say about living there? Anything that really stands out to you?

00:09:17 Curley Bruner

We was togetherness. We were very togetherness. We looked out for each other. And that was the most important thing to me that I ever seen. We loved each other. We looked out for each other, and we still communicate with each other when we . . . when we got grown.

00:09:41 Mit Kirkland

OK, Curly, why is it important to you to preserve the history of the Southside, life on the Southside?

00:09:51 Curley Bruner

Life on . . . there is a history on the life on the Southside that just, to me, show the younger generation to appreciate what we had to go through.

And you know, because lots of young people just don't know, they don't know what we had to go through or what we had to do to survive. And so we should teach *them* and learn them what we had to go through.

00:10:20 Mit Kirkland

OK. Anything else you want to add to that?

00:10:26 Curley Bruner

Well, you know, there's . . . there is other things, you know, there's quite a bit of things . . . quite. You know, we can sit here half the day, all day, and still talk about Southside because it was it was fun to me and I enjoyed it.

And see we never talked . . . they never talked about the sawmill [William-Vorris Lumber Company], the sawmill quarters, you know, and . . . and you know, they're those rough . . . those rough days. But those people had to have jobs. And they came to the sawmill and they came from different . . . the surrounding areas to get jobs and . . . and they and they had houses for them. We're talking about the mill quarters, sawmill quarters.

And you know, and that was fun to me. So we used to run up through them sawmill yards and everything and get up on the lumber they done cut. We were some problem boys. (chuckles)

00:11:31 Mit Kirkland

OK . . . Curley, tell me about the things y'all did in neighborhood, like playing and you were mentioning earlier about how y'all made your own bicycles and stuff like that. Tell me about some of the things y'all did to . . . to . . . to spend time and . . . and have fun.

00:11:39 Curley Bruner

And to kill time -- that's what we call [it], kill time -- if we can find a frame, we can make our bikes. And we . . . we get a wheel and then . . . then, you know, my dad probably, our daddies probably had to buy the tires and things like that.

But we shot a lot of marbles.

You know, we . . . we just *made* things to do. Anything. We made our own basketball goals and everything. All we need was a basketball. (chuckles)

00:12:20 Mit Kirkland

Now Cookie [Robert Potter] had mentioned about the baseball field behind . . . that y'all played baseball behind the school [Alice Street Elementary School]. Can you tell us about that? Did y'all have . . . What did y'all have real bats? Did you have gloves? Did you have bases? What? What? Just tell me about . . . just kind of describe . . . I mean the . . . the field and . . . and the conditions of the field and the things that y'all did.

00:12:48 Curley Bruner

In . . . in playing, you know, baseball, the fields . . . we had grass fields. You didn't have the dirt out in fields like they have now, you know. We had grass out there, but we had real bats. We had balls, we had all gloves and, you know, the catcher had his outfit.

And a lot of these . . . the mens, they bought their own outfit, you know. And they looked out for us and we have to swap gloves sometime . . . if we didn't have a glove we have to swap gloves with the grown men sometimes because they already had equipment. They were playing sandlot foot . . . uh, baseball on, like, Sundays. They'd go down to State Line, Greenwood, FL, Panama City, Florida, and play.

It was a good time. We . . . we . . . we enjoy . . . we had . . . we . . . we enjoyed it, we had good fun.

00:13:53 Marty Olliff

Let me ask you some more specific questions about Southside and . . . and the . . . the physicality of it and what . . . what you all did in it as . . . as opposed to how you played and things like that.

You had mentioned the sawmill as Williams Vorris Lumber Company, which was off to the west of the Southside neighborhood residential area a little bit. So tell me what you know about that and what you remember about the lumber mill itself. You talked a little bit about it. Please tell me some more about the lumber mill.

00:14:30 Curley Bruner

Well . . . the most thing about the mill quarters to me, I remember when my dad left, and he went to Cleveland, OH to work to [mumbles in thought] and to support us.

And when he . . . he came back, he was . . . he was . . . when he left, though, he was the janitor at First Baptist Church. And when he came back, well, they had hired another, Mr. Joe Glenn. And so when he came back to Dothan, they say, "well, we can't have two. So we'll let Mr. Glenn go and, Curley, you can, well, you can stay and work."

My dad said, "no, I will find a job. You keep Joe Glenn. You keep Joe Glenn." My daddy went to the sawmill.

And he had to work at the . . . the sawmill, I'm going to say about six [months] to a year and they called him back and First Baptist said, "we gonna keep both of them."

So they did.

00:15:43 Marty Olliff

Let me probe that just a little bit more. When . . . when you say he was janitor at First Baptist, was that First Missionary Baptist or was it the White Church?

00:15:52 Curley Bruner

The White Church.

00:15:54 Marty Olliff

OK, the White . . . the White First Baptist is on Main Street, right? Still there today in in 2025, large church.

00:15:55 Curley Bruner

And I know every inch of it.

00:16:04 Marty Olliff

I bet you do.

When your father worked over at the sawmill for a year, year and a half, what kind of work did he do there?

00:16:15 Curley Bruner

Stacking lumber.

00:16:18 Mit Kirkland

OK, always lead with "my dad worked at the sawmill," OK?

00:16:22 Curley Bruner

OK, OK. My daddy worked at the sawmill and his job was to stack lumber.

00:16:29 Marty Olliff

So he worked for a year and a half stacking lumber.

00:16:32 Curley Bruner

About a year.

00:16:33 Marty Olliff

About a year stacking lumber, OK. And then he went back to [crosstalk, Bruner, "First Baptist"] First Baptist as the custodian. [Bruner, "right."] Did your mother work outside of the home?

00:16:34 Curley Bruner

She worked vaguely, some . . . she worked for the health department. The veterinary health department for a while, but mainly she raised us. My dad didn't want . . . he wanted us to be raised, you know, he didn't want her to be working, but *then* she started working for Southeast Alabama Medical Center.

00:17:11 Marty Olliff

What did she do for them?

00:17:12 Curley Bruner

She was housekeeping. And she retired from that. And . . . and so did my sister. She retired from there. My cousin, he retired from there.

00:17:26 Marty Olliff

When your father went to Cincinnati, do you remember the years, the . . . the year that he was there, about approximately when he was?

00:17:34 Curley Bruner

I can't remember the year, but went to Cleveland.

00:17:38 Marty Olliff

I'm sorry. Yes, Cleveland. And do you know what he did when he was there?

00:17:43 Curley Bruner

No, I don't.

00:17:45 Marty Olliff

OK. You were born in 1946, and the urban renewal project in Southside really began in earnest in 1958. The . . . the city began buying property in late '58 or early '59. When did you . . . you folks leave? When did your family leave Southside and where did you go, and what did you do?

00:18:15 Curley Bruner

When we left Southside, we built a house. It was in 1958, I believe, and we went to Lakeview on the east side of town, right off String . . . Stringer Street, and then we moved to Eagle Rd.

So, that's . . . that's . . . that's where we moved to, but, you know.

We had already . . . Let me let me say this, my daddy was the last . . . the last one that sold his property. And then we bought what we need on the East side, Lakeview, they call it.

00:19:08 Marty Olliff

Did . . . did y'all build a house there or did you . . . [Bruner, "Lakeview."] Yeah, on Lakeview, yes.

00:19:12 Curley Bruner

Lakeview. We was building the house and we were building the church at the same time.

00:19:18 Marty Olliff

Which church?

00:19:19 Curley Bruner

New Bethel Baptist Church. [Olliff, "after it moved?"] On Allen Rd. After it moved from Lake . . . Alice St.

00:19:30 Marty Olliff

Do you know if your parents built your house as part of the Section 220 federal program?

[Bruner, "No."]

Are you saying you don't know, or that they did not?

00:19:46 Curley Bruner

They did not.

00:19:46 Marty Olliff

OK.

00:19:48 Curley Bruner

Whatever they sold for their house and property, we started building, paying for ourselves, and I think my daddy talked to Mr. West at First Bap . . . First . . . First something . . . First Bank . . . First National Bank.

And then he went from there and, you know, and built it all. We got different peoples to help. There was a lot of our people that could do that type work and they helped, and they helped with the church. And I was small but I was pushing wheelbarrows of bricks and mortar.

00:20:29 Marty Olliff

Everybody worked. Everybody worked.

00:20:29 Curley Bruner

Everybody worked.

00:20:34 Marty Olliff

So, when you all were in Southside on Bell St., you owned that property?

00:20:40 Curley Bruner

We owned that property that my daddy had paid for. I think his house payment were like \$11.00 a month.

00:20:48 Marty Olliff

But eventually he paid that . . .

00:20:50 Curley Bruner

He paid that. (chuckling)

00:20:51 Marty Olliff

He paid it. Yeah, that's . . . that's very good. So . . . so many people rented in that . . . in that area.

00:20:58 Curley Bruner

Yeah, he bought it. Paid \$11.00 a month. What he paid for it. (coughing)

00:21:11 Mit Kirkland

Curly. If there's one thing that stands out in your mind, you know, from . . . from living on the Southside to moving to Lakeview and . . . and in your childhood and growing up, what . . . what would that be?

00:21:28 Curley Bruner

One thing that stays in my mind is, we had to . . . to go . . . to my mind . . . we had to go to practice, ball practice baseball. We had to walk from Southside down through town to get to Lakeview, to the center [Lincoln Community Center]. And that's . . . that's a . . . in . . . in my . . . in my mind that's a long walk. Day and night. And then late at night you had to walk back, but my daddy, he would always get off of work and walk with me until we got large enough that we could do it on our own.

And then the Lakeview. What . . . what stood out to my mind at Lakeview, they have a *pool* down there. And everybody . . . that was, on the weekend, everybody from both sides of town was at that pool.

And they, you know, had their restaurants and things down there. So that was . . . that stood out my mind about Lakeview and then . . . and then Southside.

00:22:34 Marty Olliff

And that Community Center that was over in Lakeview, that was Lincoln Community Center.

00:22:38 Curley Bruner

Lincoln Community Center, Mr. Bell, Andrew Bell.

00:22:48 Mit Kirkland

OK, Curley, I can remember, we used to go with to Lincoln Center and they would have those semi pro games on the field, did you ever play in any of those games?

00:22:59 Curley Bruner

Ohh yeah. Every time they played, I was there. When I was, when they were, you know, when I was a little younger, when I was a teenager and I was doing the catching for 'em.

And sometimes I would go over to Northside to my girlfriend['s] and come back and they'll be behind and they will put me and Billy Buie [?] in the game and we'll win the game for 'em. (chuckling) That's what stands up in my mind. (chuckling)

00:23:34 Marty Olliff

You had said something in our previous conversation before we began taping about talking about the White Horse Restaurant. Do you . . . do you have anything to say about the White Horse?

00:23:45 Curley Bruner

Yeah. We couldn't go in there. We can only peep in the window. (laughing) [Kirkland, "Ok, lead in with 'The White Horse . . .']

The White Horse Café was real small. And they . . . you could hear the Rock-ola and the music, and things. And we'll get together and we'll just slip up there and go on and look. And we'll get up there and go and look, but we had to peep in the windows, we had to peep in the door, and they'd be dancing and things. We'd be looking at each other.

But we could not go in there, now.

00:24:19 Marty Olliff

Did they try to run you off whenever y'all . . . y'all were peeping in the windows?

00:24:21 Curley Bruner

We . . . we . . . we knew better. Whoowee, we'd get a whupping.

00:24:29 Marty Olliff

You also said that there was another restaurant very close to the White Horse, which was in the 500 block of Alice Street, but there was another restaurant close to that that you mentioned. Can you remember the name of that?

00:24:42 Curley Bruner

I was talking about Miss Ruth Berry. And that's something you . . . really that's the only one I can remember. Just Miss Ruth Berry on the . . . it was on the right hand side of the Alice St.

00:24:56 Marty Olliff

Talk to me about shopping, things like that. Did y'all go to the Langham grocery store, did you go to the Davis grocery store that were on Alice Street? Or . . . other . . . other people in this interview collection

have talked about not going to those, but going into town to shop. Do you recall your family doing anything like that?

00:25:23 Curley Bruner

We in back in those days, you know, Southside we shopped at Langham Grocery Store and there was also Fuller Grocery Store, but mainly we shopped at Langham Grocery Store.

And then later on, you know, we shop other places like the Piggly Wiggly. A&P, that was the main thing. A&P was a good deal, was the main thing.

00:25:56 Marty Olliff

And those stores were downtown?

00:26:00 Curley Bruner

Virtually, uhh, downtown A&P was, back to beginning of downtown.

00:26:07 Marty Olliff

As opposed to being in the Southside.

00:26:10 Curley Bruner

Davis Grocery was there right across the street from White Horse Café, so it was in the *community*.

00:26:16 Mit Kirkland

Curley, what other type businesses were there in the neighborhood? Were there different businesses in the neighborhood or just main a couple of cafes and stores?

00:26:29 Curley Bruner

Just a couple of cafes and stores. That was the only business there.

00:26:32 Mit Kirkland

OK, now how about the churches in the neighborhood? Tell me about the churches in the neighborhood.

00:26:37 Curley Bruner

In the churches of the neighborhood. Is what we had, you know, our church was on Alice St., New Bethel Baptist Church

Now we will go to . . . I would go to church on Sunday to our church. OK. Then we had evening church, 5:00. We have service there.

And my friend TJ Jackson, he was there and resigned, so he went to South St. and we'll go there.

And then my other friend, Blue, he was Church of God in Christ. So basically, we were . . . we were the three churches every Sunday, more or less, you know. And sometimes we didn't get home 12:00.

But we, you know, we had good . . . we . . . we supported each other. No matter the denomination, we supported each other.

00:27:38 Marty Olliff

Let me ask you this in . . . in supporting each other and going to each other's churches: was it one or two people that you went with, or was there a small *gang* of y'all that went together?

00:27:50 Curley Bruner

Well, everybody . . . each one that had families. Each church. So we went with . . . with all of them, you know. It didn't matter with us. All we wanted was to be there.

00:28:02 Marty Olliff

Did all three of the churches preach every Sunday?

00:28:06 Curley Bruner

Yes, yes they did.

00:28:10 Mit Kirkland

Now Curly, it was originally the AME church was . . . was the South St. AME Church with Reverend Hines. [Bruner, "right."] And when they moved to Lakeview, it became Hines Chapel. Do you remember that?

00:28:19 Curley Bruner

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

00:28:27 Mit Kirkland

Tell me about that.

00:28:29 Curley Bruner

Well, you know my friend TJ and . . . he went to . . . to South St.

And his daddy, you know, went to *our* church, New Bethel, but his mother and . . . they went to Hines Chapel.

And but, you know, we . . . we just didn't . . . didn't worry about the denomination. We worried about each other. And . . . and, you know, we supported each other, went to church, their churches and things. We didn't . . . we didn't worry about denomination.

00:29:10 Mit Kirkland

Now, Curley, I know at one time they had street buses and did the street buses run on the Southside or . . . or just in the North Highland area?

00:29:20 Curley Bruner

They ran . . . no, no street buses was on Southside. And I can't remember any buses on . . . on the Northside unlessin they were, you know. I can't remember if they had buses on the Northside.

00:29:38 Mit Kirkland

Yeah. At one time, they had buses, city buses, it was not run by the city, it was privately owned. But they had buses that went to North Highland, which was the area of West North Street and Baptist Bottom area. Then they had a bus that went to Acid Plant Hill, which was . . . which was over [Bruner, "right."] adjacent to

00:30:01 Marty Olliff

OK.

00:30:04 Mit Kirkland

We were, we were rolling.

Then they had . . . and I remember the bus used to go to Ridley Store, which was right at the corner of what is now . . . it was Airport Rd. then, but it's Honeysuckle Road and W Main St.

00:30:26 Curley Bruner

[Low volume and unintelligibly] I didn't know much about it, we was up on the east side then.

I can't remember that. Not to say, you know, they didn't have 'em, but I just can't even remember.

00:30:40 Marty Olliff

The roads in Southside. Were they paved or were they dirt or was it a mix?

00:30:46 Curley Bruner

The roads on Southside were dirt.

00:30:50 Marty Olliff

What about Alice street?

00:30:52 Curley Bruner

Dirt. (chuckling)

00:30:57 Marty Olliff

So there were no paved roads that you remember, paved streets.

00:31:01 Curley Bruner

The paved . . . the pavement to Alice St. was almost down to . . .down to Dothan High School then. Other than that, it was dirt. Red clay.

00:31:17 Marty Olliff

And dusty [Bruner, "and dusty."] and dusty, yeah.

I'm not . . . I don't think I have any more questions. Do you have anything that that we haven't covered that you would like to cover?

00:31:30 Curley Bruner

Yes. I remember [audio crackling, unintelligible, possibly talking about his family's Bell St. neighbors] was Blue's cousin [then?], Miss Ola Grice. And Mr. Gus Robertson, was on the right side. Mr. Gus had a mule and a wagon and a plow.

This is one . . . one of my fond memories.

And both of them left and went to New York and New Jersey, and they didn't come back.

Well, Mr. Robertson told my daddy, "you can have the mule and wagon and the plow and everything and . . . and Jim the mule."

And it was my fond memory that . . . and . . . and watching my daddy how to hook the mule up to the plows and to the wagon and thing like that. So one day I told Jim, I said, "now, I got the plow . . . " I was . . . I might have been about 10, 11, 12, about 11 to 12 [years old], and I hooked Jim up. And I said, "I'm gonna plow you today." I got the plow and Jim drove me all over the field, [laughing] and now you know my momma was just laughing. My daddy was just laughing.

You see what I go through though . . . [laughing]

00:32:57 Marty Olliff

Mules got a mind of his own.

00:32:59 Curley Bruner

You have no doubt. He had some Missouri Mustang in you. You *wild*. [laughing]

00:33:06 Mit Kirkland

Now, Curley, do you remember Moe Rainey that had a mule and wagon used to plow?

Do you remember? [Bruner, "Moe Rainey? No, I don't remember him"] Yeah. He used to come plow my granddad's garden. He had a mule and wagon.

00:33:14 Curley Bruner

OK, OK, Moe Rainey. No, I don't remember him.

Then you know we used to ride . . . we had to exercise [the mule] and we'd ride him, hook him up, my momma and daddy. My daddy would hook him up . . . me and my momma and my daddy would be riding the mule in the wagon. And I'll be sitting in the center.

00:33:40 Mit Kirkland

Now did y'all have a car during that time?

00:33:43 Curley Bruner

We had a car later. We had a 49 Chevrolet with the doors back.

You know, and then there they uh, you know, he kept moving up the Chevrolet. Chevrolet '60 . . . 4, '63, '50 . . . well, '56, '57, and '64.

00:34:05 Mit Kirkland

Now, now Curley, I know some of the other interviews we did with some of the other people that lived on the Southside, how did you get from the Southside to Montana St. School? I know South [Alice] Street School only went 1st through 3rd and then y'all had to go to Montana. What type of transportation did you have?

00:34:28 Curley Bruner

The transportation we had from Southside to North Highland [earlier name of Montana Street School], now, my . . . myself and TJ Jackson, we had bicycles. And most of the rest of them, they walked. And some of them had bicycles too. But mostly they walked.

Walk . . . walk down to . . . what is it, Alice Street? You know, down through to North Highland, down through town by the First Baptist Church.

00:35:03 Marty Olliff

Did you consider that to be a long haul or relatively short distance?

00:35:09 Curley Bruner

It . . . it was long. But to us it was short because we be talking and laughing and . . . and, you know. And before we know it, we was at school. But TJ and I, we were fortunate enough to have bicycle. And we had bicycles alike, and they were *swinging* with the rack on the back and a horn and a light.

00:35:35 Marty Olliff

Tell me about Southside school. You remember your teachers? Can you? Can you tell me something about them so we can capture it for the interview?

00:35:45 Curley Bruner

Yeah. Southside school. We had some good teachers. They mean what they said and they say what they mean. I can remember Miss West. She was real good. She was real sweet. And she taught us well.

Miss Morris, the 2nd and 3rd grade now. If you messed up, there was a little tree outside . . . outside. She would go and say, "sit on this . . . sit on this desk, sit on that desk, in that chair." She'd get a switch

from [unintelligible, 36:24-36:26] and the thing about it, she'd make you go and get the switch. And she'll whup us 2 at a time. 'Cross your legs.

But you know that kept us great. She kept us great.

00:36:41 Marty Olliff

So you had Miss West for first grade [Bruner, "first grand."] and Miss Morris for 2nd and 3rd. [Bruner, "second and third."]

And that's how the grades were divided, correct? I mean, you had second, third together and 1st grade by itself in a 2, basically a 2 room school?

00:36:57 Curley Bruner

Right, right. But anyhow . . . Well, sir, Southside had learned me a lot. Made me and the man I am.

00:37:13 Mit Kirkland

OK.

00:37:14 Curley Bruner

I enjoyed it.

00:37:16 Mit Kirkland

[directorial question, unintelligible]

00:37:18 Marty Olliff

Yeah, I think I'm good. [Kirkland, "OK.:] OK.