

Interview Consent Form
Grambling State University

Service-Learning Project
Department of English

Fall 2016
C. Bonner, Lecturer 1

Student: Brandi Green
Contact Number: 318-364-7486
Email: brandibell@yahoo.com

Catherine Bonner, Faculty Supervisor
Departmental Office Phone 318.274.2272
bonnerc@gram.edu

I am a student at Grambling State University, and I am conducting this interview for my service-learning project, required of all English 101 students at Grambling State University. I am documenting the stories of senior citizens.

During this interview, you will be asked to answer some questions related to your own life's experiences. This interview was designed to be approximately a half hour in length. However, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on to the next question, whichever you prefer.

All the information will be kept confidential. I will keep the data in a secure place. Only I and the faculty supervisor whose name is given above will have access to this information. Upon completion of this project, all data will be destroyed or stored in a secure location. However, if you permit, this data might possibly be donated to a local library.

Participant's Agreement

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation.

The researcher has reviewed the individual and social benefits and risks of this project with me. I am aware the data will be used to meet the student's Service-Learning Program requirement at Grambling State University. I have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the student's submission. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity unless I specify otherwise. I understand that if I say anything that I believe may incriminate me, the interviewer will immediately delete the potentially incriminating information. The interviewer will then ask me if I would like to continue the interview.

If I have any questions about this study, I am free to contact the student researcher or the faculty advisor.

I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference. I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.

Danny Bell
Participant's Signature

Brandi Green
Interviewer's Signature

Date Nov. 30, 2016

Brandi Green

English 101

Service Learning Project

I was sitting at my grandfather's home in Shreveport La, eager to interview him and learn more about his life and the many things he had encountered. We sat in his living room where the wall was blue and covered up with pictures of family members, old and young. The photos amazed me, and I admired looking at them from time to time. It was very cozy, and the aroma of coffee filled my nostrils. I sat in a very warm, and comfortable chair, while my grandfather sat across from me. My grandmother sat on the sofa next to him, helping my grandfather ask some questions. I was wearing a black and gold Grambling t-shirt, and jeans. My grandfather wore a collar shirt, overalls, and black slacks. I asked my grandfather how he was feeling, and he said he was doing just fine. He noticed my Grambling t-shirt, and went on to ask me how I liked school. Then he continued to talk about Grambling's football team, and how great of a job they were doing for the season. After talking for about 5 minutes, I asked my grandfather was he ready for the interview. He said yes, and we proceeded.

Home Places

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born at LSU hospital in Shreveport. It wasn't named LSU when I was born, it was called Confederate Memorial Hospital.

Q: Where was your first home?

A: I remember my first home being Hunner Oil Company plantation in Dixie Louisiana.

Q: What were some of the earliest memories of your home?

A: I remember waking up early every morning and eating breakfast. My mama made sure we never skipped a meal, and she made sure we ate three times a day. I would go to school every day, and go to church every Sunday. I remember having fun as a boy, even though we moved a lot.

Q: When and where did you move?

A: After staying on Hunner Plantation, we moved to Mount Plantation, and that was down the street. I enjoyed staying there. We had only one doctor and I remember going to him once because we had no transportation to get to him. His name was Dr. Baker. So, when we weren't feeling well, my daddy and my mama would go dig stuff out of our garden, and boil it. I remember having to drink it whenever I got sick.

Q: In what other homes/places have you lived?

A: After living on Mount Plantation, we moved to Bean Plantation in Bossier City. When I was ten, we moved to Wilson Arkansas. After we left Wilson, we ended up back on the Hunner Oil Plantation. Then at 15 years old I moved out to Greenwood Louisiana and got my own house. I was living on plantation's my whole childhood, until I got out on my own at fifteen.

Personal Data

Q: When were you born?

A: September 21, 1937

Q: What is your name and age?

A: My name is Danny Bell and I am 79 years old.

Q: Where you named after someone else?

A: Yeah, my mama told me I was named after the doctor who delivered me. His name was Danny.

Q: When were you baptized and what is your religion?

A: I was six years old when I was baptized at Rose of Sharon Baptist Church in Dixie Louisiana. I remember being baptized in the Red River by my pastor. Pastor Pennywell.

Q: How would you explain your childhood?

A: It was good... I didn't see much wrong with it because my mama and daddy kept us out of people's way. They made sure I was taken care of, fed, and we had clothes on our back. There were so many tough times, but we stuck together and got through it.

Marriage and Children

Q: When and where did you first meet your present spouse?

A: I would always see her around a lot, and one day I finally got a chance to meet her at one of those get togethers we would always have in Dixie. When I met her, she was already married to someone and I knew her husband. We started to talk in 1958.

Q: How long did you know her before you were married?

A: Well like I said, we met in 1958 and we got married in 1964. So, that's about 6 years.

Q: Where did you get married?

A: The courthouse on Texas Street in Downtown Shreveport.

Q: How long have you been married?

A: We've been married for 52 years.

Q: How did you feel when you found out you was going to be a parent?

A: I didn't feel anything. I was like "Oh well, I'm gonna be a father." Most people are happy when they find out news like that, but I didn't feel any type of way. But I did get happier and happier as the days went by. I still remember everything like it was yesterday.

Q: How many children do you have all together?

A: I have 7 kids all together. Four of them are dead. Three of my sons died when they were born, and my daughter died in a car wreck when she was 47 years old.

Q: What are their names?

A: Dorothy, David, Richard, Ann, Joe, and Johnny Lee. We didn't get a chance to name our last son.

Q: Why did you give them the names that you did?

A: Me, and my brothers and sisters were very close to each other, so I named all my children after them.

Education

Q: Where did you attend school?

A: I went to this school called Saint Plantation. It was an all-black school, and I remember it so well because it was like a little shack house. Probably smaller than my house.

Q: What was the school like?

A: I liked the school. We learned to read and write a lot. First, second, and third grade shared one room. Then they had fourth, fifth, and sixth grade in another room. I remember we used to eat lunch in the same room we learned in. they cooked with fire and wood.

Q: How did you like the school?

A: I loved the school. It was my favorite place to be when I was a young boy. I wish I would have never stopped going. I went to school rain, sleet, or snow because if I missed a day, I would have to go out in the field and work. Like I said, we didn't have transportation, and I remember walking for miles just to get there. The white kids would pass by us on the bus every day, calling us names.

Q: How did that make you feel?

A: Sometimes it made me feel like I was nothing. Like we were nobody compared to those white kids. Like they were better than us, because they got to ride the bus and go to a different school. But, that didn't stop me, or my brothers and sisters. We still made it to school every day safe.

Q: How many years of education have you completed?

A: I went to school all the way up to the 7th grade. Then after that, I went to go work.

Q: Did you attend any other school or training after?

A: No, all I ever did was work.

Work

Q: As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A: I never thought about it. All I ever thought about was going to work and making money.

Q: What was your first job?

A: when I was a little boy, I worked on the Hunner Company picking cotton and mowing the white folks grass.

Q: What jobs have you had?

A: When I moved out at fifteen, I worked for Flent Oil Company on Greenwood Road. Then, I worked at Jim Danny's where they made swing sets. I really enjoyed that job! Let's see.... After Jim Danny's I got a job at Mid Continent Steel, where I made steel. Then I went on to work for Red River, and that's where I retired from.

Q: How long did you have to work each day at your jobs?

A: I remember working long hours at Mid Continent. I barley had a break. They would always call me back after I left. I was making good money but the hours were too long. I remember not seeing my kids & my wife for a week.

Q: Do you like being retired?

A: I didn't like it at all at first, because I was always used to being busy. But now I enjoy not working.

Family Life

Q: What is your mom and dad's name?

A: John and Sadie Bell

Q: What did your mom do for a living?

A: She worked as a maid, up until she got older

Q: What did your dad do for a living?

A: He worked on a farm

Q: Do you have any brothers and sisters? If so, how many?

A: I have 9 brothers and sisters. My mama had 4 girls and 5 boys.

Q: Who was the oldest person you admired as a child?

A: My oldest sister, Dorothy Bell.

Gatherings, Storytelling, Traditions

Q: What were your family traditions on the holidays?

A: My mama cooked almost every holiday. Her favorite thing to cook was cakes, and pies. They were my favorite too. For Christmas, we really didn't get much. We got three pieces of candy, one apple, and one orange and that was our Christmas present. I know it's not much nowadays, but it was a lot to us. We were happier than ever.

Q: Did you pass down the same traditions as you got older?

A: Yeah, I made sure me and my wife cooked every holiday. But I gave my children toys, instead of candy and fruit.

Q: Have any recipes been passed down to you from your family?

A: Not really, because my mama didn't need recipes when she cooked. I learned everything from her. She cooked everything from scratch. She would cook you anything you asked her to too. Pies, cakes, cornbread, and especially jelly cakes. So, I learned how to cook from watching her.

Q: What stories have come down to you about your parents and grandparents?

A: No one really told me anything about my parents. My grandpa was a full-blooded Indian. He had hair all down his back. He was about eighty something and could sit Indian style like a baby, and could outrun anybody.

Q: How was your birthday celebrated growing up?

A: I only celebrated my birthday once out of my whole life. I was turning sixty something and my kids decided to surprise me with a birthday party.

Names and Name Changes

Q: Have you ever changed your name?

A: No, never

Q: Did you have any nick names growing up?

A: Everyone called me Junior

Q: What was your mom's Maiden Name?

A: Sadie Armstead

Racial Differences

Q: How is the world different from what it was like when you were a child when it comes to race and discrimination?

A: Louisiana was bad, when it came to segregation. I think Louisiana and Mississippi were neck and neck when it came to that. I remember when I was a boy, we had only one day to go to the State Fair, and that was on a Monday. Then one year, on a Monday, everybody stopped going, and that's what broke it up. That's when everything changed, and we could go any day of the week. I told myself I would never go back to the fair, and I haven't been back since. When we went into stores, we had to get out of line and let the white people go in front of us. See, ya'll have it so good, ya'll didn't have to go through the same stuff we been through. I remember JCPenny being the only store where we could stand in without letting white people cut us in line. We couldn't even go eat in the same building. I Remember me and my brother David went to go get ice cream one day, before he left to go fight for the war, and we couldn't even go to the front where the white people were. We had to go to the side of the building, and get our ice cream. Now that was something.

Q: How was racism like in your community?

A: I never had a white person call me the "N" word to my face. They knew who my father was, and they knew I was John Bells Son so they knew better than to call me that. But, they would

call me "boy" even as I got older. I remember I was a little boy and my mama gave me my first quarter. I went to the store and asked for a bag of peanuts, and the man looked me up and down before he even fixed them. But anyway, he filled my bag up and asked me did I have a quarter. I said "yessir," and I showed him the quarter. Then, he asked me where I got it from, and I told him my mama gave it to me. My heart was beating so fast, because I was scared he wasn't going to let me buy the peanuts, and I had the money to get them. He looked at me like he wanted to say "well, where did your mama get it from?" I stood to the side, and watched the other people pass me and get their stuff. He finally took my quarter, and gave my change and the peanuts back. I was so happy, but now that I look back on it, I should of never gave him my money. I should have saved it.

Q: What are some other things you remember while growing up and being segregated?

A: I remember the first time I sat in the front of the bus with a white person. He was my boss's brother. We got on the bus, and I told him that I had to go to the back, and he said "No you don't. you're with me." I must have looked at him like he was the craziest man in the world. I told him again "I have to go to the back." and he told me again "You're with me." So, I got onto the bus and sat down in the front with him. I can remember getting called everything in the book from the people that was sitting behind me, it was the longest bus ride of my life. The bus finally stopped, and I got off. That was the first time I ever rode at the front of the bus.

The family bible

Q: Did you ever keep a family bible?

A: Yes, my uncle gave me a family bible with everyone's birthday in it. It was so old, I bet it was about 100 years old.

Q: Do you still have it?

Yeah, I keep it underneath my other bible

Q: Did you ever start your own family bible?

A: Yes, I bought one when I moved into my first house, and put all my children's names and birthday's in them.

Q: Do you have anything else that has been passed down from generation to generation?

A: No

Family documents

Q: Do you have any family documents that has been passed down to you?

A: No I do not, but I do keep a lot of pictures.

Religious affiliation

Q: What is your religion?

A: I am Baptist

Q: When did you get Baptized?

A: I was six baptized at six years old, and I got ordained to be a deacon in 1964.

Family Burials

Q: When was your mom born, and buried?

A: My mom was born in 1919, and was buried in 2008 at Round Grove Cemetery

Q: When and where was your dad buried?

A: My dad was buried in Belcher Louisiana, at Green Cemetery in 1963. He died on Christmas Eve. I found him on the floor and I put him in the back of my car. When I heard my mama crying, I knew he was dead. I said "Mama, what are you crying for?" She never did answer me.

Q: Are there any other burials you remember?

A: My oldest sister Dorothy was buried January 30, 2010, and she was buried next to my mother at Round Grove.

Military Service

Q: Have you ever served in the military?

A: I never served in the military, but I do remember registering for the army in 1955 when I was eighteen.

Q: Has anyone else in your family served in the military?

A: My brother David got drafted for the Vietnam war, and I don't remember what year, but he was young.

Civil rights activities

Q: Have you ever participated in any civil rights activities?

A: No, I never got a chance to participate in any civil rights activities

Community Activities

Q: Have you ever Participated in any community activities?

A: The only community activity I remember participating in was a silent protest in one of the communities. It was for a a young man that was killed by an police officer in Shreveport many years ago. Me and my wife got out, and went to go support.

Brandi Green

Ms. Bonner

English 101

30 November, 2016

I had been working on the Service Learning Project for about a month, and while working on the assignment, I learned more than I thought possible. I knew that I wanted to interview my grandfather as soon as the project was handed to me. Interviewing him, and working on the service learning has taught me much more than things about my grandfather's life. My grandfather benefited from the project, because he had never been asked about his life before. Sitting down, and talking about his life made him feel special, and confident. It has taught me how to listen, and be thankful for what I have. Most importantly I have learned to listen, be patient, and be thankful.

When I started the project, I felt like it was going to be a very hard task. My grandfather really didn't talk much about his life, so I felt like it was going to be difficult trying to get him to tell me certain things. After starting the conversation, it wasn't difficult at all. When I got him to talk about his life, it seemed like he couldn't stop. It seemed like he was happy, and eager to tell me many things. He would go on and on about a lot of things, but mostly his childhood. He stayed on that topic for a very long time. His childhood was one of those subjects that he went into great detail about. I remember him telling me that his childhood was one of the best moments of his life. I observed and tried my best to listen carefully to everything he said. There were so many interesting things he would say, and I would have to go back and ask the question over just to get it right. One of the things that stuck out to me was his school and education. It

amazed me because he remembered going to school in rain, sleet, or snow. No matter what, he was determined to get there. Even though the others rode the bus, and he had to walk, he still got there, and nothing stopped him. That took a lot of courage, confidence, and determination.

Another thing that stuck out to me was the topic on racial differences. I didn't know that black people had only one day to attend the State fair, or JCPenny was the only store that allowed African American people to stay in line even if a white person was behind them. Going into detail about things that he had encountered made me wonder a lot. My grandfather enjoyed this topic, and telling me his stories. He wanted me to know what he had been through, so I wouldn't take the same things for granted. Some of the things that he couldn't do while growing up, made me realize how blessed I am. Especially when it came to racial differences in school. He told me that education was one thing that I should never take for granted, because education is important, and is something that no one could never take from you. That made me realize that being in college, getting an education is something I should be thankful for.

In all, my service learning project has taught me many things. But most importantly, to be thankful for what I have today, and to never take many of these for granted. I was worried that I wasn't going to learn anything from this service learning project, but I am glad that I did. I am glad that I learned more about my grandfather's life. I am glad that I learned how to listen, be patient and be thankful. Thankful for my education and many other things my grandfather couldn't do. I am glad that he decided to participate in this Service Learning Assignment with me. I am so happy that I got a chance to learn a lot.