

MILLER: From the thirties on, tractors --

STEIN: Because I know they come out with a tractor and we bought the first one from the Delta Implement Company for discing and things like that. Later, we started cultivating with tractors. We gradually got rid of all the mules and did all the cultivating with tractors.

MILLER: And you had to gradually get rid of your tenants too, didn't you?

STEIN: Well, yes, Ma'am. We finally got rid of all the tenants and went to all day labor.

MILLER: Then the cotton picker came, cotton picking machine.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am. That's right.

MILLER: Did you use Anhydrous Ammonia?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am, that's solid fertilizer.

MILLER: Now, that was one of the cheapest forms of fertilizer, wasn't it?

STEIN: That's right. We had machinery to put it out with. We bought stock in the fertilizer plant there in Yazoo City.

MILLER: Mississippi Chemical?

STEIN: Yes, Mississippi Chemical and we'd get a good rebate off of it at the end of the year.

MILLER: Now, during the depression did you have any problems?

STEIN: No, Ma'am.

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MILLER: Did you make a good crop every year?

STEIN: I made a good crop and most of my money was made during the depression. Well, I had a good way of making money. We made worlds of cotton. I had a brother who was an expert farmer and he looked after all that for me, brother Sam, (Sam Stein) and we had our own gin, own sawmill and own store and all the business in the store. It wasn't no way in the world for me to keep from making money.

MILLER: And then I believe they were building all of those levees at that time, too.

STEIN: That's right. H. B. Blanks was building the levee and I give him space for an office, heqdquarters, and charged him a good rent.

MILLER: Tell me, he was up at Longwood first.

STEIN: Yes, up at Longwood first.

MILLER: Tell me that story.

STEIN: He was at Longwood and Longwood is a low buckshotty place up there. He had his headquarters there and it rained and he couldn't get in or out he'd get stuck, so he come by there one day and saw that lawn. You've seen that lawn there. After the first time it could rain a month and you could walk through there in your lowquarters and that's where I had this swimming pool. People would go in there. I had a gate there and I charged them a quarter to go in there and swim.

MILLER: You're talking about the Burn.

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STEIN: The Burn - you remember that.

MILLER: Yes, I've been down there. It's beautiful.

STEIN: The boats I'd rent out. Mr. Blanks wanted to know if he could camp in there with his headquarters. I said "Yes, with so much money a month" and I said, "If you cut out all commissaries and give me all the business, give me the doodlum business."

MILLER: Now, what was the doodlum business?

STEIN: Coupon books. Every Monday morning they'd issue coupon books to the people that worked for them and they'd go to the commissary --

MILLER: The levee camp --

STEIN: They had their own commissary and they would buy on those coupon books. If they bought a dollar's worth they'd tear out a dollar coupon and charge it to them and pay day when they would collect for the doodlum books.

MILLER: So you got the doodlum books, didn't you?

STEIN: I got all of their books. He had subcontractors in those days too. Ever hear of a man named Mr. Wooten? Kirby Wooten was a subcontractor and he had a levee camp and another fellow and Mr. Blanks' outfit and I had really a big business there. It took two great big long trailers of groceries a week. I'd have to get them from P. P. Williams. They'd send me -- Vick Erwin would call on me and take their order.

MILLER: Is that who Vick Erwin worked for?

STEIN: He worked for the Goyer Company to begin with

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and then he went with P. P. Williams.

MILLER: And they worked out of --

STEIN: Vicksburg and then they had a place in Hollandale too, later. They'd send me two trailer load trucks, one, twice a week. It took that much for them, I could get all that business. I sold him sod for the levee and I had a great big five ton truck and if the machinery broke down I'd take it to the Foundry at Vicksburg and I'd get money for that, I'd get so much a trip. I made good money during the depression - big money.

MILLER: The levee camps employed a lot of people, didn't they?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: And at that time they were also working with mules too, weren't they? Or had they moved into machinery?

STEIN: No, Mr. Blanks had these electric tower machines. He put in a line all the way from Greenville all the way down to Chatham under that river.

MILLER: Now, what does that mean?

STEIN: That means that it was electricity. You put them in just like you have around --

MILLER: I mean electric towers?

STEIN: Electric Towers are these machines that run by electricity, Tower machines they call them.

MILLER: I see.

STEIN: They run by electricity and they had buckets

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and they would go way out and get the dirt and pull it in.

MILLER: Do they do that now or -- ?

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am, they still do it.

MILLER: But they are not hooked up to an electric line, are they?

STEIN: They've got to have an electric line.

MILLER: They do? I see.

STEIN: Or either a coal burner but his was electric.

MILLER: Yes. Where do they get their sod now?

STEIN: I sold him the sod. I had plenty of sod on the plantation. I sold him all his sod.

MILLER: That would be from your pasture?

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: Would that be hard on your pasture for the next year?

STEIN: No, Ma'am.

MILLER: You would grow the grass right on back the next year.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am. I had a setup where it was no way in the world to miss making money -- (Laughter!).

MILLER: Of course, the depression was a hard time for most people.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: The levee work and the flood control work, I think really helped us to get through the depression.

STEIN: Oh, yes. They had people, farmers, that did a

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lot of levee work with mules.

MILLER: Yes, I know, they had subcontractors.

STEIN: That's right.

MILLER: What was the main thing that the people on the plantations liked to buy from the stores, like your store?

STEIN: They'd buy everything. Clothes --

MILLER: Did you sell lots of snuff?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am, tobacco and snuff, chewing tobacco.

MILLER: Soda pop?

STEIN: Soda pop, cheese, bologna and salami.

MILLER: Later on you got a beer license, didn't you?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am. We handled beer too.

MILLER: When beer became legal.

STEIN: I'd sell so much beer when beer come in -- I got in with a fellow named Owen Moses. Do you ever remember Owen Moses?

MILLER: Who is he, a beer salesman?

STEIN: No, Ma'am. He had a -- like the New Deal Tobacco Company, he had a place like that, and he got in with an outfit in Chicago and they gave him all the beer he wanted. You know, you couldn't hardly get beer.

MILLER: I didn't know that.

STEIN: Yes, it was hard to get and he would get it in --

MILLER: Was he in Greenville?

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am. Owen Moses was here in Greenville. He had a store just like the New Deal Tobacco and Candy and Central Tobacco and Candy Company.

MILLER: What was the name of his store?

STEIN: All I know it was Owen Moses.

MILLER: Yes.

STEIN: He later went to Monroe, Louisiana, and he'd get a carload. He would get beer in here by the carloads and he and I were great friends and I'd send my five ton truck up here and load it up with a hundred cases of beer. It wouldn't be no time selling that beer out.

MILLER: People on the plantations and people coming there.

STEIN: Coming there in the store, wasn't no time selling that beer out. Sunday, Good God Almighty, I'd have -- I'd get everything in the world to try to make money. I had a baseball diamond there, for colored, for black people to play baseball on Sunday. I'd sell them soda pop and beer. Good gracious alive, it would take three, four or five of us to wait on them.

MILLER: Now, who all worked in the store with you?

STEIN: I had - Mr. Rich used to help me down there a bit, brother Sollie, little Lawrence Goodman and all of us, - when L. B. got big enough - all of us.

MILLER: Now, I know that when Mississippi was dry people did go over to Arkansas and over to Louisiana to buy

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whiskey, but then after prohibition came in then bootlegging really got going. Did you all have any bootleggers down in your part of the country?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am. It looked like everybody in the country was making whiskey.

MILLER: And of course that was a big thing during the depression.

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: Who made whiskey down in your part of the country, do you remember?

STEIN: Ethel Davis used to make whiskey, a black man by the name of Ethel Davis, Mark McNeil and then there used to be fellows that lived out on the river, fishermen, lived in shanty boats, would make it, everybody in there. We'd get --

MILLER: Wasn't any trouble to get it.

STEIN: No. Rosedale made it, they were noted for whiskey.

MILLER: Did anybody ever get raided down there?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am. They used to make it on the place here, caught a fellow making it on my place here.

MILLER: Who was the Sheriff then?

STEIN: Well, --

MILLER: Some of the Sheriffs didn't bother the bootleggers.

STEIN: The Sheriffs as a rule didn't bother them much but the ones that bothered them was the government.

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MILLER: The Federal --

STEIN: Federal government would send men in here and I've forgotten the names. I remember a government fellow come in there one time and made a raid, a darkey, a black man that lives with me, Mark McNeil. He's still there, he's been there all his life. He's about my age, about a year or two older than me. His mother used to cook for us and all the children still live on the plantation there. He come there to Mark's house, he heard that Mark was foolin' with whiskey and he didn't find anything, and Mark looked up at him and said, "Boss, I'm going to tell you about this whiskey business - you're just thirty days too late" - or something like that. He had hid out in a ditch somewhere. If you'd come thirty days earlier you'd of caught me.

MILLER: Nobody really thought anything about it.

STEIN: No.

MILLER: And they would talk about who had the best bootleg whiskey.

STEIN: That's right. Rosedale put out the best though.

MILLER: I think that's supposed to have been true. Were you all involved in politics in any way down there?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am. I'll tell you who was one of the best friends I ever had and you'd be surprised, is old man LeRoy Percy.

MILLER: Yes, I knew that.

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STEIN: -- him and his boy was one of the best friends. I was drunk once in my life and LeRoy Percy made me drunk right in his own home, old man LeRoy Percy. Back in the Ku Klux days.

MILLER: He wrote about it in his book.

STEIN: That's right, old man LeRoy Percy. I visited him in his home one time and he got me drunk. I couldn't get out of bed for three days.

MILLER: I take it you're not a drinking man.

STEIN: Yes. Back in 1926 there was a vacancy for the post office. Now, mind you what I'm telling you, the Republicans was in, in those days, and Mr. LeRoy Percy was a Democrat. I went up to his office, now the way we got to be such good friends, he was my father's lawyer and he never did charge my father a penny for what he did for him, and him and George B. Alexander used to come down here hunting, papa used to have riding horses for them and they'd go out and hunt, and we became great friends. In 1926 there was a vacancy at the post office and I went up to his office and I said, "Mr. Percy, it's a vacancy for that post office down there and I'd like to have it." He said, "You sure can get it." I said, "All right, then."

MILLER: Now this is when the Democrats came in.

STEIN: No, the Republicans was in there. He was a Democrat and the Republicans had control and he picked up his telephone and I'll tell you the man that was the head of the post office, New (N-e-w) was the man, a Republican. He went to

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the telephone and called Mr. New up and he told him, he said, "I've got a man here, Lawrence Stein, you've got a vacancy in the Chatham post office and I want him to have it," and Mr. New told him, "All right." Now, Mr. Percy was a Democrat and Mr. New was a Republican and the Republicans had it. He said, "Don't worry, I'll give it to him." And, I took the Civil Service examination - a gang of them took it - but they give it to me.

MILLER: Who had been the postmaster before you?

STEIN: Teddy Huntsberger. He had to leave from down there for reasons we won't discuss, and <sup>Melvin Van</sup> Norman was his clerk, and Melvin wanted it too and different ones wanted it after I got it - after I put in for it.

MILLER: So you were postmaster for --

STEIN: Thirty-seven years. Then when I got sixty-five I wanted to draw my Social Security and I couldn't by drawing that salary, so I give it up and got another lady to take it. I recommended her and they took her, and she's been doing very well with it.

MILLER: Now, getting back to politics, were you all involved in politics with the Board of Supervisors and things like that?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am. LeRoy Percy, anybody he wanted. Like he wanted George B. Alexander to be sheriff.

( End of tape one )

LeRoy Percy was a ring leader in this country.

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MILLER: Yes.

STEIN: Maybe I ought not to say this but I think Mr. Alexander was a little bit financially embarrassed.

MILLER: Yes.

STEIN: I think he was kind of at the low ebb there. You know, he used to own that Oil Mill out there at one time and he lost that. It's now the International.

MILLER: Yes.

STEIN: He wanted him to be Sheriff and we all got out and worked and got Mr. Alexander in twice. He was Sheriff twice, and the ones Mr. Percy wanted we'd get out and work and we'd elect them. It wasn't but about three thousand votes in the county, wasn't no trouble getting who you wanted in, if you'd get out and work.

MILLER: You didn't have two factions down on the Lake that were working against each other? Everybody worked together.

STEIN: No.

MILLER: Now, when the Ku Klux Klan was active, Mr. Lawrence, were they active at all down on the Lake?

STEIN: Well, they were active all over, they tried to be. I'll tell you the truth, people that you wouldn't dream of was Ku Kluxers.

MILLER: Yes, I think I knew pretty much who they are --

STEIN: Ray Toombs, Ben Gildart denied it but he was, old Tom Worthington and his folks were Catholics, I could name you all of them. Waddy West -- I can name you all up and down

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the line but you know they did anything and everything in the world for my family and me, helping all of us, Waddy West and all of them.

MILLER: So you never felt any --

STEIN: No, they were nice to me.

MILLER: The Ku Klux Klan, everybody knew who they were but they never did really, I think maybe some people lost a few jobs on account of it, I'm not sure, but at any rate Mr. Percy --

STEIN: A. D. Brooks, he belonged to it. I can name you all of them. LeRoy Percy got busy and he cleaned them out.

MILLER: Yes.

STEIN: Old George Archer, he was a Ku Kluxer, I can name them all.

MILLER: They were mostly against Catholics and Jews --

STEIN: That's right, and black folks.

MILLER: And black people. Do you think that they really gave the black people a hard time?

STEIN: Well, not to mention. I never did know of anything they did to them or anybody in this country.

MILLER: I had heard that if any of the black people wanted to leave town or leave the area that they'd make it difficult for them.

STEIN: No, it wasn't. I'll tell you where they had a tough time, it was really awful, over at Mer Rouge, Louisiana and down in that country - Bastrop. Oh, they had a terrible

time in that town. The Cyclops was down in there but Ray Toombs and all those fellows and Waddy West were very nice to me. Anything that we wanted they would do for us. Of course, we'd buy groceries from Waddy West and Malone & Hyde, he was the head of it, and we knew how to get in with all of them. We didn't want any trouble and they were nice and they were nice to me. You take Ray Toombs, if we had a darkey that got into any trouble he would always help us out.

MILLER: When you were postmaster, how did you get your mail? It came down to Erwin on the train?

STEIN: It would come down on a train. Old man Tom Worthington had the contract and he'd have horses and buggies and they'd go out and get the mail. If anybody wanted to go to the train they'd catch the hack and go out to it and they would charge them a fee to ride and they'd bring the mail. They had mail on Sundays in those days. He would go out on Sundays and bring the mail back.

MILLER: And the post office would be open?

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am, back in those days. Now the lady worked from about seven-thirty to ~~twelve~~ twelve o'clock Saturday and about eleven o'clock it's all over.

MILLER: Well, Mr. Tom Worthington had a hack that he ran from Erwin station to Chatham to Leota.

STEIN: And they'd bring the mail and he had a man in a skiff to take the mail over to Grand Lake.

MILLER: And then the steamboat would pick up the

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mail at Leota.

STEIN: No, Ma'am. No steamboat. They had a rowboat they'd take it over to Grand Lake.

MILLER: I see. So all the mail that you all would get at Erwin would be for Erwin and Chatham and Leota and Grand Lake.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: Well, in the steamboat days did the steamboat bring the mail?

STEIN: I never did know about the steamboat bringing any mail.

MILLER: I imagine they did before the trains.

STEIN: If they did, it was before my time.

MILLER: But that must have been before your time.

STEIN: Now, they had a post office down on the lake, way down on the other end of Lake Jackson, way down there on Woodstock Plantation. I used to own Woodstock at one time. Made a lot of money down there and farming.

MILLER: Now, who originally owned Woodstock?

STEIN: Mr. Oglesby, J. H. Oglesby, old man John Oglesby, and later he sold that place and moved up there near me. Joseph Oglesby was his son. You ought to remember that?

MILLER: I do.

STEIN: Sid Moyse had the insurance, and I later bought that place and down in there is where the county seat was at one time down there.

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MILLER: Oh, was that where Princeton was?

STEIN: Princeton Landing, that was where the county seat was down there at one time.

MILLER: Yes.

STEIN: At old Jobe ? they had some of those bills at one time, I don't know what ever become of them.

MILLER: Those bills?

STEIN: You know, dollar bills, denominations.

MILLER: Yes.

STEIN: From that bank down there. They had a bank in there.

MILLER: But that was before your time?

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am. Now, what we were talking about the post office. The post office down there was called the Cuffy Post Office.

MILLER: Cuffy? How do you spell cuffy?

STEIN: C-u-f-f-e, I guess. Mrs. Oglesby was the Postmaster down there.

MILLER: And that was at the other end of Lake Jackson.

STEIN: At the other end, down near the levee down on the far end of Lake Jackson, and we used to separate the mail and make it up and a black man by the name of Burt Brady would ride a horse and would take the mail down there. Burt Brady was his name.

MILLER: Now how many people lived down there around the Cuffe post office?

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STEIN: I don't know but it was a plantation down there and all the people that lived in there used that post office. The Cuffee post office. I'll bet it's not another person living that knows about that post office.

MILLER: I never heard of it before. Now, what was the next Landing after Leota on the river going down towards Vicksburg?

STEIN: Princeton Landing but I never did know of any boats landing there.

MILLER: And then going North what was the next Landing above Leota?

STEIN: I don't remember any landing there.

MILLER: That might have been the only one before Greenville.

STEIN: There may have been one along in there somewhere, I just don't remember.

MILLER: What is the biggest change that you've seen, Mr. Lawrence, in your lifetime, like in farming and life in the country?

STEIN: Well, electric lights, artesian wells and automobiles, horse and buggy days, tractors.

MILLER: In your lifetime there has been a complete change.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am. Electricity was one of the biggest things, artesian wells - we used to have cisterns. It's a wonder we all didn't die in those days from drinking water out

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of a cistern.

MILLER: Right.

STEIN: Wiggle tails and everything else in them.

MILLER: We all had malaria.

STEIN: That's right.

MILLER: Of course, the telephone's pretty good thing, too.

STEIN: That's right. The telephones, but we'd had telephones for years.

MILLER: Yes, prior to --

STEIN: At one time the only telephone in that country was in our store and you'd go to Leota, they had one out there, and I remember the two people who used to come down there and work on them - two black men, one of them was named King and I forget the other one's name. Two black men and I think King finally went into the upholstery business here in Greenville after he retired.

MILLER: Yes, I think I know who that is. When the Civil Rights movement started, when the integration of the schools and the new laws came out about black people, were you all affected in any way in your part of the country?

STEIN: No, we couldn't tell the difference. We accepted it and went right on.

MILLER: Nobody tried anything.

STEIN: No.

MILLER: In education in that part of the country?

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We had very little of it in Greenville too.

STEIN: Very little.

MILLER: Now the other day we were talking about drainage and you said you didn't have any problems about drainage on your plantation.

STEIN: No, Ma'am, we didn't have any drainage system and as far as taxes, you know --

MILLER: Is it because the land -- ?

STEIN: It's all drained, see lots of people drain in Lake Jackson, some of them drain in Lake Washington and I drain all of my land in the Burn Lake there (We called it the Break) - two names there, and different people had ways of draining their land. We had regular ditches in those days and we had two ditches there. A black man by the name of Johnson and, by the way, his boy is still living. He lived with me out there until recently when he moved to town. Jack Johnson, his father, passed away, he was a ditcher. He ditched with a shovel. We paid him by the rod and Jerry, the ditcher, an Irishman, and we paid him by the rod.

MILLER: And they lived there at Chatham?

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am, at Chatham.

MILLER: Did they own their own land?

STEIN: No, Ma'am. Johnson lived with us, on my place. He farmed and he made a crop and also did our ditching, and his children lived with him, and Jerry didn't do nothing but ditch. That's all he ever did.

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MILLER: He ditched for everybody?

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am. Now he lived on the Metcalfe place. That joined me and I'll tell you old Lady Metcalfe owned that plantation and after her death Fred Metcalfe inherited half of it and Clive Metcalfe's father inherited the other half. I think that Lois has still got that half. You know Lois Metcalfe?

MILLER: Yes, sure.

STEIN: She's still got her half and that's what she lives on.

MILLER: I didn't know that.

STEIN: She owns 550 acres adjoining me.

MILLER: Yes, that's beautiful land.

STEIN: Oh, it's as fine as a crow ever flew over, and she owns some land out here at Bourbon, Mississippi that her father left her, Doctor --

MILLER: Smythe.

STEIN: Smythe left her, yes. She owns a couple of tracts out there.

MILLER: Yes. You've had a very interesting life, Mr. Lawrence.

STEIN: Oh, yes, Ma'am. Yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: Now what do you do with yourself these days?

STEIN: That's the hardest job I ever had in my life, doing nothing.

MILLER: You don't go fishing?

STEIN: No, Ma'am. After I had this heart attack

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the Doctor told me to quit, so I give up ginning, give up store keeping, quit the post office, and rented all of my land out. Now L. B. takes care of all the business.

MILLER: L. B., now that's L. B. Stein, your nephew?

STEIN: My nephew. He lives here at Woodlawn Apartments and he's President of Holiday Inn. He's President of it. He takes care of that. We are in the loan business too, I branched out in that. I'm getting out of that too. We've been getting out but it'll take about ten years to get out of it. We've been getting out of it for about two or three years.

MILLER: Now your store closed.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am. We got out of the store business.

MILLER: Yes, you do go back and forth to your home.

STEIN: We use it for headquarters. We've got all the records down there and we still get all of our mail at Chatham.

MILLER: And you stay in town sometimes?

STEIN: Well, I stay here when I feel like it with my sister and I stay down there, wherever I feel like staying.

MILLER: You stay down there, I imagine, in the summer time.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am. Whenever I feel like it I go home down there. My sister used to stay with me. I brought her and her husband over. He went out of business and I told them they could come over and stay with me and they lived with me for quite a few years. She lost her husband and then she

come up here and she is staying at the Bessie J. Taylor home.

MILLER: Yes, that's Mrs. Ella Cornblatt.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: And your other sister here in town is Fannie Schwartz.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: Well, Mr. Lawrence, I believe we've covered nearly everything.

STEIN: Well, we've covered a long, a big space, haven't we?

MILLER: We have covered a big space and it's a very --

STEIN: I'll tell you, I've had a nice life.

MILLER: I think you have too.

STEIN: Yes, Ma'am.

MILLER: And certainly an interesting life, very interesting, and I appreciate it very much. Thank you.

STEIN: You're quite welcome.

- - - - -

The interviewer, Roberta Miller, would like to add a note to this interview:

As Mr. Stein left my house, he said, " There was one thing you did not ask me" and that was "What was the easiest thing you ever had to do?"and my answer would have been "Making Money". It was easy for me to make money. There was no way for me not to make money. I liked to work.

When I ran my gin, I ran it seven days and 7 nights a week.  
I took care of my business, and did not depend on others.  
I gave my tenants statements at the end of the year. And  
the hardest thing I ever had to do is "Nothing."

( End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Vivian Broom)

FINAL by V.B.

10-24-77.

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OF LAWRENCE STEIN  
BY SHERILYN D. ALLEN

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