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Frank and Marceline Day interviewed by Michael Kline at their home on Willie Pace Rd.
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At 95, Frank Day is a man of remarkable energy and clarity. He lost his mother as a infant and was raised, along with his brother and sister, by his aunt who worked “for part crop” until he was seventeen. His sister got married and his brother left home to work for wages and left him at the house by himself. He went to work plowing from sun up to sun down for a dollar a day and was glad to get that. His aunt lived close by and gave him a quart of butter milk every day and he made corn bread and drank that milk. “And if that wasn’t a slave, there ain’t never been a slave.”

When he was a small child his aunt moved with him and his siblings from farm to farm working in the fields for half a share of the crop. His brother and sister worked with their aunt hoeing tobacco, while he played in the yard with the land-owner’s children. But he soon got big enough to work with the family, dragging sticks and dropping plants in the field, watering mules and leading them to the barn at the end of the day and walked from home to the fields every day. Then Day went to work for wages for a man who treated him well, gave him a room in his home, and he stayed at that farm for twelve years. Then he went to another place and worked 15 years for that family.

In 1928 he bought an A Model Ford, and the son of the man he worked for helped him keep it running. A driver’s license cost a quarter, but Day didn’t have a quarter, and drove for years without a license until after his marriage to Marceline. He worked with Odell King and hauled fertilizer until 1962, and he told Mr. King about not having a license, and Mr. King said, “That’s alright, if you get stopped just tell them to call me and I’ll get it straightened out.”

After the Days got married they stayed at Frank Meyers’ the first year farming for half a crop and she worked in the fields just like he did. They had a handicapped child. Went to Hugh Jeffries the next year and Jess Hayes the year after that. Then Marceline’s uncle came by and got them to come farm with him for four or five years. Then they quit farming and Day went to digging graves at a cemetery for about six weeks and then got a job with the Mebane Sanitation Department in the shop and worked there until he retired in 1977. “It was a rough life, but the Lord pulled me through. Both white and black were good to me.”

Day told about the death of his father, shot to death by the law in Burlington, when Day was only seventeen. My aunt was so good to me, used to buy be candy and never made me go to school. Day attended about three days at Patella School and then got to fighting over there. “I didn’t want to go back and she didn’t make me.” But later he wished he had attended. Day talks affectionately about his handicapped child who lived to the age of 49 and died in 2001.

Marceline Day, in her late seventies, was born to a sharecropping family in Pleasant Grove. She talks about her school days, growing up in a tobacco farm and her courtship and marriage to Frank Day. She remembers the family singing in the tobacco fields and going the association meetings in the summer. She finished twelfth grade in 1950. Studied home economics and learned to cook and sew. She still makes quilts and does primitive painting. We photographed her with a picture she painted of a tobacco barn.