

R: This is Verdell Robinson. Will you state your name please?

W: Malachi White.

R: What year did you start school at Ogden?

W: 1939.

R: How old were you when you started school there?

W: Six years old.

R: What year did you stop school at Ogden?

W: 1944.

R: What grade were you in then?

W: Fifth.

R: So you completed the fifth grade at Ogden School?

W: Yes.

R: What month did school open and close when you were going to Ogden School?

W: It opened in September and closed in June.

R: What time of day did it open?

W: It opened at eight and closed at three.

R: How did you get to and from school?

W: Walked.

R: How far?

W: I guess about eight to ten miles.

R: Round trip or one-way?

W: That would be round trip.

R: So about four to five miles one way. Were there others walking with you?

W: My sisters and brother, and then we walked by the Jones house, and sometimes they would walk with us. The Jones' didn't live too far from the school. Sometimes they would catch us and walk back and forth to school together.

R: Was that walk uneventful or can you remember anything that went on when you were walking to and from school that might be of interest?

W: On the way to school we used to cut the fool and play on the way, a bunch of us walking together.

R: Cutting the fool is the same as what, playing?

W: Yes. Just playing around.

R: Who was your teacher? Or who were your teachers specifically?

W: As far as I can remember, Mr. Welch and Ms. Jackson.

R: Which one was the lead teacher or the head teacher?

W: Mr. Welch.

R: Mr. Welch was the lead teacher. Was he called principal? How did you know he was the lead teacher?

W: Because he was the oldest. We didn't address him as principal because there was no principal back in those days. He was just the head teacher.

R: How many students were in your class?

W: I guess there was about eight to ten of us.

R: How many were in the whole school?

W: If I remember, I think it was about twenty to twenty-five, something like that.

R: So, twenty to twenty-five and eight to ten were in the same class as you. How did they determine the class? How did the teachers do the teaching? [Did they say] this is the class in first grade, and this is second grade, and [so on].

W: I guess, because every year we would get promoted if we passed. We would go from one grade to another. I guess that is how they kept up with us.

R: Were all of the twenty children in the same room?

W: Yes, it was same room, but I think it was divided. The oldest would be up front and we would be back next to the door. We had a blackboard that partitioned off the [children].

R: So it was made into two rooms by dividing the room with the blackboard. The younger children would be behind the blackboard on one side and the older children on the other side.

W: Yes.

R: All of the younger children would be on one side. The younger children would have been first through third grade?

W: Something like that, yes.

R: Did they ever partition the school off with an actual divider?

W: I don't think it was when I was there.

R: How was the school heated?

W: By a wood stove.

R: And cooled?

W: By opening the windows and doors.

R: Where did the wood come from? Did you have go cut the wood?

W: I don't know if they bought wood, I don't think that we had to cut it. I don't remember how they got it.

R: Where did you eat lunch?

W: We ate outside unless it was raining, and then we would eat at our desks.

R: Did you bring the food from home?

W: Yes.

R: So, was food ever prepared at school?

W: Later, they had the government commodities. They had the yellow corn meal, yellow girls. I think it was for the home economic teachers to teach the girls how to cook.

R: That was just the girls part.

W: Yes.

R: The boys didn't take home economics. The teachers did teach the boys how to cook.

W: No.

R: How long was the lunch period?

W: Lunch period, I think, was forty-five minutes to an hour.

R: You said that you ate outside. Were there places to sit outside?

W: We had benches and tables out there.

R: What kind of outside activities did the students participate in?

W: We had dodge ball, baseball, and the girls had the little "Ring Around the Rosie," and "Rise Sally Rise" and all that kind of stuff, activity.

R: The boys didn't play those games, those were just girls games.

W: Those were girls games.

R: Did the girls play dodgeball and baseball?

W: Yes.

R: What about volleyball and basketball? Did you have that too?

W: I don't remember basketball. Volleyball, yes I remember that.

R: No basketball. So it was the ring plays for the girls and then everybody played baseball or softball.

W: Dodgeball.

R: Everybody played that.

W: Yes.

R: How long were you outside doing those kinds of activities?

W: About thirty minutes.

R: Was that right after lunch, or with lunch? Or would you go back in school and have class and then come back out later.

W: Yes. [We] came back out.

R: What kind of outhouse did the school have?

W: I think it was a wooden outhouse. I don't know if the government furnished any outhouses or not. I don't remember, I know we had them.

R: Was there more than one? Did the boys and the girls have their own?

W: Yes, we had separate ones.

R: Could you go any time you wanted to? If you were in class and needed to go, could you just go? Did the class go all at one time? Did you have to have permission?

W: Yes, we could go anytime. You would hold up your fingers, and then get to go.

R: Like after lunch, was there a line of boys and a line of girls to go use the bathroom before you went back in the class?

W: Yes, they made sure everybody had a chance to go before we went back into the classroom.

R: Talk about the books now. What kind of textbooks did you use? Do you remember any that you used and what condition were they in?

W: [We used] *Run Jane Run, See Jane Run*. Anything that the white children used, they would bring them over to us after they were done. We would use them. That is how we got our books.

R: What condition were they in?

W: Some of them were in pretty good condition, some had pages torn, and most of them were [in] good [condition].

R: How about the backs [of the books], did they still have backs on them?

W: Most of them still had backs on them.

R: They were in condition that you could use them and get the information from

them.

W: Yes.

R: What other books, besides reading books [did you use]?

W: We had reading, arithmetic, and spelling. Most of the major books.

R: [Did you have] geography books?

W: Yes. We had a big globe. We had a couple of them (globes) and we would bring them down. The teacher would find a state on there and we would have to find the capital. I liked that, that was my best subject.

R: What was your worst subject?

W: Arithmetic, math.

R: What kind of school closing activities were held at the end of the year?

W: They had plays and stuff at the end of the year. They had May Day celebration, that was a yearly thing. They had games and things at May Day.

R: Did the community and your families come out then?

W: Yes.

R: And also at the end of the year activities?

W: Yes.

R: [At the end of the year activities] you said they had plays. Did all of students have to participate in the play?

W: No, I don't think that you had to, but if you wanted to you could.

R: Were you in any?

W: No. I was doing the boy things.

R: What is the most memorable event that happened to you at Ogden School?

W: Most of the older children had graduated and went on to the Alachua High School. The younger ones that were left behind, we were tired of school and we wanted to go too. We tried to knock the block pillars out. We tore up things

inside, windows, you know, we thought they would close the school.

R: Your objective was to close the school, so you ransack it so it couldn't be used. Everyone wanted to go to Alachua/High Springs to school.

W: That was a stupid thing to do, but we paid for it.

R: How many of you were involved in it?

W: About five or six of us boys.

R: What were the consequences? You said you paid for it.

W: Well, we got whippings all the way down the line. Mom got to do two or three of them, me and my brother. He was leaving the next year, and I was suppose to leave the next year too. After we got back to school, the teacher made us go out and get switches and lean across the desks and they put it on us.

R: Mr. Welch and Ms. Jackson?

W: Yes.

R: What did the school board or the county do? They had to fix things back up or did it close?

W: No, it didn't close, because you know you all came along after that.

R: So, this was in 1944 when you were in fifth grade?

W: Yes.

R: Did you go back there the next year?

W: I think I finished that year out and mama died and there was just the girls, and me, and my brother. Some of the girls had already married and moved on. So, when mama died, I was sharecropping and I never got any money out of the deal. I got mad and ran away from home and went to Tampa. I did the sixth grade in Tampa, until my sisters found out. See, nobody knew where I was going, and they found out where I was.

R: Did you have relatives there?

W: Yes, my uncle was there. I had an uncle and some cousins. My mama had one brother, and he was living in Tampa with his family. I went to see him, me and a cousin of mine. That is when I left.

R: You mentioned earlier something about graduation. Did they had a graduation ceremony at the school?

W: We had a graduation from one grade to the next.

R: How do you judge the education that you got at Ogden?

W: It was fair, the best that you could do. It all depends on the student, if you wanted to study and get it, you could get it.

R: It was available, you were offered what any other student was offered.

W: Yes.

R: How did your parents view education? I know you said that your dad died when you were a baby, so we are talking about your mother.

W: She did the best that she could. She made sure that we got our lesson. My oldest sister would too, because they would have a switch too. We would get down our lessons as best we could.

R: Your mother would see to that.

W: Yes.

R: Did she attend the school closing activities at the end of the school year?

W: Yes.

R: You mentioned your older sisters, they would work with you on your lessons. How many sisters did you have at home at that time?

W: Three.

R: What sort of values did your teachers have?

W: They had a job to do, they were very strict and they did the best that they could. They had to give respect.

R: Did they demonstrate any religious activities during the opening of school?

W: We had prayer and devotion.

R: Was that every day?

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W: That is what we opened with.

R: So they [the teachers] did not tolerate any wrongdoings?

W: No.

R: What about the golden rule, the “do unto others?”

W: Yes.

R: Anything else?

W: We were a bit mischievous, but we were boys.

R: Mr. White, I appreciate your spending this time with me.

W: Thank you.

[End of Interview.]