

# Bogart Laney

“Uncle Bog”, as he is fondly called by many, is 83 years old, and even though he has been away from Lando for some years, he has a very vivid memory of his days spent here. Just as the interview was ending, he said, “There’s one more thing I want to tell you. It’s a poem that Gary Carter learnt me. He’s dead and gone now, but I still remember what he learnt me . . .

*He was nothing but a hobo, and he hadn’t any means,  
When they saw him on the levy in the state of New Orleans.  
Where the niggers were a-dancing as they came parading by.  
He’d stopped to see the jiggin’ he heard from the otherside.*



BOGART LANEY (Photo by Susan Meiselas)

*There was a big mulatto nigger whose name was Francie Jim.  
He was passing round his hat and he held it out to him.  
He only turned his pockets wrong side out and hoped for  
another side.*

*He said he’d make some music if they cared to hear him try.*

*So they handed him the fiddle and he fiddled on the keg,  
He tuned it up cheerful as he held it on his leg.  
He fiddled on the high note, he fiddled on the low,  
He fiddled as if the devil was jerking on the bow.*

*The very bales of cotton was looking round for mates,  
The bunches of bananas was dancin’ in the crates,  
The rats was doing two-step with the roaches on the chair,  
It seemed as if judgment was getting very near.*

*There came a kind of itching in the bottom of my shoe,  
And it wasn’t but a second till I was dancing too.*

*He was nothing but a hobo and he hadn’t any means,  
But he could’ve owned the city if he’d stayed in New Orleans.*

*recited by  
Bogart Laney*

Bo Laney also shared the following story with us:

Peddlers used to come through here sellin’ clothes and a lot of other different stuff. They peddled on the factory hill as long as they could. But the company wouldn’t allow ’em to if they could help it. They had a lawsuit with one for trespassin’. So they got him up at that old log house that they used to use for Woodman Hall, courthouse, and I don’t know what all else. Anything like drinkin’ liquor, gettin’ in a fight, or anything like that, they’d take ’em up there and try ’em on a Tuesday, I think it was Tuesdays.

Well, old man Jim Reid was the judge, and whatever the company said, he’d more ’n likely do. So he had this peddler up there and was gonna fine him. Said, “Well, Joe, I got you for trespassin’ on company property.” The peddler said, “Well, now, supposin’ I’d be goin’ down the road and I’d meet a woman in the road and she’d be in a buggy and she’d tell me to get out of the way, and I wouldn’t do it. She’d pull out a pistol and shoot me. Then what?” Old man Reid said, “Well, you could step out of the road.” Joe said, “No, no, I couldn’t for I’d be trespassin’ on company property.” So you see, they couldn’t do nothin’ with him. I think they turned him loose, but before they let him go, they told him he would still have to pay the cost of court. He said, “What cost?” They said, “It cost Mr. Reid to come down here to try you.” Joe said, “I didn’t send after Mr. Reid.” So he wouldn’t pay that either.