



WILL and MADGE ERNANDEZ: "Me and Madge had nine children, and every one of them was born in this house except Robert." (Photo courtesy of Will Hernandez)

Will Hernandez

My daddy and them moved here in 1908 from Fairfield, east of Ridgeway. He was farming someone else's land, and he was a sharecropper – gettin' half what he made. Back in them days, he'd go buy a whole barrel of flour for \$4.00. That's hard to believe, isn't it? Why back in them days, you could buy three pounds of sugar for a quarter and a big slab of fatback for about 35 or 40 cent. We lived way down in what you might call "no man's land". And I don't never wanna' live there no more and I never will.

This old man, he's dead and gone now, but he lived up here where Tony (Ernandez) was livin'. He came down there where we was at and talked Daddy into comin' up here to the cotton mill at Lando. Daddy had cows and pigs and a mule and farm tools and stuff like that. That was old man Tom Frye that done the hirin'. He told Daddy what he could make and this and that and the other, til Dad pulled up and threwed away and give away what he had and moved us all to Lando.

My mama didn't say nothin' when my Dad said we was movin'. I tell you, she was a good woman. Well, she died up here in that house in front of the Church of God, right there in that house where Stroud's livin' now. I was right there beside her when she drawed her last breath.

I went to work in the spinnin' room sweepin' for 40 cent a day. You could get a job easy then. This man had us a job before we ever moved up here. Had the whole family that was big enough a job. I worked then 55 hours a week – worked on Saturday 'til 12 o'clock. The rest of the children went to school.

I've got a little brother and sister dead and they're buried in Fairfield. I used to go to church with Daddy and I had to set real still and be quiet. All of us did. There was Charlie, John, Lee, Ray, Bunny, Ben, Janie and Rosebud and me and that little brother and sister that died.

I'm 84 years old now, but I was about 17 when we came here. I married the first time in 1910 at the magistrate's. Glass was his name. After we married, I said, "How much do I owe you?" And he said, "Fifty cent." We walked all the way up to his house in Edgemoor and back. My courtin' house is still here. It's that big ole two-story house on the right 'cross from the big tank. Pap Langley lives there now. Me and Madge had nine children, and every one of them was born in this house except Robert. My wife's mother, Mrs. Laney, she was a mid-woman, and she helped with every one of 'em.



MINEZA ANN LANEY, midwife, and VERA NUNNERY. (Photo courtesy of Dora Hefner)

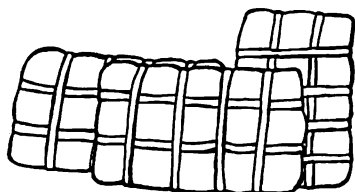
My first wife got killed in a car wreck. We went to town on Saturday with Vernon Ramsey, Dewey Ramsey, and Jess Coker and comin' back home some kid in a old truck run into us. I don't remember it, but they said they carried us to Rock Hill and the doctor there said he wouldn't give two cent for my life neither. But I lived, so I just said, "Oh, well, it wasn't my time."

We had started keepin' house right in that three-room house by them rocks where Joe Dawkins lives. Back in them days, it was bed bugs, chinchies they called 'em. And bless your soul when me and Madge got in there, and I'll tell you the truth, there was chinchies everywhere. I never saw so many in all my life. They like to eat us up. They was in the cracks and everywhere. We got up out of bed and took and made a pallet in the kitchen. But, you know, the next day, we got hot water and poured everywhere. Back in them days you scalded 'em, and we got shed of them things.

People give us all kind of stuff when we got married. Everybody helped out when youngins got married. I wasn't 18 and my wife was just 16.

Daddy left here one time and moved to the farm down there below Bascomville. He wanted me to go with him and I moved down there, too. I was married then, but I didn't have no children. That's where my first boy was born. They had a mid-woman and a colored woman and old Dr. Gaston, he came down there to her. He was a good-lookin' young man. He was drivin' two horses. Had him a chauffeur – a colored man – drivin' that buggy. He was smokin' a cigar and he come down there to see Madge and that's the only time he come.

I'll tell you that old house wasn't much. The wind come through the cracks. Had "cat holes" we called 'em, cause the wind'd get so strong, it'd blow a cat across the floor. Well, Daddy helped me out farmin' and that year, with his help, I made six bales of cotton. The last bale I sold, I got 6¼ cent a pound for it. After that, I decided I'd come back to Lando.



I jumped on the mule and I rode him all the way back up here and I got me a job. There wasn't but two rooms open here when we moved back here. So, I moved in here, and been here ever since. Now, that's over 65 years I've been here in this house.

Back in them days, they had small looms downstairs, what they called breaker looms. So, I went to work there and learned how to weave. I made more money that I did on the farm, and it wasn't out in the cold neither. The work wasn't too hard. They paid us by the pound then. I remember one week, a fellow, Jim Alley, he made \$7.00 and everybody like to went wild over that \$7.00.

When I was weavin', I kinda' took up fixin' looms, too, and I could fix my own looms. Then they got to where they'd call me to fix the other looms too. So one day, I said, "Let me tell you one thing. I'm either gonna' have to fix looms or weave. I can't do both." And he said, "I'm gonna put you to fixin' looms." And he did. I fixed down here for 15 years or more 'til I got in that wreck and couldn't squat down no more. Then I had to go back to weavin'. Then I showed Robert how to fix them looms, and I ain't braggin' on him, but he's a good loom

fixer.

They had shuttles when I started weavin', and you had to thread your own shuttle and you had balls in the blanket, and each shuttle had a different fillin' in it – blue, black or whatever, and you had to learn to put the right kind in. If you put the wrong kind in there, you'd make the border wrong. I didn't run but four looms. I don't know, but I reckon I had the record of makin' the best cloth of any weaver down there. They never would have me up on bad cloth much. But some of the rest of 'em, they'd have 'em up on bad cloth all the time. Something'd happen to the loom, it'd hang up or somethin', and they'd keep a-goin' and make a thin place in the cloth. They'd have 'em up on that and show it to 'em. Well, they'd have me up sometime on somebody else's cloth, but I would mark mine. I was on the first shift, and when I'd go off, I'd put a little paper clip and mark so I'd know where mine was at. Then when he'd have me up on somebody else's cloth, I'd say, "Wait a minute. Hold up there. That ain't my cloth. I didn't weave it. There's my mark over there, and that ain't my cloth." They finally got to where they had to give 'em six looms, and that was more work. Then they got them C-4s down there and them was different, bigger looms. But, there ain't no weavin' down there now, you know.

Old man Gilbert Heath, he was a good man. I never went to that man in my life for accomodations when I didn't get it. If I'd go to him to borrow any money or to help me out any way, why he done it. 'Course he always knew I'd pay him back.

When I was younger, I used to get out and play ball a little bit with the boys. We used to have a ball field over there where the pines are in front of where the Church of God's house is. But they tore it down. I've been over there to see a good ball game a many a day. You take Curt Bolton, he used to be a good player and Grady Bolton he was good, too. They had a team, and they played other teams. I remember one boy down here, he was a Indian from over at Catawba, and he was pitchin' ball and hit another boy side the head. And I want you to know, he died in just a day or two after he got hit.

I used to play in a band over here. I was the drum beater when they had it over here in the schoolhouse. That was long years ago. We played for land sales. We'd go out in the country where they was sellin' and play. I don't remember where they paid us anything or not.

Kate and I married in 1947. She come down here on vacation with my aunt. They were both workin' in Danville. Then after that, we wrote each other for awhile. Just all in all, she fell for me, and I fell for her. I made two or three trips to Danville to see her. We married one night, the 17th of December it was. They had a old nigger man there playin' the piano. 'Law, such dancin' you never seen in your life. There was a old man there had on a long overcoat swingin' way down round his legs, and him and Kate danced, but I put a stop to that. I had nine children, and Kate had six. She's got five livin' and one dead, and I've got eight livin' and one dead. All of my children worked in the mill.

It ain't nothin' like it used to be. It used to be a nice, place 'round here. They'd cut all these weeds down and keep 'em trimmed down every summer. There was a man they hired

from Richburg, and he brought a bunch of darkies with him and they got the work done. Now look at the houses how they're tore up when somebody moves out. I reckon they just don't care. Harry couldn't have no insurance on all these old empty houses. I'm glad to see him pushin' all of 'em down.



CREW "PUSHIN' DOWN" old abandoned house.

You know four people lives down here now. But there wasn't a house empty when I moved in Lando. Lots of people have brought houses and moved up above Edgemoor and still workin' in the mill. They don't hardly make nobody move now. You take Walt Hyatt up there. Before he diéd he said

Harry asked him one day, "Walt when are you gonna' retire?" Walt said, "Why? You want to run me out the house?" Harry said, "You think I'll run you out as long as you've been livin' down there?" So it's the same with me. I'm here to stay.



KATE and WILL ERNANDEZ: "I'm here to stay."



MANETTA MILLS workers in 1902. (Photo courtesy of Billy Haggerty)