

MS. GRETCHEN DOUGLAS' INTERVIEW

By
Thomas Dye

(Ms. Jenkins) My name is Gretchen Earnestine Jenkins Douglas. I was born in Gainesville on August 26, 1943. I am the daughter of Eva Jenkins and William Jenkins. I currently live in Orlando and have two children, and that's it.

(Dye) Okay, and then the Jenkins were, of course, residents of Rosewood.

(Ms. Jenkins) No, my mother Eva Jenkins who was Eva Marshall, at the time, was born in Rosewood to Agnes and William Marshall. Agnes was a Goins, so Edmund was Eva's grandfather. Edmund Goins was Eva's grandfather, Agnes was her mother.

(Dye) Okay, and so then your grandparents were?

(Ms. Jenkins) Great grand.

(Dye) Great grandparents.

(Ms. Jenkins) Umh, great grandparents were the, at the time that mother was born 1910 in Rosewood, and her father . . .

(Dye) We have the 1910 census here, lets see if she is in here

(Ms. Jenkins) She was born October 15.

(Dye) And she is a Goins.

(Ms. Jenkins) Umh.

(Dye) And her name is?

(Ms. Jenkins) Eva.

(Dye) Eva Goins, see its depending on when

(Ms. Jenkins) When it was taken, right.

(Dye) It may not show up in here.

(Ms. Jenkins) Right.

(Dye) But here I see is a Linda Goins, Hilton Goins, and a Florida Goins; here is a Charlie Goins, Perry Goins, and George Goins.

(Ms. Jenkins) Agnes was her mother's maiden name, depending upon when that was taken. Is there a date on that? Does it show when it was taken

(Dye) April, it was taken April of 1910.

(Ms. Jenkins) No, she was born October 15th. How often would they have done that?

(Dye) The U. S. Census was done every ten years.

(Ms. Jenkins) So the next would have been twenty which was when her father died. Okay, her mother and father should be on that.

(Dye) See if we can find it on here.

(Ms. Jenkins) He was a Marshall. Her married name was Marshall. She was the only living of the three children.

(Dye) Who was that?

(Ms. Jenkins) Eva.

(Dye) Okay.

(Ms. Jenkins) The other two are deceased.

(Dye) Okay, okay, so alright.

(Ms. Jenkins) You got it now?

(Dye) Yeah, I got it now. Okay, the Goins' family and I looked at some of these. I was down at the courthouse all last week looking at the Goins' family and looking at the land they had leased and owned, I mean its page after page.

(Ms. Jenkins) Oh, really. How much did it end up being?

(Dye) Acres and acres of land, as far as I know. A lot of it they leased, some of it they owned and they were leasing from the railroad (a company called Cedar Key Town Improvement Company) which owned a lot of land around there, I guess to do their turpentine business.

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah.

(Dye) That's what I imagine it was. Alright, why don't you go ahead then and tell me as best as you can about your mother and what she . . .

(Ms. Jenkins) . . . has told me about this?

(Dye) . . . has told you about it, and if you can remember anything about what she remembers of the town that would be helpful.

(Ms. Jenkins) Oh, yeah, a lot about that. The way she described the town to me is that the escalator had a railroad that ran basically sort of through it, and ah, it was called --the stop was called Hilton Station. It was named after one of the--either the children or the brothers of Edmund Goins. One of them was named Hilton Goins, and that's who the stop was named after and the train would come through on a regular basic and pick up supplies and take things out that they had made. In fact, she said that her casket was made there.

(Dye) Do you know the man who made the casket, or anything?

(Ms. Jenkins) Umh, Umh, and I never -- I don't recall her ever saying who by name, but there was a woodcrafting kind of business. In fact, she has a baby picture of her and one of her brother (she was sitting the chair and one of her brothers), it was a poster kind -- high, you know, how they used to be high upholstery (very thick) . . .

(Dye) Umh.

(Ms. Jenkins) and the intricate it was a high back chair, very intricate handwork detailed kind of stuff (real big) bigger than this, like a square back kind of thing with all kinds of intricate details on it, it was made there.

(Dye) And that picture was taken in her home?

(Ms. Jenkins) Oh yeah, it was taken on the front porch. Ah and, she was a baby (it looks like she might have been less than two-years old, cause she sat in a chair).

(Dye) You think there is anyway we can get a copy of the picture, or either . . . ?

(Ms. Jenkins) Oh yes, she got it here.

(Dye) Oh, she does.

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, she showed it to Dr. whats her name.

(Dye) Dr. Jones?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, she showed it to her today. That indicates that they were real craftsmen because she said this is what they made the furniture that was in the house. She talks about a grand piano they had in the house, in her home.

(Dye) Right, I heard about that.

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, that she play (was her doll's house) under. This summer when we were getting ready for family reunion, I asked her to do a session on the massacre because everybody is focusing on the destruction and I am concerned about people also seeing Rosewood as something before it -- before it was destroyed, it was and what it was before that, and she talks about the lace curtains at the windows. They lived in a three bedroom house. What we refer to that as shotgun, from the front door to the back door you could see through, you know, straight hall. The three bedroom and the kitchen and all was attached to the house cause undoubtedly, many of the houses at that time had detached kitchen facilities, or what have you, were detached from the house, it don't know, but in their situation everything was all together with the front porch and back porch, and the swing in the yard and all that kind of thing. It seems like it was an enjoyable regular kind of neighborhood.

(Dye) Did she tell you about the churches in there, or how many?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, she said there was two, a Baptist church and a A. M. E. church, now, we are A.M.E.'s and that's where she went to church, but she doesn't know much about the Baptist church.

(Dye) But this was Black baptist church?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, because I think she said there was only, she only knew of one white family, I think the Wright's or whoever lived there. So I guess the assumption is that it would be a black Baptist church, but the A.M.E. which is the African Methodist Episcopal was there and they had a minister, she said they use to call in Reverend Brady. Its either Brady or Baidey which might have been Bradley, or something that sounds like that. She can not remember the name of the church, though, and she remembers going to school very biblically. They went to school at the Masonic Lodge and her mother was her first teacher. In fact, her mother came, her mother Agnes came from North Carolina and had a teachers' certificate from North Carolina when she came to Rosewood. She talks about the -- she knows the first reader that she had (but

I can't remember what she called it), but anyway, the way they use to write on slates and it was all a one room kind of school house thing where everybody was all in the same class together. I asked her about the sound, what did it sound like, what a regular day [was] like, and she would say, she could tell when they were building from the wood, building different things there was a rhyme to the wood and to the hammering of it, and ah, there was just a sound to the way that life, like you could tell what was going on by the sounds of the work that the people was engaged in. Her father was what that called a range-rider. He rode over the property and inspected it. I asked her, how long would he be gone, she said, he would be gone at least a full day, just riding and inspecting (I was trying to get a feel for how far, what distance, and how much land and all that, she said she had no idea in terms of acreage, but she knew it would be a full days job to go out and inspect and see what was going on).

(Dye) Now, Edmund and Sarah, they had their own separate home, or did their children, Agnes and Marshall, live in with them.

(Ms. Jenkins) The way she explained it to me Edmund, her grandpa had his meals with them, now as she explains it to me, her grandpa Edmund provided living accommodations, home space for all of his children. They were giving an area where they had a house and that's the way that was done, but for dinner time, he would come to Agnes to their home and that's where he would eat. Now what I don't know is when if the wife Sarah was alive at that time or not, and that's what I don't know. I don't remember any conversation about that, but except that he was married to her, but in terms of whether she was a live or deceased, I really don't know.

(Dye) Do you have any idea of their house, what it looked like, Edmund and Sarah Goins?

(Ms. Jenkins) No, she didn't, I don't remember asking that. I really don't, ah but, I do know that each one, each family, each of the children had their own home.

(Dye) Were they all near one another?

(Ms. Jenkins) No, not in a row like, she said they were in different—they were all in the same community, but they were at different places in the community.

(Dye) Have you ever heard of the term "Goins Quarters"?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, as I understand it, Goins Quarters was where the employees for the turpentine still lived. It was like twenty some . . . I don't know what you would call them shanties, but it was like for those people who

didn't have anywhere else that worked for Goins, that's where they could live and work and it was all in one area, but that's all I know about.

(Dye) Did she ever described the still to you, the actual plant?

(Ms. Jenkins) Ump, ump, except there was like a general store kind of thing that he owned, what they called it . . . commissary is how she referred to it. Ah, that they made all kinds of things like she said, she talks about the shoe last, where they made shoes for children and adults, and they had a smaller one for child shoes and a large and they would do that in there. They made barrels, on set of caskets, wooden things, they took shipments; they made things and the train actually stopped and shipped them office orders to other places and they put the rosin from the . . .

(Dye) Umh, rosin, right.

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, from the sap from the trees. Ah, it sounds like they used all of the by products from the tree. Now, I remember her saying too that there was a letterhead that they had for their business, and she doesn't know where you might be able to find one, but they had a letterhead for their own business. I think it was M & M, Martin and somebody, it was M & and something Goins, and it was the two brothers and they . . . it was a legitimate thriving business that they were conducting there.

(Dye) Did she ever talk about any type of ah, the church any celebration in town? Have you ever heard of the A.M.E. church possibly having a reunion, or a regional convention in Rosewood, at any time?

(Ms. Jenkins) No, but all of that's possible because of the calendar of the church, you know, Sunday school conventions. Well, I know she talked about the activities of the church being A.C.E. League, Allen Christian Endeavored League is what it was called, where you will go at after, the church day would be you would have your 11:00 o'clock service and you will have dinner, then you will go back in the evening for league and then many times evening service. Sunday school convention and all that, that's just apart of the ritual of the church, that's been forever.

(Dye) Any other events, or whatever, did she remember any events or anything occurring or celebration or . . .? What about the baseball team, or baseball field being there?

(Ms. Jenkins) Now, I have heard other talk about this, now I have heard the men folk talk about, but I don't remember necessarily talking about, but I have heard men talk, talk about it.

(Dye) Did she talk about the people in Goins Quarters, or that were employed by the Goins Turpentine operation, were they all black people or where there any white employed?

(Ms. Jenkins) I have never, if I am not mistaken, the only white people that I have ever heard her make reference to was the Wrights. Those were the only ones that I have ever her make reference to. And I was asking her, what did people do on the weekends, what did people do after dark, what was the good thing, the bad things, where were juke joints and all that, but she said remember she was a child because her mother died in child birth. I think it was 1917, so mother was seven-years old when her mother died, and it sounds like, she lived a rather protected life, just didn't run free and all of that.

(Dye) Did she ever talk about the black Masons there?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, yeah.

(Dye) Were they Prince Hall Masons?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah.

(Dye) Where her parents or her father . . . ?

(Ms. Jenkins) I have no idea, she never said, I'm not sure she would know, or she would understand the significance of that at that young age.

(Dye) Did she ever mention anything about sugar mill, or any other business – say furniture, and of course turpentine? Was there any other industries there black- owned businesses or . . . ?

(Ms. Jenkins) That seems to be, that turpentine still seems to be the focal point of production in Rosewood.

(Dye) Did she talk about any of the men that ever worked at the Sumner Plant, there was a sawmill in Sumner?

(Ms. Jenkins) Now, yeah, reference to that but in details no, no, and Sumner was right down the street, right down the road not too far and people move back and forward between there, and there were people lived in Sumner that came up and worked in Rosewood, but . . .

(Dye) I was wondering what people did, maybe she related it to you, what did people do when they got sick or needed a doctor?

(Ms. Jenkins) I asked her that too. They had mid-wives and people that knew about, as say medicines and taking care, now for example: the death that her [?] experienced now with medical care would not have been the case. Ah, I think she said her father, she believes that her father died with some kind of fever of some description which would not have happened if there were adequate medical care.

(Dye) They got modern antibiotics out to people that was a big difference in everything.

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah.

(Dye) Okay, anything else that she related to you about the town before the incident there, anything else?

(Ms. Jenkins) It was a nice community where people did they thing, they farmed. She said, they had their own family farm.

(Dye) Now, what about livestock: chickens, or hogs, maybe cows, what?

(Ms. Jenkins) And they had their own smoke house.

(Dye) Smoke house?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yeah, they had their own smoke house where they hung their meat, processed the meat and they were self-sufficient it sounded like. Ah, they did hunting, all of their vegetables they grew, and interesting thing, she was talking about the safes that they had which was a thing that they kept their food in. I asked her, well how you keep food fresh, as refrigeration was not it. There was like a cabinet built, she said, against the wall that they would bake pies and put it in there. It had a screen over it to protect it from the flies, but food was kept in what they call it a safe, and that's where they kept their food.

(Dye) You know something that would be helpful if you would ask her if somebody made ice deliveries to Rosewood, because we are going next week to talk to a man in Tampa (a white man), who says that he delivered ice to Rosewood, that was his job.

(Ms. Jenkins) I sure will, and she said over the – there was a warming like a bench or tray over the stove where they will keep food up there and with the wood stoves, or whatever or how they would cook it would be secured. I mean, it would not spoil, cause I asked her about spoil, I said how in the world did you not get sick from food. She said the way that it was kept on that warming tray and whatever that thing was over the stove and the safe, it was alright, nobody ever got sick.

(Dye) Did she remember anything about the depot at all? The train platform . . . ?

(Ms. Jenkins) The description of it?

(Dye) Yeah where they would load or unload?

(Ms. Jenkins) Never, I'll tell you this, it is only -- see talking about Rosewood was something that just didn't happened, and I remembered as a child my uncle Harold would come home, he lived in South Carolina and he would come in ah, he would come home for Christmas and after dark everybody was sort of settled home, we would have our baths and it will be time to go to bed and you could hear the conversations change through the wall, and he would always be very upset. He'll be talking about why don't we go find out what happened, why don't we go find out what happened to the land. And they never talked to us about it, and it was only after I became grown that Rosewood had any kind of significance for me. In terms of knowing, what actually happened.

(Dye) When did it first sort of come into your mind, as a little or later on?

(Ms. Jenkins) No, I knew that there was something that -- the way we were raised when grown folks say its grown folks talk you just, you knew your place and you just got out of the way and you closed your mouth, and you just didn't bother -- that's just the way it was. And we all respected that, but we would tell by listening through the walls that there was something. Ah and, we knew it was something that was not right there in the home and that there was a problem out there somewhere, and it never went away.

(Dye) You were living in Gainesville, right, so there were you in a black neighborhood predominately?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yes, oh yes.

(Dye) Okay, so there would be people around you that would be your neighbors and all were aware of that, or that your family had experience that . . . nobody knew that?

(Ms. Jenkins) No, I never heard them talk to neighbors about this. We had other relatives in Gainesville, and on occasions they would start talking, but then of course we was pushed away. Ah, we were never ever involved in direct conversation even within shadow about their discussions about this. Their talking became very quiet, very hushed, very, very serious. Now, I had a uncle (cousin) Clarence, who used to talk (I guess that was my first experience with him, I guess I might have been ten-years old give or take a year or two),

and I remember cousin Clarence talking about the shooting. Clarence Goins was his name, he was talking about the shooting and the people coming with torches and how many people were killed and that kind of thing. And how many people this one cousin shot down. My brother and I especially would just--go down the hill which was just about eight blocks from where we lived, on a Saturday afternoon just visiting and listening, listening to them talk about it. That-- Rosewood where it was, it was sort of like a story listening to a story, instead of something that was personal and real that actually happened, and then I guess after that--it was in the ah . . . maybe when sixty minutes did ah, when Ed Bradley did a piece on Rosewood that was probably when it came home more clearly to me, and my brother was the one that brought my attention to it, and then it started becoming real at that point.

(Dye) That was George?

(Ms. Jenkins) George, yeah, he is deceased now. He was the one that brought it to my attention. Gretchen this is what this was all about, and I said "oh", and then I started paying more attention, but this was never. . . .

(Dye) How do you think it affected your mother in Gainesville, I mean as far as, was she somewhat paranoid or did she live in like fear associated, or did she live a pretty open life after that, or . . . was she quiet?

(Ms. Jenkins) Thats hard to say.

(Dye) Was she quiet?

(Ms. Jenkins) She's quiet in her own way, but momma . . . ah, I don't know. I'm thinking, I feel that momma today it takes a lot, I have to encourage her to talk about, and if she's in a -- if she feels she's secure she will talk about it. It is not something that she talks about with her friends. I talk about it with my friends, I don't mind talking about. I don't believe that she didn't -- I don't get a sense of fear from her . . . maybe it is fear, but she doesn't pass that spirit along to me at least. I am very comfortable in talking about it. I understand that there is a fear that is associated with it even as we speak, but I refuse to buy into that. I think as a result to my attitude, I can see a difference in her posture now, as compared with earlier. She would not talk before, but she was not asked to talk, but in sharing information in family that never happened, but I am at a point were I say, I will not be frightened or intimidated by it, so she opens up much, much, more time, but its had its toll. I can see in the person that it had it tolls, I mean it changes when she talks about it.

(Dye) From all the stories that you have heard and everything from your cousins or uncles and everything, what is your best guess or estimate as to

how many people actual would have been killed, black and white, or black or white?

(Ms. Jenkins) Based on what I have heard from the story with cousin Clarence, there was talk about the grave a big mass grave that people was just dumped into. Well over a hundred people based on what I was told about how many people lived there and what happened to them, and then about the stories the people – children and the women those that could have escaped going into the hamlet, at least.

(Dye) Now that's a hundred black people?

(Ms. Jenkins) . . . People, yes. I have never heard of any whites that was killed. I just don't know, but the story that I have always heard at Rosewood that there very, very few. In fact, I think I have heard there was two white families, but the one stick-outs is the Wrights, and thats all I every heard of. But I have not heard of – obviously there had be whites that were killed because Sylvester was the one that was credited with having defended themselves against a number of intruders, but they obviously had to be white but how many I can't tell you, but there was quite a few from what I am told.

(Dye) Lets come up to January of '23, alright.

(Ms. Jenkins) Prior to January '23, mother's mother died ah in 1917.

(Dye) Thats Agnes?

(Ms. Jenkins) Agnes, died in 1917 in child birth. Her father was still alive. Momma's father was still alive. There was mother, Harold, and Roscoe, the other two brothers. They lived there for a while with their father, he could not take care of three children, a father just couldn't do it. So what he did, he took them to Gainesville to Rebecca (who was Agnes' sister), the oldest sister who lived in Gainesville.

(Dye) And this was approximately when?

(Ms. Jenkins) I would say within a year after her mother's death in 1917.

(Dye) Okay.

(Ms. Jenkins) Moved to Gainesville ah, then she said that at one point, I think she said it was 1918 they did move back to Rosewood to live with their father again, and they were there, I think she said, about a year. Then they went back to Gainesville and that's where they stayed. Ah, and then her father died

* in 1920. She does not know, ah I think she said it was some fever or whatever that he could not recover from. Now, then we pick up in 1923, she said, she was coming home from school. They lived on fifth avenue, Rebecca's house was fifth avenue across from the Rose Theater. Ah, she remembers coming home from school, there was all these people she recognized from Rosewood on the front porch and there were a very somber, sad, depressing kind of scene, and she knew something had happened, grown folk were talking. Again, when grown folks talk, children go elsewhere. In that process, she found out that Rosewood had been burned and thats why all of these people were there. I think she had a uncle George, uncle Perry, and uncle Charlie. There was some that lived in Gainesville at that time. Some of Edmund's children lived in Gainesville at that time and they then started picking various children, adults, whomever and giving them a place to live to be secure, and that's what she remember.

(Dye) So they just took them in their homes and . . . ?

(Ms. Jenkins) . . . And took care of them from there.

(other) Does she have any memory about how many was from Rosewood?

(Ms. Jenkins) Ah, no. There were specific ones like A.T., A.T. Goins and ah Amett's mom . . . who was deceased. Ah, those two in particular because we, as a unit we have remained close through the generations. Those two she remembers, but there was others, there was definitely others because there was some that went to the Bradley's,--ah, John Bradley was momma's godfather, and they lived further out fifth avenue off of--by the water tank. And ah, there was some that they took also. I mean, they sort of, there was enough people in the area--not enough, but there was significant number of people in the area that people sort of--could spread out and be sheltered for a period of time, until they could either remain there, or other family members from elsewhere would come get them, and they could go to them or whatever.

(Dye) Do you know was it just the people from Rosewood that had evacuated, were any other people from Cedar Key, or Wylly, or any other places?

(Ms. Jenkins) I don't know, because I understand that there was some people that were there that did not live in Rosewood, because it was a New Years celebration time any way. There was people that was visiting, so I understand there was some that was from Wiley, some from maybe even Palatka, from all over, you know, that were visiting in various capacities at that time. But where they went or what happened, I can't tell you.

(Dye) So tell did you go on and go to Lincoln High School there in Gainesville,

or where did you go to school?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yes, I went to Williams Elementary and then went to Lincoln. I left Lincoln in my tenth grade year and went to a private girls school in Jacksonville, Broyner Naval [?]. And that closed at the end of the eleven grade year and I went to a private school in North Carolina, Nashville High School.

(Dye) No what did your mother do?

(Ms. Jenkins) Registered nurse and my daddy was a ice man. He sold ice in the summer time and wood in the winter time.

(Dye) Okay.

(Ms. Jenkins) Momma got -- my daddy worked her way through school. She went to Bracy in Atlanta and got a B.S. there and an, she worked at Sunland...[?]. Much of her experiences has been mental health kinds of things. She used to work for Alachua County General for a while.

(Dye) Sunland, where?

(Ms. Jenkins) In Gainesville. Sunland in Gainesville move here.

(Dye) Had one here.

(Ms. Jenkins) No, but it moved from -- yeah, well that's why she came down here because then that she moved with that unit down here, and that was after daddy died, which was better for her cause my brother here. I was in D.C. and she was in Gainesville by herself, so, you know, it would be better for her to live here than up there by herself.

(Dye) Is that you home now?

(Ms. Jenkins) No, I'm in Orlando.

(Dye) I was wondering why they had the reunion in D.C.?

(Ms. Jenkins) We have family up there.

(Dye) Okay.

(Ms. Jenkins) We move all over, wherever family is that wants to host it.

(Dye) And what did you do, just tell me what was your career in?

(Ms. Jenkins) Music, I'm a music teacher.

(Dye) You still doing that?

(Ms. Jenkins) Yes.

(Dye) Where do you teach music at?

(Ms. Jenkins) Union park at the school.

(Dye) That's great, that's great. Well, I don't have -- unless you have anything else that you want to add that you feel is important ah . . .

(Ms. Jenkins) Well, its time for this thing . . . to be brought to this thing in terms of Legislative action, ah its past time for that. It needs to be done.