

INTERVIEW WITH BETTY LORRAINE CARTER and MARIAN C.

BERRY on SPRING ISLAND, FEBRUARY 22ND, 1994.

Marian Carter Berry :
Born : August 13th, 1924.
Place of Birth: Varnville, S.C.

Betty Lorraine Carter, Mock, Parry.
Born: July 2nd, 1930.
Place of Birth: Ridgeland, S.C.

Father : Lewis Henry Carter.
Mother: Minnie Connally.

Father: James Lewis Carter
Mother: Lois Harvey

Siblings: 4 Sisters, 2 Brothers, all passed
away except one sister.

Siblings: 1 Sister.

MARIAN:

We did not live on Spring Island, we were living in Ridgeland, South Carolina when our Father bought the island, I was a student in college at the time so my opportunities to come to the island were infrequent. We came in the summer and when I was home from college. My Mother had a fear of water so she preferred not to travel to the island very often. I am not sure of the exact date when the island was purchased but I spoke with my Father every Sunday night when I was in college and the night he told me he had sold Orange Grove Plantation on St. Helena Island I was heartbroken, I said "I will never forgive you", he said "Wait until you see Spring Island" and of course I have good memories from here but not as good as Orange Grove because of my being in college.

We came over on the boat of the barge that pulled the log trucks, the barge was large enough to pull four loaded trucks and my Father's car.

My Father purchased Spring island around 1941 or '42 but I am not positive because we have no written records. My Father passed away on April 17th, 1945 and I graduated within the month and came home. It was not very long before our uncle who ran the Carter Lumber Company for us after my Father's death, told my Mother that he could not handle Spring Island and all of the lumber business, so we made a joint family decision - a bad one I think - to sell Spring Island and continue with the lumber company.

We had nothing but the one boat to come over and I think Bryant and his wife Liza

lived in the house that is near the reception center now, the only house I remember then. Liza was an excellent cook, if she knew that any of us were coming to the island, she would prepare a meal for us. My Father, my two brothers and my brother-in-law came over to the island daily during the time they were harvesting the timber. We never lived on the island, we traveled from Ridgeland to the island. My niece Betty who you will interview next, spent many, many weekends over here because her father was younger than my parents and they enjoyed coming over here, so they spent many weekends over here. I spent one weekend in the big house while my fiance was home from the service before going overseas. My brother and his wife came and I remember that the number of trout fish that they gilled that night was the strangest thing I had ever seen in my life, I remember that the entire bottom of the boat was covered with fish, it was fairly cold and I don't know how they stood being out there but anyway the fish were just magnificent.

The fireplace in the big house, the logs had to be at least 6 feet long, it was just a tremendous fireplace I remember that and also that you had to step down to go into the living room, it was a sunken room. There were stains all over the house from the people who had owned it before us because of having dogs in the house. One bathtub upstairs was particularly for the dogs, it was about a fourth of the size of an ordinary bathtub and this was where they bathed the dogs, this was unheard of to me because we did not allow dogs in our house.

I remember one particularly beautiful light covering in the dining room, it was made of a pink taffeta and having been a little country girl, this was something else to me, it was very ornate but it was so old we could not salvage it but I hated to see it destroyed because it was magnificent.

Usually, in order to reach the big house, when we did go over there, we traveled by boat. There is a tiny cut between Callawassie and Spring Island that you could only get through on high-tide so if you waited longer my Mother would be very anxious, she said, "Lewis we got to go, we got to get off this island before dark" so you had to be careful about timing.

Q : Where did the food come from that you ate on the island?

The people that lived on the island, Isaac Brown and Liza, they had a garden but we did not have one over here. We ate seafood, shrimp, crab, fish and Liza made the best cornbread I have ever eaten in my life, my sister who is older than me remembers that so well.

I found an old pewter coffee pot in the back yard at the big house, (the Copp Mansion) at one time, it had a white enamel lining to it but it had rusted through that it had a hole and someone had tried to patch it so I later removed the enamel liner but I still have

the coffee pot, it is quite beautiful, I use it for floral arrangements sometimes.

When we would come to the island it would be for a family outings, my father and brothers and my sisters husband came over here to work almost daily but we would come for the day on weekends and sometimes would stay for a weekend. I know of no accidents that happened on the island. The other supplies that were needed by the Bryants came from the mainland by boat. There were not a lot of motor boats at that time, most people used oars to go back and forth across the river.

After we sold the island we got permission from Mrs. Lucas in Walterborough who bought the place from us to come over and get us some of the bulbs like you see blooming on the island now. She said, "Just dig just as many as you want" so an old gentleman, named James Hamilton rowed the boat across the river for us, he had a motor but he said, "I can't trust this motor" anyway he rowed across the river and my brother-in-law and I dug about two bushels of the bulbs and carried them home and last week I picked some and put them in my house.

Q: Do you remember any other "stories" you heard about the island when you used to come over here?

Not really, there was always speculation about the tabby ruins, I asked my Mother on many occasions, "What do you think they use to hold it together", we used to talk about it but that's about it.

Q: Do you remember any significant people that were on the island at that time.

There were no people on this island except the couple that lived at the landing, the Bryants and their children.

After we sold the island, some of the people who had worked here, I remember a quite large man named Mitchell, anyway some of the people that worked for my Father here on the island came to work for him in Ridgeland because they liked the relationship of being with our family so they pooled together in a truck and came to work for the lumber company in Ridgeland so I knew Isaac and this man Mitchell - a very large man - whose name I cannot remember.

I said I was in college, there was so much going on in the world with the war and my fiance leaving to go overseas. If I had been a better student as a freshman in college I would have been able to spend the last summer of my Father's life with him but because I had not been a good student I had to spend it in Rock Hill, South Carolina in college and when my Father died in April before I graduated in May I was heartbroken to think, here I am in college and those three months of summer would have meant so much to me. I called my parents every Sunday night during the 4

years I was in college and in my last conversation with him, I told him I had a job offer in Lancaster, South Carolina and he said, "Oh, no baby you're coming home because I know when Ronald gets back from overseas I'm going to lose you, your Mother is slowly killing me with her cooking, I want you to come home and take care of your Daddy" - I had majored in home economics, this conversation was on Sunday and on Tuesday at one o'clock I received a phone call that my Father had died.

BETTY :

The first time I came to Spring Island I was about thirteen or fourteen. The island was very primitive then, it was very overgrown, we had purchased the island for a place to live but we had to cut timber and then we were doing the restoration work of the big house and the man who lived here prior to that, stayed. I think Bryant was living on the island and stayed on the island when we owned it.

We bought a barge to get the timber out and docks were built on both sides, both on the island and off the island. The crews that came in here to work were transported and usually they came for a week and stayed on the island the whole week and cut timber and they stayed in campsites, they put up tents and camped out for the week occasionally they would go in but they would come back. They would bring all their own food and sometimes would rotate with three days on and three days off. We cut the lumber and then it was taken into the mill sight where it was dried out.

Of course as a teenager I was growing up I was going to school and the island being very primitive with wild hogs and geese and I was just starting into my high school years and all through them years I was going and coming to Spring Island, every chance we could get we would come and spend our weekends over here and I had slumber parties over in the house with the girls on the weekends and then we would come in the summer and stay more than we did in the winter because all of us as a family loved the river. We loved to fish and the men hunted and at that time they didn't let the girls out quite as much as the boys. I wanted to tour the island more myself, just get out and walk it but being so many wild animals and wild hogs they were afraid for us girls to take off and walk it on our own.

We had an old vehicle over here that we would get in and make it from one side of the island to the other and back. Basically that's my years of remembering the island. Of course in 1945 when my Grandfather died suddenly I was at the end of my junior year

when he died of a heart attack, I never will forget how devastating it was when they came to the school to pick me up and told my cousin and I the bad news.

The timber had been cut off of the island we had controlled cutting, not strip cutting, and by the end it was such a load because we had the mill going, we had the island going we owned another piece of land for stock farming which was another large piece of land so my Grandfather's brother (Rudolph Carter) who did a lot of the office work for us decided that the island was too much that he couldn't handle the mill, the farm and the island and that is when we decided to sell the island.

My Father's brother was named Randolph and his wife Betty, who lives in Florida and they used to come over to the island a lot, Randolph has passed away but Betty is still alive. In fact she is the one that recognized the paintings that I had that was taken out of the back of the big house as we called it then. When we started to clean it up, it was in bad disrepair we were afraid of electrical fires or storms or anything creating a fire and this outside building which I presumed to be where the cooks or someone stayed at one time is what I think it was, it was a separate building from the big house. It was made of logs and the tabby in between the logs but the windows were gone and the roof was in bad shape but they had just stocked it full of hay like for feeding the horses and cattle, so we decided that the best thing to do was to clean all this clutter out and get rid of it and then we wouldn't have no fire problem.

We had decided to come over for the weekend and camp out in the house and do this and that is what we were cleaning when somebody threw something out and we the ladies were piling it on the pile when Randolph's wife, Betty, recognized this rolled up canvas as being a painting since her father was a painter so she unrolls it and it has a big tear in it and she rolls it back up and we go home with that and her father lived in Greenville, South Carolina, he was a banker but he painted on the sidelines so he patched it and as the years went by and the family moved off from one place to another, she and her husband Randolph went to Florida and some of their things they wanted to sell and get rid of and she decided to sell off these paintings that she had found on the island so I immediately was going to go and get me some money and go get them. In the meantime my Father beat me over to the house and he bought them, I said "Daddy, that's not fair, I wanted those" and he said, "You can have them when I die" so when Daddy died I went to Mamma and said "Now Mamma, can I get my paintings now" and she said, "You can get them after I am gone" so after she died I said "OK, no questions about it, those paintings were mine, I had waited so long" so I wound up with the paintings and now I cannot decided how I am going to divide them up between three children.

I had many, many happy hours on this island in my childhood fishing and running behind my Grandfather because I would go every step he would ask me to, I was like a tomboy and always have been.

The painting I have is of hunters it is a picture that is possible could have been done by someone who lived on this island many years before and I am not sure if Mrs. Copp owned this painting or what but it is signed by the name of Dubois and the only connection that I have ever been able to find on this painting is Mr. Taylor whose first name I cannot remember. He told me before he left Hilton Head that he had on his Mother's side the name Dubois who was a painter in the family and went through the low country painting and that possibly it could have been some of his relatives who may have painted that painting. I even showed the painting to Walter Greer and asked Walter about renovating it for me and Walter said no he didn't want to touch it and he said if you did anything to it I would suggest that you send it to New York but if it were him he would not touch it at all but I would like to know more about the painting. It dates way back.

The memories I have of being here were being together as a family, it was so much fun. When you came to spend the weekends on the island it was as though you left the rest of the world behind. We loved to fish and crab, we lived in the rivers and enjoyed relaxing. Of course all the family were hunters, my Grandfather took time with each one of us, we were taught how to shoot a gun, you started out with a little 22 and then you learned a 16 gauge.

Q: When you were on the island do you remember any accidents that may have occurred?

No, we were lucky. The only accident that really happened was right here at the landing site when one of the black men drowned on a low tide in the heat of the day. He could not swim and he wanted to get cooled off and they told him don't back out there too far there is a drop off and before they knew anything he was out and down.

If I am not mistaken there was another death here many years later of one of the workers on the island, it happened after we sold the island but he was one of the men that had worked around the island with us, I don't know if it was Isaac Bryant, he was with Ed Floyd from Ridgeland, they were out in the boat fishing, one was a white man and one was a black man. Isaac drowned many years later, after we had sold the island, and when I heard about it I was shocked because he was raised in this river, he taught us about throwing the shrimp nets, he road us out marsh hen hunting and some of my best memories of Isaac was when he took my first husband and I marsh hen hunting. He would say, "I hear them over there" and he would not even get into the water he would go across the marsh and just put the oars in the mud and leap across until he got across the river. He had huge muscles and was very strong.

Q : What were some of the crops that grew here on the island, what did you do for food?

We mainly did not grow our vegetables here, we grew them on the mainland because we were here mainly on the weekends, we did not live in the house here permanently but the men who lived here on the island and maintained the island for us, they all had vegetable gardens, they had citrus trees growing here on the island there was lemon, grapefruit and orange trees here at one time, I don't know what is still here but they were here when we came to the island. We grew feed for the animals and there was pasture land for grazing and that was about the biggest part for the growing of stuff.

The crews here has domestic animals, we had the barn the horses and the cattle and the milk cows and chickens and ducks and the geese that were so plentiful here and the hogs were wild and all over the island. The island was just teeming with deer, raccoons, possum, it was just alive with wild animals all the wild game, birds, marsh hens, egrets, turkeys and squirrels, they had the big cat squirrels and the fox squirrels back then.

When the hogs got so bad we started catching them and transporting them off the island, we took them to Earhardt Market in Earhardt, South Carolina. Of course when we come everyone would hate us and say, "Here comes Mr. Carter again with another load of those wild ones" and they would all be laughing but they were taken off the island to go to the slaughter house mainly. We would catch them here on the weekends, we would use them catch dogs and they would pen them up and then ever so often, every week or every two weeks, they would bring in the big truck with the cattle body on it and we would load it up and haul them off. Of course that was quite a chore because you had to get them on a cattle truck and put it on a barge and get

the barge across the river to the other landing and back up.

We had some incidence with the trucks in the river and the lumber floating down the river and sunken barges and holes in the bottom of the big boat, you know, one thing and another.

Of course we had an operation going which required teamwork from everybody, even the girls in the family, we had a commissary on the mainland and a lot of the food that was supplied to the working men, they would go in and get their food and if they couldn't pay then we would just put it on the book and that is the way it worked. The crews came to work and sometimes they did not come off this island until 9 o'clock at night and on weekends we would just have to sit and wait until the island crew to come in and they would come in and do their shopping whatever they wanted, they would get their paychecks and then they would do their shopping and then they would go on. The store was located right where the mill site was in Ridgeland. All this was part of the operation.

The Planer Mill was Devastated by Fire in Ridgeland around 1943 or 1944. The mill closed after the sale of the island around 1947.

Interviewed by Beryl LaMotte.