

**INTERVIEW WITH GENEVIEVE BRYANT ON SPRING ISLAND -  
FEBRUARY 22ND, 1994.**

Date of Birth: November 15th, 1915.

Place of Birth : Spring Island.

Father's Name : Mace Jennings.

Mother's Name: Ella Mitchell

No Siblings.

I was born on Spring Island, but Katie and Nancy Mitchell they raised me. I worked in the fields when I was young and then when I was 13 I went to work for Mrs. Copp.

Every morning at 8 am I took Mr. Copp his orange juice. Mr. Copp he had to have his highball every night but he no bother nobody, he was the nicest person though, a rather sweet Yankee. He was crazy about me and I was crazy about him and Mrs. Copp but Frankie don't like Mr. Mills you know Frankie like old times but Mr. Mills can act a bit funny how some people is because Mrs. Copp had so much money when Mr. Copp die but later on say the money gone and he sold the home. I don't know what happened.

I don't want to leave the island, Frankie wanted to leave, no I don't want to leave Mrs. Copp I didn't want to leave, Hattie said Mrs. Copp wants to see you. I said I didn't want to see her, I'm going to cry if I see Mrs. Copp. Frankie done gone then and I couldn't stay then and somebody done come and get me but I cried and Mrs. Copp cried.

Q: What were the crops grown on the island? Sweet potatoes, lettuce, tomatoes, blueberries. We had pecan trees, orange trees and fig trees

Q: What happened when you needed medical help on the island?

Most thing was Vicks sav and cough drop. Sadifax, some people would go and dig it up and draw it. I used to go to Dr. Ryan in Ridgeland.

My granny delivered the babies. My Aunt Katie said, the only thing wrong with me was that I had sores in my head and she used to comb my hair, I remember that good. My Grandmother she had a goyta in the neck and she went to Savannah and she died

of that it had gone too far and it was so big on her neck. My Mother she had a lump in her breast but she hide it from everybody.

My baby took sick and died on the island, he had a hot fever and my Granddaddy, Gilbert Mitchell, took a rowboat and we had to row across the island and get a car to take us to Bluffton with my baby and the doctor said he had double pneumonia and he wasn't going to live and he died here on Spring Island and I buried him here on Spring right near my Grandmother.

A lot of people died on this island a long time ago they used to call it another name, not cancer, it was called consumption and they died, it was a problem a long time ago when I was young. Mr. Pinckney, the white fellow that was on the island, he got sick and he died but not here, I guess he just got old. Mr. White was a white man too and he died but he was sick. The white people on the island were Mr. Pinckney on one side and Mr. White and Mr. Cops owned the island.

There used to be a cemetery near to the house, we were young and we go to the cemetery and me and Jessie May we go out of the house and we take the glass from the black people that died a long time ago and took it to my Grandmama's house and she make us take it back and put it on the grave. My Grandmother was so sweet and she said, "What you all bring that stuff here" and I said we done got it off the grave and she said, "You take that stuff back, you don't bring that stuff in my house" (laughing), but we were children we didn't know no better. The cemetery was close by our house.

I used to love to ride them horses and go out in the wagon and load up the moss and we would use that for the hogs and stuff.

We used to ride all over the island with the wagon, we used to love to ride all over the island. When we were 8 years old we used to have to get up and go and work on the farm at 4 o'clock in the morning, then we would come back at 8 o'clock and we would go to school before I started to work when I was 13 years old. I used to pray to get 13 years years old (laughing). Every morning we had to go on the farm and work for Mr. Copp. Frankie's (Genevieve later married him) Daddy was the foreman, we used to get \$3 per week we used to pick them sweet potatoes and cut them lettuce and pick the tomatoes and pack up them things and send them to sell off the island.

We used to go to bed early around nine o'clock, our Grandmother she was a good cook and my aunt, she died along with my Mother.

I used to remember Judge Foster from New York come every winter to go shooting wild turkey. He had a good piece of money too. I used to fix breakfast for him every morning, he used to come in that kitchen, he was so sweet, I think he died before Mr. Copp. Judge Foster used to come for about 2 weeks every year.

Mrs. Copp family also used to come, they come from Key West, her Mother came and her sister ; mostly family. Mr. Copp stayed mostly the year on Spring Island, he loved the island, he used to ride the horse everyday.

Mr. Copp was very nice to the black folks, he built all those houses for us you know and he charged us no rent for them. It was good living on Spring Island. People used to come from the mainland to work here.

Mrs. Copp, she was good to me and I tell you she was nice to me because when she asked me to come and work for her, she had two little girls who were working for her and they had been working a long time and I think they done bad things and she fired the girls. Mrs. Copp found them drinking and so she fired them - now you don't tell Franc I done said that. She done get me to come and work for her then, I was 13 years old and I am now 78 years old.

Mrs. Copp done do nothing special, she walked around and she talked to folks. She read books and mess with those Pekingese dogs, 60 Pekingese dogs, 60 of them, she has a special girl to cook for them dogs. We had a room for them dogs and they had a little bed for them because she didn't have no children so she get the Pekingese dogs. Mr. Copp paid for them dogs. He couldn't stand them dogs. Lydia was the dogs help.

When I go to work I get there at 7:30 in the morning so I can get that orange juice squeezed and upstairs at 8 o'clock when I was 13 years old, then I would go downstairs and straighten everything up and go and clean and set the table in the dining room and if the silver dirty I clean the silver. I be there all day but I was close enough to my house to go there a little while in the afternoon. Every other Sunday I had off.

I can remember when I was 5 years old, my great grounded he was a preacher on Spring Island and he was blind in both his eyes and one morning we get early and we going down the road and I walk and I said, "Oh my goodness look at that lady walking with the dog on the riverside", I see that thing just as plain as I look at you. You see they said that was a spirit they said. I was walking to my great grounded and I told my big mama and she said, "Shut-up, shut-up". I see that thing just as clearly as I see you. I can still remember that , I was 5 or 6 years old. I done see that spirit just walking as clearly as I see you now. I was going to pick some pecans with my Granddaddy.

Interviewed by Beryl LaMotte.