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7-19-2012

## Wiggins, Richard

Richard Wiggins

Deborah Oden

Ishmael Lewis

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Carolina Connections

Interviewee: Richard Wiggins

Interviewers: Ishmael Lewis, Deborah Oden

July 19th, 2012

Eddings Point, St. Helena Island, South Carolina.

Ishmael Lewis: I've been to Philly once or twice is all, on Gerard avenue

Richard Wiggins: Yeah? Yeah, you know

IL: Yeah Gerard avenue was something.

RW: yeah, I lived in old Philly

IL: Did you stay in one of those Row Houses? Those houses that are connected to each other?

RW: Yeah, I got to Philly in 1934.

IL: 1934? That's a long time ago.

RW: Yeah it was before your time, before you were born.

IL: Yeah, I wasn't even born until 1978

RW: Aw shucks you look young

IL: I'm a young guy, i got a little gray but,

RW: You look young. Eh?

IL: Yeah I got a young look. Born in 1978

RW: 78?

IL: 1978 that's right,

RW: God, I retired in 75, I retired, you wasn't born when I retired?

IL: That's right you love your retirement got a good retirement. Are we at Edding's point? Today's date is, today's date is July 19th, right ready? July 19th today was my Grandma's birthday

RW: Yesterday was the 19? I thought today was the 19th.

IL: It is, you right.

RW: Are you in the service too?

IL: No, I was too fat, I couldn't, I wasn't gonna make it out of basic training, there's a weight requirement now.

Deborah Oden: Ok, we're going to introduce what we're doing first Mr. Wiggins before, I'm Deborah Oden with Ishmael Lewis.

IL: I'm Ishmael Lewis, and there's Audra, and Reyna

DO: And We're all here from Ohio with Carolina Connections, and today's date is July 19th

IL: 2012, and we're at Edding's point on St. Helena Islands

RW: Edding's Points

DO and IL: Eddings Point.

DO: and we're here with Mr. Richard Wiggins, who's 102, and as you can see very sharp (laughs).

IL: When's your birthday?

RW: March 4th, 1910

IL: Where were you born?

RW: Born right there, Look over there, right there where you see that car, I was born right there.

IL: Ok

RW: I was born right there, and I left in 1934.

IL: You left here in 1934?

RW: I went to Philadelphia, and it was about 2000 when I came back here

IL: You came back in 2000?

RW: Mhmm

IL: Tell us about your parents

RW: My father died when I was 8 years old, and my mother died when I was, I think, 57 When my mama died.

IL: What was your mama's name?

RW: Phoebe Wiggins

IL: Phoebe Wiggins?

RW: Yeah, nice name yeah, Wiggins

IL: What did she do? What was her occupation?

RW: She went to Philadelphia to work in do housework. And then after that she was old and she you know retired, yeah.

IL: Now how was it growing up here on the island, take us way back when.

RW: It was a different place altogether. I mean, this place is different than the old days, when I left here, things are so different because when I left here there wasn't nothing here but us. Mr. Jenkins had a car, that was the only car I had been on at that point, old man had a car, what was his name, let me think of it now, Hayward , we had nothing but a horse and buggy, cart, and there wasn't nothing here but colored folks, there was no white folks. They didn't live down here, they didn't want to come down here, now, everything's changed up it was nothing but grass, when I come back here it's a swamp, all these trees and water ain't nobody farming.

IL: what did you farm in your younger days when you were here?

RW: Oh, we plant everything corn, corn, cornrows, sweet potatoes we used to plant everything, and we raised cattle, cows and horses, we didn't have to buy hardly anything, people didn't buy no milk. You got a cow, you got more than one milk cow? And if your cow go dry and my cow got milk, you go and milk my cow, you don't gotta ask you just milk it and take the milk home. That's the way we used to live We didn't need anything, the only thing we had to buy was sugar, wheat flour, and what then? You didn't have to buy no onion, no pepper, no peas, no beans, no vegetable, no milk, no meat no fish no shrimp, no sweet potato, we ate everything. Yeah, but now I came back here, i taste the food, I said I wasn't raised by slave for this. Now You don't want land, I can't add a room onto this house and they would say, no, we ain't got use for that. What's yours is yours You could do anything with your land anything with your house, nobody tell you what to do, you never ask nobody nothing, but now people here they remind me of the people on the mainland used to live we used to go there where them people used to live, and i told my mom I couldn't live on that place. Because then Saint Helena was the only free place in South Carolina

DO: The Island?

RW: St. Helena Island was the only free place in South Carolina, where you got your own house, your own land, where you ain't gotta work if you don't wanna you don't have to. If you live in the other place you gotta work whether you want to or not, because you living on those other people's place.

IL: How long have your people, your family, had this land?

RW: I can't tell you, because they had it before I was born.

IL: So as far as you know this has always been your land?

RW: Yeah, yeah, yeah

IL: Did you all go to school? Or have to travel to go to school?

RW: Yeah, we went to public school. When you was coming I know you passed by a place where you see all these boats. Well that where the school was at, and if you go to public school, it was Penn school or private school that you had to pay for, but they don't teach no higher than 6th grade, you'd get to 6th grade and you'd have to go to some other school, but it don't go no higher than that, that's the way it was.

IL: did everyone around here go to school?

RW: yeah

DO: So you went to Penn School after the 6th grade?

RW: Yeah, I went to that school for a time, through 1928.

IL: What was your favorite subject in school?

RW: Arithmetic

IL: New money?

RW: Yeah, I liked arithmetic, and reading too you know,

IL: Did you all go to school year-round?

RW: no no no no, we was going to a public school I think we go to school, I don't remember, it was 4 months, 4 or 5 months, i know it was i think it was 5 months of public, but when you went to the Penn school you had to pay, they would go longer, they would go into June. And they had you know, to close.

IL: When you weren't at school were you here working in the fields?

RW: oh yeah, oh yeah oh yeah oh yeah.

IL: Ok.

RW: Working in the fields yeah, farming hell yeah, yeah yeah

IL: When did you start seeing a change in the island as far as seeing all your land.

RW: When I left here in 34 everything was the same, it wasn't like it is today, when I came back here, I found all this, and you know, you can't go borrowing things, you gotta ask and all that stuff.

IL: What was lost? Did you feel something was lost in that time period? You said it was yours before, and now you gotta ask for permission, what are some things you used to do?

RW: See this tree, if I want to cut this tree down I could, it's on my land. Anything in here I want to do it it's my house, if I want to add a room on this house I can do it. I don't have to ask nobody nothing. You was going to ask me a question, what were you thinking?

IL: So what did you study at the Penn center?

RW: when I went to Penn school things was the same. These things happened when I left home and I left in 1934.

DO: And when did you come back?

RW: I came back in 2000.

DO: What made you come back?

RW: I always wanna come back home. I always, some of them ever since I left this island said "You paying taxes? I ain't going back there to live" and I said I was, and they said, "you is crazy" and I said maybe I am I said but I got it in my mind that if I live long enough, I would like to go back home, and I lived long enough.

DO: So you paid your taxes all while you were gone?

RW: Oh yeah, a lot of them sold their land and after things changed down here they wanted to come back but they didn't have no land to come, and they tried to get their land back but they couldn't get it back. I don't have no land of my own but all my land is family property.

IL: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

RW: None. I'm the only one

DO: I many did you have?

RW: I had 6 brothers, and 2 sisters, but I only knew 4 of us. 4 of 'em died before I was born, the 2 girls, and the twin boys, they died before I was born. I was the last guy.

IL: and then after Penn school you joined the military?

RW: No, I wasn't, when I went in the service I was in Philadelphia, after they bombed Pearl Harbor and we had to go to war. Before that that didn't take us in the service they didn't want us, and then when they need us they was in trouble.

IL: What branch did you go to?

RW: Army of course.

IL: You said they wouldn't take you if it wouldn't of been for the bombing?

RW: no no if it wouldn't of been for the war.

IL: and how long were you in the military for?

RW: I was in there 2 years and 11 days. And then the war was over, and the war was over. First we were off in camp at Ft. Lee Virginia for 78 days, then we went to Greensboro North Carolina for basic training, 90 days. Then from Greensborough, we went to Augusta Georgia then we stayed there for gee, how many months, 3 months I think. Then from there we went to um, aw shucks, out in Utah!

IL: Utah?

RW: Yeah

IL: okay

RW: 35 miles on the other side of Salt Lake City, and I used to visit Salt Lake City every weekend. And we stayed there for 7 months, and they ship us back to Ohio, Dayton, Dayton Ohio.

IL: Did you ever go overseas?

RW: No, we were booked to go overseas. I had my overseas shots and everything, and we had a call that said, don't send no more men over, we got things under control, so our gang didn't go over.

IL: Did any of your friends from here go into the military with you?

RW: Oh, oh yeah. I didn't go in the military from here but from Philadelphia, but a lot of them from here went to the military too. They left from Savannah and Some of them from Baltimore.

IL: Who was your running buddy when you were younger? Who was your best friend?

RW: My best friends was my cousins John Bailey, Thomas Bailey, Morgan Board, and Bettiger Smalls.

IL: You have any stories about y'all getting into trouble?

RW: No, there was no trouble to get into. There was nothing to get into here, we just played at nights, drinking moonshine, we would have a lot of fun you know?

IL: Like what? What did y'all do?

RW: We played hide n' seek.

DO: Did you tell ghost stories?

RW: Huh?

DO: When i played hide n go seek as I child I was always afraid of ghosts in the woods. Do you have any stories like that?

RW: yeah yeah.

DO: What kind of stories are there down here?

RW: In hide n seek, I forgot how it used to go, but I know a ready or not I'm coming. They gonna find you. Oh as children we used to have a lot of fun, amen.

IL: On holidays did you all have any big get-togethers?

RW: Oh yeah

IL: Tell me some things you guys cooked.

RW: Oh did we cook everything man

IL: tell me

RW: yeah we had a feast. shrimp, vegetables, fudge, we had a table, and this one had a different table, and lemonade and doughnuts, and ohhh rootbeers, yeah. Money was scarce, but we didn't know, we had a lot of fun, we enjoyed ourselves

IL: who was the best cook?

RW: The best cook on Eddings point was a lady by the name of Sheila Smalls. That was the best cook, none of them could cook, but she was the best. Baking cake, when people getting getting married, she was the one that would cook.

IL: What was her specialty? Chicken?

RW: yeah yeah we would have chicken, fish, pork, and all

IL: did you all go out and catch the fish in the river?

RW: Yeah, but we didn't catch fish like they catch fish now we catch with a hand line

IL: Handline? What's that? Tell us about that. With a rod or no?

RW: no no, I don't know how to use no rod. All I know is hand line, you throw your line overboard, you get your line for your shrimp and you throw it overboard, and you feel when get a bite you pull the fish on in.

IL: Just the string?

RW: Yeah, hand line.

DO: did you use like a net?

IL: You see I'm from a different part, I don't know what hand line is.

RW: No?

IL: No, I don't tell me about it.

RW: It's some kind of a string, but it's stronger than a string. You don't know what a handline is?

IL: I don't know what a lot of stuff is, that's why I'm here, I want you to teach me.

RW: Well a handline, is stronger than a string. But that's because the fish you're catching are second you put a hook on then you catch yourself a shrimp, and you put the shrimp on the hook and you throw the line overboard and the fish get caught trying to eat the shrimp and that's how you catch him.

IL: Did you get up early in the morning to go fishing?

RW: Many times

DO: How do you catch the shrimp to bait the line?

RW: Get yourself a net, you gotta cast the nett, throw the net in and catch the shrimp. You don't know what net you use?

IL: I don't know nothing about net.

RW: A net is still here, that's something they still use, you can go cast it and catch some shrimp and some other fish in the net, yeah yeah,

IL: What was the best time of day to go shrimping? Did you have to go early?

RW: No you didn't go early, you go when the tide kinda getting low, you know? You don't wanna go on high tide

IL: ok, when it's low.

RW: Yeah

DO: Why, what's the difference do it when it's low tide and not when it's high tide?

RW: High tide we, we come on in.

DO: Is it harder to catch shrimp during high tide?

RW: Yeah, yeah, we go out during low tide to go fishing anyways. Because you want shrimp, you can catch all the shrimp you want.

IL: You can eat whatever you catch?

RW: Oh yeah, you can eat whatever you catch

IL: did you ever have to get a license or anything?

RW: No, you didn't have to mess with that like you do nowadays, you go fishing and you catch what you want to catch.

IL: Ok

RW: We were free.

DO: Had you always been free?

RW: Always been free St. Helena Since we came to this island we always been free, we had a song about it,

*Come once again oh blessed lord, come walking on the sea, and let the man land hear the voice that sets St. Helena free.*

I don't feel like singing it, but that's how it goes.

IL and DO: That sounds pretty good.

IL: Good enough

DO: That was good

IL: That something you always used to sing when you were little? You still sing it today?

RW: Well yeah you still sing it, some people sing it but they don't pay no attention to what they saying. Now I got older and I found that St. Helena island is the only free place in South Carolina, was anyhow. Not now, since these people move in (motions left) now you gotta have these different laws you gotta have licenses to do this, you didn't use to need a liscense to do nothing.

IL: When you were younger did yall play sports? Football or baseball?

RW: Oh yeah, not no football, baseball or basketball yeah.

IL: what team were you on?

RW: Every plantation had their own team, Every plantation Eddings Had a team, jenkins had a team, hayward had a team. Crawford had their own team, indian hill, Saxonville, Frogmore, they all had their own team and we play against each other?

IL: Who would usually win?

RW: Well, sometimes you win, sometimes you lose.

IL: Did you have like a championship or?

RW: Yeah, you ain't playing for nothing, all you playing for is fun and praise and we were good, you were playing just as hard as people who were playing for money.

DO: so the Edding plantation was just like this street here?

RW: Huh?

DO: The Edding plantation

IL: Was it big? A large plantation?

RW: Yeah, this is the Eddings point now.

DO: This whole street, eddings point?

RW: Yeah, all of this going back to Jenkins, but i can't tell you because you wouldn't know, but all of this is eddings point. Going back, way back over here to the river, that's eddings points.

IL: When you went to Penn were you still living here and walking to Penn everyday? Where did you stay at?

RW: yeah, we walked to the Penn school and back, but I didn't have to walk because my uncle had a store right near Penn school and I used to ride with him every morning and come back in the evening, so i didn't have to walk. But the most of them walk

IL: That's a long way

RW: Yeah 10 miles, each way maybe 5.5 miles, that's some good walking man. But we'd walk it because it wasn't too far from the church and we used to walk to church on Sunday, You know.

IL: Which church did you go to?

RW: Ebenezer,

IL: Were you raised in that church?

RW: Yep baptised, there 1923, mean, yes sir.

DO: Do you have a family bible?

RW: No, I got a bible, but it isn't a

DO: It isn't a family bible

RW: No, we had a bible, but I don't know what happened to that old bible that we had. We had an old bible with the children's names in it but I don't know if it got destroyed or what happened to it, because I left it here, I left all these things here.

IL: Did you ever get married?

RW: yeah

IL: Tell us about, were you allowed to date when you were younger?

RW: Yeah

IL: How did that go? Did you have to get permission? How did that go?

RW: No we didn't have to get permission to do nothing, no, you were free you were your own man, you were free you could do what you want. You come here you're free and you go and you're free, nobody can tell you what to do.

IL: Do you remember your first girlfriend?

RW: Yeah

IL: what was her name?

RW: Her name was Lillian Moosey but we called her Posey.

IL: Posey?

RW: Yeah

DO: How old were you?

RW: I was 18 years old

IL: Was she from eddings point?

RW: No Saxonville, we had a son, but I didn't marry her. I left home and I got married in New York. To a girl from down here. She was in New York with her sister, and I was in New York with my brother, but then we went to Philadelphia and I used to go from Philadelphia to New York and we met and we got married in 1937, she had three children, but they didn't live. I had a son before I was married, and he lived, and I had a daughter too, but I wasn't close to her.

IL: Did you get a chance to come back? Did you come back and visit all the time when you were in New York and Philadelphia?

RW: Yeah, I would come back, at first I would stay away a long time, at first I came back was 78, not it was 74, and I came back in 36 my brother, one of my brothers, was sick and I went back and I didn't come back again until 51, then I didn't come back until my momma funeral.

DO: So did all your family live on this land right in this area?

RW: yeah, we used to live right across the road, and the other one used to live right there I know you passed that trailer that where his house used to be, and my brother live right there, and my other brother live right over there. We all lived right close together

IL: Do you all still have large family reunions where everyone come back down here?

RW: No, we used to but we don't do that anymore most of them were gone, and if you were left they don't like their family now, they alright, but they don't how to get together like the rest of them used to do, but you know, the ones that is gone. When they see you they glad to see you but when they gone, you don't know when you see them again, yeah, yeah.

IL: Who was popular, like musicians? Did you ever play an instrument?

RW: No, I would never play on music, I tried, but I never did.

IL: Who was popular when y'all was growing up? Did you ever listen to the radio or?

RW: Well, I used to sing we didn't have no radio, no, I used to sing quarters and all that kinda stuff.

DO: What kind of music did you sing?

RW: Gospel, it was all gospel.

DO:Gospel?

RW: mhmm

IL: what was your favorite song?

RW: We sang blues as well, especially when you started drinking

IL: Did you all make your own liquor?

RW: Yeah, country went dry they started making corn liquor, country went dry in 1915. I remember that good, country went dry, there was no liquor that was when people started making their own liquor, that was when the trouble start. They started raiding people and a lot of people got killed, making liquor, and that was a crime.

IL: Who would raid you though?

RW: Those people, what you call those people? Cops.

IL: Police?

RW: Yeah they would raid the people, and they make their liquor in the woods, and breakup their stand and a lot of people got killed.

IL: were the police from St. Helena? Or were they from Beauford?

RW: There was no police on St. Helena, hmmm Beauford, yeah.

IL: So if something happened on the island happened who took care of it, say for instance, someone did something would hurt somebody, who would handle that situation?

RW: Well you would go to court, they had somebody to come in, and sometimes you need to call tomorrow and go to court.

IL: Was court here in St. Helena?

RW: You had a place up there in St. Helena, uh I can't tell you where it's at because you wouldn't know, but anyways they had a place. They had a judge, and if the case was too serious then you had to go to Beauford,

IL: Was the judge black?

RW: No. no. we didn't have black judge.

IL: So you always had to go see whites, whenever law was involved.

RW: Yeah, no there was no black judges in those days, you get a charge but there was no black no no.

IL: You said they started raiding and killing people you said?

RW: Yeah, yeah, they broke up the circles where they making the liquor, just like they doing now with dope. Just like they doing with dope now that's the same thing that they used to do with liquor. Anything that you do,, that they can't get some money out of is a crime, if they can get some money out of it it's ok you can do anything, I'm telling you that I know something.

IL: You know a lot

RW: If they can get some money out of you, you can do anything, they same things they would lock you up for, they was doing the same thing. I tell you what I know, I used to work for the

judge, and he had a cellar, and he was making liquor, and selling it, and sometimes he'd send guys to jail, but he never went to jail and the judge is supposed to be against it. Man, the worst thing about this dope, this dope dope dope, when you sell this dope, you don't get none of the money, people right now, I know this man he sell dope, he got boys that work for him, every morning they go out and get their supplies and every evening they come back, and the county don't lock him up because he pay them off, same thing that they used to do, if they getting some of the money it's ok. If not, it's a crime. That's what I know, I been around here.

DO: So the court was close by, and everyone went to it? Or was it just the people on the island went to that court? Was it a court house, on the island?

RW: they did have a place there for the judge, Kettles, Judge Kettles, had a place there, you know.

DO: Was it a traveling judge or one that was here all the time?

RW: No he stayed here, yeah yeah, he scared us. After he died then who was the other guy, someone was down here before Judge Crawford took over.

IL: Did you ever think that you would see a black president?

RW: No. No I no no no I never thought, of course we had one, with Abraham Lincoln he was mixed. Calhoun is his father, you know Calhoun, you see Calhoun in Sharpston? You know what they saw about the monument in Sharpston, Calhoun. He called himself Lincoln's father, that's why they killed him, because they found he was colored, and his people turned him in, my people, because he wasn't a white man, and he was living that life, and they finally catch him and kill him. You should go and read and see what he got on, the what do you call that thing?

IL: The internet?

RW: Yeah, go and read what they tell him to do.

IL: So all the people here knew that Lincoln was black?

RW: Yeah

DO: Was Calhoun's son?

RW: Yeah, Calhoun, tell the white folks said for all you do, keep us down. Yeah, go and read it and see what he say.

IL: So what do you think, do you think people have changed for the better since your childhood, you've been around a long time, what would you say about the treatment of the blacks.

RW: Yeah, we still got some problem in the whites, a lot of them is good, but we still got some weak minded ones, yeah.

IL: you remember the civil rights movement?

RW: No. Civil rights?

IL: Yeah, like doctor Martin Luther King and the civil rights legislation.

RW: Ohhhh.

IL: Being able to vote, and all, were you able to vote in the 40s and 50, coming up.

RW: I couldn't vote until I went to Philadelphia. I was able to vote once I went to Philadelphia, but I couldn't vote down here.

IL: Did they threaten you?

RW: They threaten you, you think you gonna damn vote, you ain't gotta, you ain't got no one around, they don't want you around when they vote, voting for president. You knew better than to try?

IL: You didn't even try?

RW: No, couldn't.

IL: Did they lynch anybody around here, Ku Klux Klan anything like that?

RW: Not here, not on, not here, but they did it in you know, in the city.

IL: In Beaufort?

RW: I don't, I don't

IL: Or a little further out?

RW: Yeah. Yeah. But no, we were when I went to Philadelphia, first time I could vote, in 1934. But here when they voting for president they just didn't want you involved.

IL: Were you a democrat or republican?

RW: I was nothing Because you couldn't vote?

IL: Right ok. Do you remember the first time you voted?

RW: Yeah in Philadelphia, in 1934, I forgot the name of the man we were voting for, and we were voting for them, and we went and my brother couldn't vote, he was waiting long enough, and they said, bring him on in, haha, but they couldn't vote down here.

IL: What does the culture and Gullah mean to you? If someone say, you Gullah, what does that mean?

RW: I don't know, I heard that name, after I came back. I didn't hear it before, they called us a different name. Once upon a time they called us GeeChee. Yeah, and they said, there ain't no Geechee in Carolina, Geechee in Georgia, and I said Geechee in Georgia, you don't know nothin' them, if you call yourself one of them they take your neck off, they prejudiced.

IL: So it's not positive?

RW: And they don't want to live around you, they move over on the other side of Westborough street, because it used to be Yamacraw, Yamacraw used to be a tough place to live in. yeah, but, things changing now.

DO: Where's Yamacraw?

IL: Philadelphia?

RW: Yamacraw in South Philadelphia. You know where Westborough street is? They changed the name of that to Martin Luther or something, but the other side of westborough street, that's Yamacraw.

IL: So you didn't hear anything about Gullah till you came back here? Would you consider yourself Gullah?

RW: I don't know, what is Gullah? I don't know, I don't know.

IL: How about Geechee?

RW: I know Geechee, and I know you can't be one of them.

DO: You gotta be from Georgia to be Geechee, huh

RW: The first time I been around them, I was working with a man on a truck, my cousin and I and we went across Westborough street. And we heard these people talking so funny and I said "what kind of people are those" and he start laughing, he said what do they call us, and he said, they geechee, I said people don't call us that, and what's the big deal if they did. Just like there is a Jew section and an Italian section, they all live together they don't want nobody else in there, no other nationality in there, that the way in Philadelphia, but i don't know about everywhere else.

DO: So do blacks have their own section in New York and in Philly,

RW: Yeah, they got a section for themselves, yeah man.

IL: When you were in philly what did you miss about home?

RW: The only thing I miss about home is, you know, I can't get the same in philly where I can get something for nothing.

IL: something for nothing?

RW: Yeah, you have to buy everything, it didn't bother me though. But you know, you miss it. Because down here you don't have to buy, so much things we didn't buy, people used to farm. All this way, ain't nothin but where these trees are here, nothing but grass is all, that's where we were farming, some place still farming.

IL: Here on the island?

RW: Yeah some place back over that way, they still farming, but they are using some kind of machine, you know? But they don't plow it no more, you plow your horse and cart, and oxen, they don't do that no more, yeah. Man.

IL: A lot has changed?

RW: Yeah, great change. Yes, yes, yes yes. I like home, that's why I'm back here today, because I like home, but most all of my people when I used to live here is gone.

IL: Is there anything specific that you would like to tell the younger generation?

RW: Hmm?

IL: Is there anything you would like to tell the younger folks about the island and your life?

RW: They always come around asking me questions, some of them here about what was before, I tell them what I know, I don't know everything, but I tell them what I know. And they enjoy it.

DO: Do you know who's plantation this was? You said it was a plantation but who was the plantation owner? Was it Eddington? The plantation owner for this whole street Eddings point? Who was the owner?

RW: Oh, I don't know, but I heard a name.

DO: Ok. It wasn't Eddings? It wasn't the name Eddings?

RW: Yeah it was Joe Eddings, he didn't just own Eddings point and another plantation over there, Eddings way or something, that was the owner.

DO: And so your mom was on his plantation? Your mother was on his plantation? And father?

RW: No they were right here on this plantation.

IL: You remember any of your grandparents?

RW: I remember my father's mother and father, but I don't know my mother's, mother and father.

IL: Could you tell us something about your grandparents?

RW: Oh man, I did like ma and pa, they were so nice to us. Grandma and Grandpa, they were nice.

IL: What was their names?

RW: Henry Wiggins and his wife name Virginia Wiggins, that was her married name though, her maiden name was Polite. And she came from a place over there called Doctor White and Grandma, yeah grandma, yeah.

IL: Do you remember any stories that they would tell you as a child, did they ever tell you any family history?

RW: No, I can't remember.

IL: Any stories about when they were little?

RW: When they were little? No, I don't think they would tell me that

IL: Were they strict? Making sure you did what you were supposed to do?

RW: Grandpa was kinda strict, but grandmother she was easygoing, but my grandfather he was kind of strict.

IL: Is he the one that taught you how to fish, did he teach you how to fish?

RW: No

IL: Or plow?

RW: No, I learned that from my brothers. My brothers, I learned from them. I wasn't too young, but I learned from my brothers anyways, because my father died when I was only 8 years old.

IL: how much older was your brother?

RW: One of them was 7 years older, one was 9 and the other one was 11

IL: And they taught you the ropes? They taught you the ropes?

RW : Yeah yeah they didn't spend too much time with me, I learned them myself, I was too young for them. They were those 3 brothers, and then my mother had 2 girls, and they died, and then she had the twin boys and they died, then they had me and I'm still living, so those ones that died, I don't know them, they died, before I was born. All I know was the 3 of us, 4 of us including myself.

Do: You were the youngest?

RW: Yeah.

DO: Hey Mr. Wiggins thank you so much

IL: for letting us talk to you

RW: I enjoyed it

DO: You enjoyed it?

RW: Yeah, I'm glad when people come around me to talk.

IL: Do you ever get a chance to go to the senior place and play bingo?

RW: No, but I used to play bingo in philadelphia. Oh man

IL: Were you good?

RW: Yeah, played bingo, I like to gamble now.

IL: ok, I don't want taking my money.

RW; Bingo, numbers, poker.

IL: Did you all play numbers here on the Island?

RW: Yeah, lots of numbers.

IL: Do you ever do the dream book.

RW: Yeah my niece took my dream book and left it in philadelphia, but yeah, I play my numbers.

IL: Play your numbers?

RW: Yeah

IL: Do you remember lotto before they had the numbers the computer way? Do you remember the old ways

DO: Did they play in policy and clear house

IL: Play numbers that way

RW: We used to play numbers on the horse race in Philadelphia, I used to write numbers down, I was a number writer

IL: Ok. So you had bootleggers, down here moonshining, and up there you had numbers?

RW: Yeah

IL: You all had numbers down here too? Coming up?

RW: No, we just have it now. They lock up the numbers I been in jail now a couple of times That happens.

IL: Wha they lock you up for?

RW: The first time it happened I got caught in a house, in a gambling house, and they took us all to jail.

IL: Were you shooting dice or playing cards?

RW: Cards

IL: What?

RW: Poker

IL: Texas Hold'em or Stud?

RW: Stud. you play too?

IL: Yeah, a little bit, a little bit.

RW: Have you played, lets us play. I like poker, tonk.

IL: Tonk, you play tonk?

RW: A little bit of blackjack, I don't do too good at blackjack.

IL: I ain't either

RW: But poker and Tonk, yeah, yeah men , and numbers.

IL: Did you write them down or did you always remember them?

RW: I write them down

IL: Yeah, i'm talking about back in the day?

IL: I got you, I'm not good at numbers, I can't pick no numbers

RW: You either?

Do: I do sometimes, but not often.

RW: Oh, sometimes if you do it sometimes, that's alright, you know that if you do it sometimes.

DO: So Mr. Wiggins, what's the secret to being 102 and still looking good? What's the secret I wanna know, I mean smart, thinking, remembering all these things. What's the secret?

RW: That's the same thing the doctor asks me, he asks me same thing and I say I don't know nothing, he says. What's the secret, he says you know something, I don't. When I was 92 he said you can remember Monday, and I said you don't know Friday from Tuesday? I said I don't know. I always been this way, I could always remember things, more than my brothers and they

were older than me. I can't tell you the secret, I didn't used to take care of myself, I used to drink liquor and sleep on the ground at night. But I take care of myself now.

DO: So you eat right?

RW: Yeah, I eat right, and these children I got yet they take care of me, I guess til I'm gone.

IL; We gonna take to your buddy, Willie, you know Willie Robinson, we gonna talk to him tomorrow.

RW: Yeah, he come here every once in awhile. He come in here with me, yeah he and I is the 2 oldest ones.

IL: yeah people told us your name, everyone told us your name and to come talk to you.

RW: Yeah, he come in and we can talk but his mind is a little bit bad. And He's like "You can remember all that" and I'm like I can remember but you can walk I can't walk, and I suppose going in the river, but I ain't gonna get in, because I don't know if I can get out.

IL: did you all go to the river a lot when you were coming up?

RW: Oh yeah, man, oh yeah, this time of day, the entire island would go down and swim yeah.

IL: And crab? Find crabs and shrimp?

RW: Oh yeah. We didn't catch crab that much we didn't but they can catch crab online now. We used to use a trap and catch the crab and put the crab in a bag and bring the crab home but now they catch it on a line. I don't know about that. Yeah.

Do: Ok mr. Wiggins

IL: I would like to thank you for teaching me a couple of things today.

RW: I enjoyed y'all, I didn't know who was coming, I didn't want to, I said what kind of people are those, but after this I say these people they coming and they asking some questions. Suzy said you were nice people and she was right.

IL: I know it's hard sometimes, because you didn't know us, but I want to thank you for letting us into your home. And giving us the chance to talk to you.

RW: I'm glad you all came, because I like to talk, sometimes I believe I talk too much, but I just like to talk.

IL: If you know any other stories just let us know and we can come back and record you talking about it.

RW: Y'all come back. Come back.

IL: We'll stop by and say hello. Is that your niece?

RW: Yeah I enjoyed talking to y'all. My grandniece.

IL: Well maybe we can get your grand-niece to talk tomorrow, she was back there telling you things to remember, they know a lot too.

RW: Yeah both of them my grand niece, they take care of me.

IL: Well, they doing a good job.

RWw: I have to say yeah, because if it wasn't for them I'd be in some home. They take good care of me, yeah.

IL: Thanks a lot.

**[End of Interview]**