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Recollections/personal views

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YAZOO COUNTY BICENTENNIAL

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: Jack Sloan

INTERVIEWER: Ronnie Sloan

SUBJECT: Comparing Enterprise, Ala. with Yazoo City

DATE: September 1974

JS: My name is Jack Sloan. My address is 724 East 5th Street.
My occupation is publishers' representative.

RS: How long have you lived in Yazoo City?

JS: Three years.

RS: Where did you live before moving here?

JS: Enterprise, Alabama.

RS: Is Enterprise a bigger or smaller town than Yazoo City?

JS: Enterprise is larger than Yazoo City by about 5,000, I'd say.

RS: Is Enterprise any different in geography or terrain than Yazoo City?

JS: Yes. Yazoo City has the.....of course the Delta and then the hills and most of Enterprise is flat farm land.

RS: What do they grow in Enterprise mainly as comparative to the main staple here?

JS: The main crops in Enterprise and Coffee County is peanuts.

RS: Do you know why they don't grow much cotton in Alabama - Enterprise, Alabama?

JS: Yes. Back when the boll weevil invaded the states from Mexico and came up through Texas and Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama, all of the farmers in the cotton belts of that area were just virtually wiped out after several years. This forced the farmers into diversified farming - trying out crops they have never farmer before. In Coffee County, Alabama the farmers soon found that peanuts would make a very good crop. As a matter of fact, many farmers over there became wealthy growing peanuts. After new chemicals were found to combat the boll weevil, the farmers in that particular area of Alabama simply didn't care to go back to cotton farming. So as a result, they stayed with the peanuts.

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RS: Why haven't the boll weevils hurt much of the cotton crop in the earlier day in Yazoo County as it did in Enterprise?

JS: It was my understanding that the boll weevil devastated crops through out the cotton belt which is Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, on into Texas. The way it worked out peanuts, the farmers found over in Alabama that they could do as well, if not better financially by growing peanuts. I guess it is because of the soil over there. When other farmers gradually got back in the cotton, Coffee County and that area of Alabama, had no desire to get back into it because they were doing so well in peanuts.

RS: What was your occupation in Enterprise, Alabama before you came here?

JS: I was a civilian test pilot for Page Aircraft Company. They had a maintenance contract with the U.S. Army to maintain the helicopters that were used in the pilot training program.

RS: What did you do after you moved to Yazoo City?

JS: When I came to Yazoo City three years ago, I moved here to fly for Jimmy Reagan who had three helicopters here at that time. He was using these to spray cotton.

RS: Is this work dangerous?

JS: I'd say it is a little more dangerous than other occupations I know.

RS: What was the first thing you noticed when you first came to Yazoo City?

JS: Well, there were several things that I was impressed by when I first arrived here.....and that was obviously this is an old city. There are a lot of large, beautiful trees, and a lot of old houses that people have fixed up inside and out. Then, of course, the canal network they have running down Canal Street. Then, of course, the Yazoo River there which is.....they have.....the water no longer flows in it. I would say the trees, the homes, and the canal is the main thing.

RS: Getting back to some contrasts. Which do you think has a better economy, Yazoo City or Enterprise, Alabama?

JS: There is no question about it, I believe Enterprise, Alabama has the healthier economy by virtue of the fact that they have a large military base nearby. Anytime a city has a

military base the military personnel are going to shop and buy cars and groceries and everything else in that town so naturally this stimulates the economy, whereas, Yazoo City is, with the exception of the Mississippi Chemical Plant out here, the main industry here, is what I would....Yazoo City is what I would consider a farm community, a small farm community town.

RS: Do you think the Yazoo economy can use some newer industry or new innovation?

JS: Very definitely I think they could because they have a surplus of manpower here. There are people who don't have jobs that could use jobs. I feel like if the city wanted to, they could stimulate the growth of the city in many different ways, but the impression I have is that there is a certain apathy here which is evidenced by the lack of the growth rate. I believe if you were to look at the census figures you would show that Yazoo City is not one of your fast growing cities in Mississippi.

RS: Would you say Yazoo City has a pleasurable climate?

JS: Yes, I enjoy the climate down here. I prefer a warm climate to a cold climate.

RS: One final question - what do you think the progress holds for Yazoo City?

JS: Well, of course, I don't have a crystal ball -- the only thing I have to base the answer to that question is the way things appear to be at the present time. We touched on that earlier and I feel like the potential for growth is here, but its not going to grow by itself. It is going to take some people in the city government who are ambitious and want to see the city grow and then conformulate a program and a plan with good, sound ideas that are channeled along in that direction. To answer that question, I would say it depends on the city fathers and if they want new industry in here, they got to take positive steps to get it. At the present time, it doesn't seem to be that motivation. There seems to be something lacking.

RS: Thank you for your time.

-END OF INTERVIEW-

