

## Richard (Look-up) Jones

### **Interview with Richard Jones (Dick Look-up), age 93 [HW: 125?]**

#### **County Home, Union, S.C.**

*—Caldwell Sims, Union, S.C.*

Dick has an upward stare all the time, and holds his head as if he were always looking up into the sky, consequently he has won the sobriquet, 'Look-Up'.

"Everybody dat knows me knows dat I was born on de Jim Gist plantation, and it used to jine Mr. Winsmith's and de Glenn Peak plantations. Mr. Winsmith was a doctor. Marse Jim sho was a good man to his darkies.

"My father was named Ned Jones and he belonged to Marse Berry Jones. His plantation was across de forest, next to West Springs. Mother was Lucy Gist, belonging to Marse Jim. My parents had de following chilluns: Esther, Bella, Ephriam, Griggs, John, Penfield, me and Richard. Dey married and so we was all Jones.

"De slaves in de Gist Quarter lived well. All nigger chilluns in dat quarter had very small tasks until dey was seventeen or eighteen years old. De quarter had nine houses. Dere was seventeen hundred acres in our plantation; or dat is, de part where we lived and worked. We lived in one-room log cabins dat had to be well kept all of de time.

"All de chilluns in de Quarter was well fed, clothed, housed and doctored until dey was strong and well developed younguns. Den dey was give tasks and learnt to do what de master and de mistress thought dey would do well at.

"In de houses we had comfortable home-made beds and chairs. We had nice tables and plenty to eat. Our clothes was kept mended by a seamstress, and dese things was looked after by one of de mammies on de plantation dat was too old to work.

"Ah yes, well does I 'member my Granny from Africa, and straight from dere, too; Judith Gist, dey named her. Dat ole lady could not work when she died, fer she was a hundred and ten years old. Dey had in de paper dat I was 125 [HW: 93?]. It gives me notice to say dat I is de oldest man in Union County. Can't 'member any of my grandfathers. Millie Gist was my mother, and aunt Judith was her mother.

"Granny Judith said dat in Africa dey had very few pretty things, and dat dey had no red colors in cloth, in fact, dey had no cloth at all. Some strangers wid pale faces come one day and drapped a small piece of red flannel down on de ground. All de black folks grabbed fer it. Den a larger piece was drapped a little further on, and on until de river was reached. Den a large piece was drapped in de river and on de

other side. Dey was led on, each one trying to git a piece as it was drapped. Finally, when de ship was reached, dey drapped large pieces on de plank and up into de ship 'till dey got as many blacks on board as dey wanted. Den de gate was chained up and dey could not get back. Dat is de way Granny Judith say dey got her to America. Of course she did not even know dat de pieces was red flannel, or dat she was being enticed away. Dey just drapped red flannel to dem like us draps corn to chickens to git dem on de roost at night.

"When dey got on board de ship dey were tied until de ship got to sea; den dey was let loose to walk about 'cause dey couldn't jump overboard. On de ship dey had many strange things to eat, and dey liked dat. Dey was give enough red flannel to wrap around demselves. She liked it on de boat. Granny Judith born Millie, and Millie born me. No, I ain't never had no desire to go to Africa, kaise I gwine to stay whar I is.

"Uncle Tom come 'long wid Granny Judith. Two womenfolks come wid dem, aunt Chany and Daphne. Aunt Chany and aunt Daphne was bought by de Frees dat had a plantation near Jonesville. Uncle Tom and 'Granny' was bought by Marse Jim Gist, but dere marsters allus 'lowed dem to visit on July 4th and Christmas. When dey talk, nobody didn't know what dey was talking about. My granny never could speak good like I can. She talk half African, and all African when she git bothered. No, I can't talk no African.

"After I was seventeen I did all kinds of hoeing and plowing and other farm work fer my marster. He said dat by dis time, his little niggers' bones had done got hard enough fer dem to work. We had a 'driver', a older person, dat showed us how to do everything right. Marse never let him over-work or hurry us. We liked him—'Uncle July Gist', we called him and dat was his real name, too. His wife, Aunty Sara, was good to us; dey both buried at Woodson's Chapel Baptist Church.

"Fer my first task I had 1/4 of an acre in taters, 'bacca and watermelons de first year. Some of de boys had 'pinders, cantloupes and matises (tomatoes) in dere task of a 1/4 acre.

"De next year, we made corn and sold it to our master fer whatever he give us fer it. All de use we had fer money was to buy fish hooks, barlows, juice harps and marbles. Boys did not use 'bacca den until dey got twenty-one or over. Marse allus carried a roll of money as big as my arm. He would come to de quarter on Christmas, July 4th and Thanksgiving, and get up on a stump and call all the chilluns out. Den he would throw money to 'em. De chilluns git dimes, nickles, quarters, half-dollars and dollars. At Christmas he would throw ten dollar bills. De parents would take de five and ten dollar bills in charge, but Marse made de let de chilluns keep de small change. I tell you, I ain't never seed so much money since my marster been gone. He buried at Fairforest Presbyterian Cemetery as white folks calls it, but we calls it Cedar Grove.

"When he died, he had sixteen plantations, you can see dat at de courthouse in Union. All his darkies went in a drove of wagons to his burying. He was killed by dem Yankees in Virginny. Uncle Wylie Smith, his bodyguard, come back wid his body and told us dat Marse was kilt by a Yankee. Marse Jim was a sentinel, and dat Yankee shot him in his nose, but strange to say, it never tore his face up none. Miss Sara buried him in his uniform and she wrapped a Confederate flag over de top of de coffin. Uncle Wylie put Master's watch around Miss Sara's neck like he had done told him to do when he got home. Miss Sara cried and us cried, too. Jim never married and dat's why Miss Sara to do everything, kaise she was his sister what lived wid him.

"Mr., I run on Broad River fer over 24 years as boatman, carrying Marse Jim's cotton to Columbia fer him. Us had de excitement on dem trips. Lots times water was deeper dan a tree is high. Sometimes I was throwed and fell in de water. I rise up every time, though, and float and swim back to de boat and git on again. If de weather be hot, I never think of changing no clothes, but just keep on what I got wet. Five niggers allus went on Marse's boat. One man steer de boat and of course he was de steerman, and dat what he went by. I recollects two steermans, Bradley Kennedy and Andy McCluny. Charlie Gilliam was de second steerman, by dat I means dat he de young nigger dat Bradley and Andy had to break in.

"Sometimes Marster have three flat boats a-gwine down at one time, and I has recollections of as many as five a-gwine from our plantation; dat was not so often, though. Us had long poles to steer de boats wid; den dere was some paddles, and some of de niggers was called privates dat handled de cotton and used de paddles when dey had to be used. You knows dat batteaus was what dey always used de paddles wid. Privates did de shoving and other heavy work. De seconds and de privates allus shoved wid de poles when de water was rough, and de steerman give orders. I was allus a boatman.

"Charlie Gilliam acted as boatman, some; and den de other boatmen was: Bill Hughes, Warren Worthy, Green Stokes and John Glenn. Dey made de poles to suit de job. Some of de poles was longer dan others was. Some of dem was broad and flat at de end; others was blunt and others was made sharp. When de Broad River rose, sometimes de waves got higher dan my house dar. Den it was a real job to handle one of Marse's boats. Fact is, it was five men's jobs. Wid water a-roaring and a-foaming and a-gwine round you like a mad tiger a-blowing his breath, so dat you was feer'd (scared) dat all your marster's cotton gwine to be spilt, you had to be up and a-doing something real fast. Sometimes dat river take your boat round and round like a merry-go-round, 'til you git so swimmy-headed dat you have to puke up all de victuals dat you done eat. Den it swing from dat whirl into a swift stream dat take you a mile a minute, yes sir, a mile a minute fer I don't know how fer.

"Den you see a tree a-coming right straight to you. If de boat hit dat tree, you knowed dat you be busted into a million pieces. You had to git your poles and somebody had to let a pole hit dat tree ahead of de boat. Of course dat change de boat's course from de tree and you went sailing on by. Once in a freshet us raced twenty-five miles in twenty-five minutes. Marse Jim was wid us dat time, and he tole us so by his watch. De water a-jumping real high and dat boat a-jumping still wusser made me so skeer't dat I just shake in my knees and all de way up and down my legs.

"On dis trip we had went plumb up in North Carolina. Us never had been dat fer up befo'. I ain't never seed North carolina befo'; neither is I seed it since. Broad River was real narrow when we went up and she look like a lamb; but when we come down it had done and tuck and rained and dem banks was vanished ... but dat water sho did rare up dar to git back in its regular channel. De rocks up dar was mo' scary looking dat dey is whar it run through Union to Columbia. Dat night we run into a nine-mile shoal. Couldn't none de niggers keep dat boat off'n dat shoal it was so powerful ... dat is, de water just tuck dat boat plumb smack out'n our hands. But it throwed our boat in shallow water and of course dat made it drag. Good dat it never drug over no sharp rocks—and dey was setting all around us—but it happened dat it hit sand. We camped dar fer de night. By morning we had done go a quarter mile from de channel.

"When we et (ate), we worked de boat out into de main channel again. Den we staked her to a tree and tuck a look around befo' we started down stream fer Union; dat seemed fer off right den. Finally de master boatman give de order, 'Shove off, boys!' We shoved and we fell into a clear open channel and our boat went a-skeeting down stream. We never had to hit a lick, but she went so fast dat we was all

skeer'd to take a long breath. Finally Marster said, 'Boys, see dem willow trees down yonder; well, steer her to run over dem so dat she will slack her speed.' Us did, but it never deadened our speed a mite, dat us could see. Marster shake his head and 'low, 'Bound fer hell, maybe, boys'.

"Got to Cherokee Falls, wid water so high couldn't tell no falls dar. Marster say, 'Lay her to de right, we can't wreck dis boat widout putting up a honest man's fight.' Den he say, 'If us does, us'll sho go to hell.' We tried to swing her by grabbing to a big willow, and we broke a lot of limbs in trying, but we did swing her and she run a 100 yards widout steering, and de boat landed on a little mountain of land. Marse 'low, 'Ain't never seed sech a ocean of water since I was eighteen years old, damn if I have.' He look at me and say, 'Don't know whether Dick scared or not, but he sho is a brave man.' I was a-setting my feets on land den, and I look at him and 'low, 'No sir, I ain't skeer't, why I could come over dat little place in my bateau.' Truth is, dat I was so skeer't dat I wasn't skeert. We lay over a day and a half. De water had done receded back some, and we come 27 miles down to Lockhart Shoals in dat one day. De water was still so high dat we run over de shoals widout a tremor. Come sailing on down to Fish Dam and went over de Fish Dam and never knowed dat it was dar. Den we landed at de road wid everybody safe but still scar't.

"Dar was two Charlie Gilmores ... one was kil't right below Fish Dam. He was hit in de head by a private. When de private was cutting de boat, Charlie got in de way of de pole and it hit him in one of his temples and he fell over in de water dead. When dey got him, wasn't narry drap of water in his lungs, dat's how-come us knowed dat he was kil't straight out. Some says dat he was hit in de y'er (ear), but anyway it was on a tender spot and de lick sho done him up. Nothing wasn't done to de private, kaise it was all accidental and Marse and everybody felt sorry fer him.

"On river trips, we took rations sech as meat, bread and cabbage, and us cotch all de fish dat we wanted and had coffee. We each took day in and day out to cook, dat is, all dem dat could half-way cook did dat.