

Maugan Shepherd

Interview with Maugan Shepherd

—Gertha Couric, [HW: Eufaula]

SLAVERY COMING BACK? MAUGAN HOPES SO

"Mistus, I hears slavery times is comin' back."

Uncle Maugan Shepherd is past 80. He idled about the front of his tumble-down house in Eufaula, happily recalling the old plantation days. He has never learned to read, and therefore pins a great deal of dependence upon hearsay.

"Where did you hear about slavery coming back?" the interviewer asked him.

"Well, mam, 'pear lak I heard it somewhar. I don't rikolekt jest now."

"Would you like to have the old times back again, Uncle Maugan?"

He studied a moment, beamed:

"Yassum, I would. I'se proud I was borned a slave. I'se too young to 'member much, but I knows I always had enough to eat and wear den, and I sho don't now.

Uncle Maugan said that he was "birthed" at Chestnut Hill; that he belonged to Marse and Mistus Rich Wiley, and that his father and mother were Bunk and Betsy Wiley, both "field niggers." Maugan had two brothers, Oliver and Monroe; but no sisters.

"I never seed ma and pa much 'cept on Sundays," he explained. "Dey was allus workin' in de fields an' I was out chasin' rabbits an' sech mos' of de time. At night I jest et my cornpone an' drink my buttermilk an' fell on de bed asleep."

Maugan remembers one overseer, scornfully referring to him as "po' white trash."

"Us slaves called him by his las' name behin' his back," the old darky explained, "'caze us hated to 'mister' dat white man."

Maugan remembers Reconstruction and a great deal about "atter de surrender," but says "rickollection ain't so good" on things that happened before.

"I 'members dat I was powerful scared of de Yankee soldiers," he said, "but dey never hurt nobody. Dey come through Eufaula an' all us niggers tried to hide; but dey jest come on by an' laughed at us fer bein' scared."



Maugan Shepherd, Eufaula, Alabama

More than fifty years ago, Maugan married Kitty. She is about 70 and makes her living washing clothes for "de white peoples." They never had any children.

Maugan says he never goes anywhere except to church on Sundays. His legs are not so strong anymore, he explains.

"My ol' 'oman, she sho' lak to go to funerals," he chuckled. "But in dese days day takes de body to have it vulcanized, so we can't have no settin' ups. Dis went hard on Kitty, 'caze she was a mourner; but it didn't do her no good, shoutin' an' amournin' all night. She would always come home wid her head tied up an' her eyes set back in her head."

Maugan still works. He is a good yardman, but says some day he is just "gwine ter drap out, lak his pa did."