



**Wes Brady**

**WES BRADY, 88, was born a slave of John Jeems, who had a farm five miles north of Marshall. Wes has farmed in Harrison County all his life. He now lives with friends on the Long's Camp Road, and draws a \$11.00 monthly pension.**

"I was born and raised in Harrison County, and I was eighty-eight years old this July past and has wore myself out here in this county. I was born on Massa John Jeem's place, on the old Jefferson Road, and my father was Peter Calloway, and he was born in Alabama and his whole fam'ly brought to Texas by nigger traders. My mother was Harriet Ellis and I had two brothers named George and Andrew, and four sisters, Lula and Judy and Mary and Sallie. My old Grandpa Phil told me how he helped run the Indians off the land.

"Grandpa Phil told me 'bout meetin' his massa. Massa Jeems had three or four places and grandpa hadn't seed him and he went to one of the other farms and meets a man goin' down the road. The man say, 'Who you belong to?' Grandpa Phil say, 'Massa Jeems.' The man say, 'Is he a mean man?' Grandpa say, 'I don't know him, but they say he's purty tight.' It was Massa Jeems talkin' and he laughs and gives Grandpa Phil five dollars.

"We niggers lived in log houses and slep' on hay mattress with lowell covers, and et fat pork and cornbread and 'lasses and all kinds garden stuff. If we et flour bread, our women folks had to slip the flour siftin's from missy's kitchen and darsn't let the white folks know it. We wore one rigin' lowell clothes a year and I never had shoes on till after surrender come. I run all over the place till I was a big chap[Pg 134] in jes' a long shirt with a string tied round the bottom for a belt. I went with my young massa that way when he hunted in the woods, and toted squirrels for him.

"Some white folks might want to put me back in slavery if I tells how we was used in slavery time, but you asks me for the truth. The overseer was 'straddle his big horse at three o'clock in the mornin', roustin' the hands off to the field. He got them all lined up and then come back to the house for breakfas'. The rows was a mile long and no matter how much grass was in them, if you leaves one sprig on your row they beats you nearly to death. Lots of times they weighed cotton by candlelight. All the hands took dinner to the field in buckets and the overseer give them fifteen minutes to git dinner. He'd start cuffin' some of them over the head when it was time to stop eatin' and go back to work. He'd go to the house and eat his dinner and then he'd come back and look in all the buckets and if a piece of anything that was there when he left was et, he'd say you was losin' time and had to be whipped. He'd drive four stakes in the ground and tie a nigger down and beat him till he's raw. Then he'd take a brick and grind it up in a powder and mix it with lard and put it all over him and roll him in a sheet. It'd be two days or more 'fore that nigger could work 'gain. I seed one nigger done that way for stealin' a meat bone from the meathouse. That nigger got fifteen hundred lashes. The li'l chaps would pick up egg shells and play with them and if the overseer seed them he'd say you was stealin' eggs and give you a beatin'. I seed long lines of slaves chained together driv by a white man on a hoss, down the Jefferson road. [Pg 135]

"The first work I done was drappin' corn, and then cow-pen boy and sheep herder. All us house chaps had to shell a half bushel corn every night for to feed the sheep. Many times I has walked through the quarters when I was a little chap, cryin' for my mother. We mos'ly only saw her on Sunday. Us chillen was in bed when the folks went to the field and come back. I 'members wakin' up at night lots of times and seein' her make a little mush on the coals in the fireplace, but she allus made sho' that overseer was asleep 'fore she done that.

"One time the stock got in the field and the overseer 'cuses a old man and jumps on him and breaks his neck. When he seed the old man dead, he run off to the woods, but massa sent some nigger after him and say for him to come back, the old man jus' got overhet and died.

"We went to church on the place and you ought to heared that preachin'. Obey your massa and missy, don't steal chickens and eggs and meat, but nary a word 'bout havin' a soul to save.

"We had parties Saturday nights and massa come out and showed us new steps. He allus had a extra job for us on Sunday, but he gave us Christmas Day and all the meat we wanted. But if you had money you'd better hide it, 'cause he'd git it.

"The fightin' was did off from us. My father went to war to wait on Josh Calloway. My father never come back. Massa Jeems cussed and 'bused us niggers more'n ever, but he took sick and died and stepped off to Hell 'bout six months 'fore we got free. When we was free, they beat drums in Marshall. I stayed on 'bout seven months and then my mother and me went to farmin' for [Pg 136] ourselves.

"I wore myself out right in this county and now I'm too old to work. These folks I lives with takes good care of me and the gov'ment gives me \$11.00 a month what I is proud to git. [Pg 137]

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