

Edd Shirley

Monroe County

Interviewed by Lenneth Jones

I am 97 years old and am still working as a janitor and supporting my family. My father was a white man and my mother was a colored lady. I was owned three different times, or rather was sold to three different families. I was first owned by the Waldens; then I was sold to a man by the name of Jackson, of Glasgow, Kentucky. Then my father, of this county, bought me.

I have had many slave experiences. Some slaves were treated good, and some were treated awful bad by the white people; but most of them were treated good if they would do what their master told them to do.

I once saw a light colored gal tied to the rafters of a barn, and her master whipped her until blood ran down her back and made a large pool on the ground. And I have seen negro men tied

to stakes drove in the ground and whipped because they would not mind their master; but most white folks were better to their slaves and treated them better than they are now. After their work in the fields was finished on Saturday, they would have parties and have a good time. Some old negro man would play the banjo while the young darkies would dance and sing. The white folks would set around and watch; and would sometimes join in and dance and sing.

My colored grandfather lived to be 115 years old, and at that age he was never sick in his life. One day he picked up the water bucket to go to the spring, and as he was on his way back he dropped dead.

(97): Janitor at Tompkinsville Drug Co. and Hospital, Tompkinsville, Ky.