

**Joe Mayes**  
**Madison, Arkansas**  
**Interviewed by Miss Irene Robertson**

I was born a slave two years. I never will forget the man came and told Mother she was free. She cooked. She never worked in the field until after freedom. In a few days, another man come and made them leave. They couldn't hold them in Kentucky. The owners give her provisions, meat, molasses, etc. They give her her clothes. She had four children and I was her youngest. The two oldest were girls. Father was dead. I don't remember him. Mother finally made arrangements to go to Will Bennett's place.

Another thing I remember: Frank Hayes sold mother to Isaac Tremble after she was free. She didn't know she was free. Neither did Isaac Tremble. I don't know whether Frank Mayes was honest or not. The part I remember was that us boys stood on the block and never was parted from her. We had to leave our sisters. One was sold to Miss Margaret Moxley, the other to Miss Almyra Winder. (He said "Miss" but they may have been widows. He didn't seem to know--ed.) Father belonged to a Master Mills. All our family got together after we found out we had been freed.

The Ku Klux: I went to the well little after dark. It was a good piece from our house. I looked up and saw a man with a robe and cap on. It scared me nearly to death. I nearly fell out. I had heard about the 'booger man' and learned better then. But there he was. I had heard a lot about Ku Klux. There was a big gourd hanging up by the well. We kept it there. There was a bucket full up. He said, 'Give me water.' I handed over the gourd full. He did something with it. He kept me handing him water. He said, 'Hold my crown and draw me up another bucket full.' I was so scared I lit out hard as I could run. It was dark enough to hide me when I got a piece out of his way.

The owners were pretty good to Mother to be slavery. She had clothes and enough to eat all the time. I used to go back to see all our white folks in Kentucky. They are about all dead now I expect. Mother was glad to be free but for a long time, her life was harder.

After we got up larger she got along better. I worked on a steamboat twelve or thirteen years. I was a roustabout and freight picker. I was on passenger boats mostly but they carried freight. I went to school some. I always had colored teachers. I farmed at Hughes and Madison ever since excepting one year in Mississippi.

I live alone. I get \$8 and commodities from the Sociable Welfare.

The young folks would do better, work better if they could get work all time. It is hard at times to get work right now. The times are all right. Better everything but work. I know colored folks are bad managers. That has been bad for us always.

I worked on boats from Evansville, St. Louis, Memphis to New Orleans mostly. It was hard work but a fine living. I was stout then.