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Interview no. 172

Armond Jackson

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Armond Jackson
INTERVIEWER: Oscar J. Martínez
PROJECT: El Paso-Ciudad Juárez History
DATE OF INTERVIEW: February 4, 1975
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

El Paso Upper Valley farmer, member of Mormon Church.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Battle for Ciudad Juárez in 1919; agriculture in the Ciudad Juárez-El Paso area; Mexican immigration; bracero and mojado deportations of the 1930's.

1 hour.
23 pages.

BICENTENNIAL

M: Mr. Jackson, would you tell me what you remember about your childhood?

J: Well, about the first thing that I remember that is of any importance was the time of the Mormon exodus that was from México. I was nine years old. The Revolution started there. Folks down there...first the women and children, came out on the trains. And then the bridges were burnt and the men were left down there. We lived in El Paso for a while before we went back. I ran around here as a child, going to school, skating and what not.

M: Do you remember what happened in the Mormon colony at that time?

J: Yes. Everybody was supposed to leave. All the women and children left first. And the men were going to come afterwards. They came out later overland, because there were no trains. They come out to Columbus by team and wagons and horseback. At one time, my father and my two brothers were the only people left in the Mormon colony because they had missed the company that they were supposed to come out with. That's quite an experience, there. I don't know whether you want me to tell that or not. Every time they would try to come out, my father and my two brothers, they were picked up and taken back. He had a flour mill. They were taken back to grind wheat for the revolutionaries. They were gathering the wheat out of the granaries around in the valley and hauled up to the mill, and he had to stay there and grind it for them. He

couldn't come out and it was quite dangerous. Till one day, they picked him up and took his team away from him, and he went down to their headquarters, to see the general to get his team back again, as he had done other times. He said to the general, "Why don't you give me a letter so that I can show these fellows so they won't take my horses away from me?" And the general said that was a good idea. And he gave him a letter. He took the letter and come clear to Columbus on it.

M: Were these Villistas?

J: I don't know. I was young at that time. I don't know what they were, if they were Villistas or what they were. I don't think that Villa was operating at that time, maybe he was. I was just a child, I don't know. But they told me that story when we got here, and I recognized that he came out with people, and a black mare that he had on his wagon. They landed up down here and below Ciudad Juárez, on the farm of B. E. Stevens. I used to drive down there as a youngster.

M: Did you come with your family here?

J: Yes, we landed in El Paso one night; it was dark. We came in, women and children; I was a child. That was the first time I'd ever seen street lights. I never will forget that. The street lights were shining on the paved street of South El Paso Street. At that time the train come clear over to the Union Depot; we got off and got a room there on South El Paso. I will never forget those bright lights shining on the streets. That's the first time I ever saw [them]. I guess I was about nine or ten at that time.

M: What did you do after that? What did your family do?

J: We just went down to the farm...Steven's farm just below Cd. Juárez, about half way between Cd. Juárez and San Ignacio.

M: Where is San Ignacio?

J: Well, San Ignacio is now inside of Cd. Juárez. But the city limit at that time wasn't that far down.

M: What do you remember about that place?

J: Well, we were just working on the farm at that time, and my brother-in-law had a regular farm. They didn't raise cotton at that time. There was no cotton in the Valley. They didn't know it would grow here. It was just wheat and alfalfa and corn. That town I called San Ignacio, I have to take that back; it was Zaragoza. San Ignacio is a little farther on...but, anyway, we lived there, I don't know, two or three years. I kind of grew up on that farm from youngster on up; I would come to school in the winter time. I would go sometime down to Colonia Juárez to school. That was the time when we were down there, when Pancho Villa come out to take Cd. Juárez. I was about 14 years old.

M: Do you remember that year?

J: No, I think it was right after the return of the boys from France, after World War I.

M: In 1919?

J: 1919, 1918. There had been grapevine news all summer long that he was going to come and take Cd. Juárez. Everybody had heard it; and even the Carrancistas that were in Cd. Juárez at that time had built barbed wire fence clear around Cd. Juárez with a trench behind it, in preparation for the coming of Villa. Well, nobody

knew when he was going to come. But we were down there kind of close to Zaragosa. One afternoon the garrison from Zaragosa come through our farm, come on up to Cd. Juárez. At that particular time Earl Stevens owned the farm, and he and his wife were on vacation in California. There was me and my older brother, and two younger brothers, and my sister, and my mother, and the housemaid, Carlotta. We were living there on the farm, when the garrison came through there and said that Villa was coming. Well, we didn't know what to do, but we didn't leave. We went to bed that night as usual. Me and my brother were sleeping on the porch. About two o'clock in the morning, there's a couple of men woke us up. Said they wanted three horses, described them; the horses were with other horses that were locked up in our corral. And that they wanted three rifles, described them: two 30-30 long belts and one 30 party Army, U. S. Army. The day before they had come, when the garrison came through there we had taken those rifles and wrapped them up in gunny sacks and buried them in a manure pile. Well, we had to go and dig them up. And getting the horses they wanted. The next morning other troops come in there and took the rest of our horses-- I don't know how many--and about seven cows. And butchered them, butchered the cows and rode the horses.

M: Did they pay you anything for that?

J: No.

M: How did your family feel about that?

J: Well, of course, we didn't like it. But there was nothing that could be done. We were trying to save our own lives. There was nothing we could do. My mother was an awful good bun baker.

She had some experiences in the Revolution further down and knew that the men who were coming in there were hungry. They were really hungry. And they had been travelling through the mountains, living off the land, and they hadn't had much to eat. And she started making sweet cookies and buns and giving them through the screen door. And then they got to where they wanted to come into the house. They weren't satisfied with just passing them out and they finally got in, and we got afraid. My brother and my missionary--at that time we had two missionaries that stayed with us, too. One of them was a Mexican. His name was Abel Paez, and another was a boy from up in Utah. Well, my brother and one of the missionaries started over to their camp to see if they could locate Villa or somebody to restore a little order around our home. And on their way they met General Felipe Angeles. He said that he had no power at all, and [no] jurisdiction over the army outside his own personal bodyguards. But they felt like if he came over there, he could restore order. My brother invited him to come over.

M: Was there disorder?

J: Well, they were going all around the house and they were wanting to get in the house, and we were afraid to let them come in the house because we had my mother in there; my sister, Mrs. Paine, was in there; and also if they came in out of the hills, we didn't know what would happen. First, they were satisfied just taking the goodies out of the door. And then they didn't want that, and so they were getting up to where they were getting out of control. They wanted to get in. They didn't want to stay

outside. They wanted to get into the house. And if they got in the house, we didn't know what would happen. And General Angeles come over there; my brother Lee, he invited him to come after he'd talked with him. And he pitched his tent right in the middle of our front lawn. He had twelve men, well-built men, big, tall, broadshouldered, hand-picked men. And they stayed there day and night. He slept down there, but he spent the whole day inside the house playing our Victrola and eating with us at the table, and talking to us. He was very well educated. He had two boys going to school here in El Paso, at El Paso High School, at that time. Two sons. And it turned out that two of his men were the ones who had come and woke us up at two o'clock in the morning. They were the ones that had our special saddle horses. And General Angeles was the one who rode the best horse that we had. Of course, he offered us the protection. We didn't hold it against him. Our lives were worth much more than what the horses were. He told us that if they should win in Cd. Juárez, win the battle and take Cd. Juárez, that all that we had lost would be repaid. But they didn't win.

They would have won if it hadn't been for the United States troops. They were down there and in that area, and out of place. They cut the fences on all sides. The men that we had that were working for us, some of them had to hide out, because they were really more afraid of them than what we were, almost. They were down there for about five or six days and then one evening, about the sixth day, they started to travel toward Cd. Juárez. Cd. Juárez at that time wasn't nearly as

big as it is now, and the fence went completely around the lower end. And they got located up there. That evening you could see the dust trail they were making, getting clear round, all around Cd. Juárez. The next morning they started shooting. We had a big high barn out there on our corral, and, boy, I couldn't miss that. I had to get up on top of that barn to watch. They cut through the fence. Nobody was in the trench to keep them back.

M: How far was the fence from your house?

J: I would say the fence was four or five miles. It was quite a little ways. At that time, where we lived seemed like it was quite a little ways below Cd. Juárez. But now, Cd. Juárez goes clear beyond that, into Zaragoza. Anyway, they started shooting, and they got into the town. There was a cuartel down in the center of town that had some troops. Then they had a fort up on the hill where the comandancia is now. That was where the main fort [was], where the troops were. Carrancistas. All the men in this cuartel had been in the fort, had left the town part practically abandoned. They come in and they had been out in the hills, and starved and everything. As soon as they got into the center of town, the soldiers and solid men went into the saloons and started having a high time in the stores, looting and what not. [They] left a few youngsters there. In the army there's always a bunch of fifteen, sixteen-year-old kids they would take as troops. You know what I mean. They left those boys out in the street to guard. The Carrancistas regrouped up there and came down and pushed them clear out.

M: How did you find out about that?

J: I could see a lot of it and afterwards, I could tell also from the shooting out there. We had a high barn and it wasn't so far away that I could see when they were chased back out of the city. Well, they regrouped outside. I guess Villa himself and some of his generals got them to regroup and sent them back in this time. They were going right up to the fort, and they had to take that fort, what they called fuerte. I would guess they would have that fort within another hour or so; there was no cannon--nothing but rifles, see? All of a sudden I heard a lot of rapid fire. I knew something else had happened. At that time, as far as they were concerned, they had no cannon. But Fort Bliss had. They spotted some cannon on Mt. Franklin over here. They started to shoot those cannons across to Cd. Juárez. In the outskirts you could see the puffs of smoke and see the shells, where they'd land. At the same time they turned troops across both bridges and threw up some smaller bridges temporarily down there where the cavalry and cannon could come across, down close to our place. They come up right close to our fence. They just pushed them out.

M: The shells landed close to your place?

J: Yes, they landed pretty close to our place. I could see where they'd land.

M: About how far away?

J: Oh, a mile, two miles. I could see the big cloud of dust. In fact, one shell that I saw...a cannon was being pulled by the cavalry. They sent groups of cavalry across the river down below the bridges; and the Villistas were running the ranch there.

We had gone and closed the gate on that side so it would be harder for them to get in. They had tried to open the gate, but they were in such a big hurry that they couldn't get it open as they'd go on by. That was the good thing, I think, that we tangled the gate up tight so they couldn't get in. Or they might have shot us as they went out because they were being chased by American soldiers. They got out on the sand hills. I seen one group out there, and they started to try to make it stand. That was close enough that I could see it. This group of U. S. cavalry came along. They had a cannon with them; whirled that cannon around and shot a shell right at the middle of them. They just scattered like flies. That was the end of that. It didn't take very long for it all to stop. The troops all went back.

I personally felt like they sent those troops over there because they claimed there were too many shells coming into El Paso. Oh, there must have been some shells coming over because there's some shooting this way. But they were prepared for that before Villa ever got there. They had those cannons located there up on the hill, and I think that probably the General of Fort Bliss and the General over in Juárez had already had an understanding before. That's just my personal opinion. I don't know otherwise. In fact, as I understand it, the troops put across were the troops they brought in here. That's what I heard afterwards--[they] had been brought in here purposely for that.

M: Well, now, after that experience, did your family want to stay there?

J: Oh, yes.

M: They still wanted to stay there? No problem?

J: No. In fact, during that experience...now I don't know if I ought to put this in or not. At that time, when they started coming in--they were two or three nights coming in--they didn't all come in one bunch. The Villistas, when they were coming into the Valley, the total that come in there [was] about between five and six thousand men. They come in groups of several hundred at a time. Villa himself come in; I think it was the second or third night after the other men had been in. When he got there, he was camped just outside of our farm. He sent a man, a captain, over to our place. He'd heard that there was a family of Mormons over there and he wanted a good breakfast. He sent over to see if he'd get some. My brother Lee and this missionary, Abel Paez, took him a good breakfast. When they got there, Lee said he was sitting on a mound of dirt. His men were digging a trench around his tent to keep out the rain water. He was sitting there, cracking jokes with them. Lee told him what he'd brought; Lee wasn't too much afraid of him. He had some experience before that, down in México. He wasn't worried. Villa wasn't strong against Mormons; he didn't like Americans, but he figured that Mormons were a different people. He said to Lee, "I understand you're a Mormon." Lee said, "Yes, I'm a Mormon." He turned to Abel and said, "I guess you're a Mormon, too." And he was scared, Abel was. He said, "I'm a Mormon, too." He said, "No, you're too black to be a Mormon." Same result, he took Mormons to be a different race and not American. He had contact with Mormons down there. He had had my wife's father, at one time, in his camp for three days and he didn't maltreat

him at all. Him with his two counselors. Didn't even take the provisions that they had. But they considered Mormons a different race of people than what the Americans were, and they wouldn't think Mexicans were Mormons. Of course, now and then, we'd have a lot of Mexican people that have joined the Church.

M: How long did you stay in that farm after the battle of Cd. Juárez?

J: Well, after that I lived there--my mother and sister, and part of our family lived there up until the time I was married. In the summertime, [I was] working and then I'd go to Colonia Juárez to go to school in the wintertime. That's where I went to school. After we were married...in fact, I went to Utah just before we were married. She was going up there; my father had come back up when Pershing's troops had come back. General Pershing was called back to the state just before World War I, when he was sent to France. At that time, my mill had burned down, shortly after the troops left. It was burnt down by, I believe, by the revolutionaries. They were going through the land. They wanted to destroy anything that would do any benefit for the people that they were fighting.

M: Let me back track a little to the farm there in Zaragoza. At that time, was the area very fertile?

J: It was very fertile.

M: Was there plenty of water?

J: That was before Elephant Butte Dam was built. It was quite seasonal, when water was melting up there; and in fact, we had too much water in the river. Couldn't hardly be contained. There were times when it was short. So far as the ground that

they had to plant, there was plenty of water. I don't know of any time when we were short of water. And the ground, both there and over here, was what I would call a whole lot more fertile than it is now. I've seen oats over there. Of course, we didn't have cotton at that time. We just planted feed; I've seen oats over there, when a man could ride out in a field of oats on a horse, and pick the stem of oats and hold it up to his head.

M: What about after the dam started operating?

J: The Elephant Butte Dam?

M: Yes.

J: When they first put in the Elephant Butte Dam, this whole area here was quite bosque. There wasn't very much of it that had been developed around here and down there, too. Farmers started developing the ground, clearing the ground, leaching it up. I don't know whether you know what leaching it is. You can buy leaching water in wintertime for 10 cents an acre foot. Leaching ground is to build a dam around, a high border around it and fill it, a foot of water in it, and keep it there for a couple of three months. Then it washes the alkaline out of it. Then these drains will take the alkaline out. Did you notice the drainage ditches were in the Valley? That's part of the irrigation system. They put in the drains. Of course, the farmers eventually paid for all of it; even Elephant Butte Dam belongs to the farmers here. The money was advanced by the government to put it in, but the farm land is taxed for it and it is paid off that way. In fact, this ground that is sitting here [Upper Valley, El Paso] was bosque mountain and there wasn't anything here at all. All these areas around here was that way.

I have another brother-in-law, the husband of Mrs. Paine; he developed an awful lot of this ground, working for Zack White. Maybe you've heard of Zack White. Zack White owned this whole area up here. They didn't have anything up here but a herd of goats. He hired my brother-in-law, and then later Mr. Taylor--they were called Paine and Taylor--they done it by teams. They had no old caterpillars and bulldozers to do it with. But they had teams leveling this ground and leaching it out. They had a good job. He paid them salaries for preparing the ground and then let them have all the crops that they could raise on it for two or three years after they got in the cultivation. After that, they were to pay him 1/3 of the crop. Well, that was a good thing. A lot of this ground here was developed through them.

M: When was that?

J: That was around the end of World War I. At that time, I didn't have anything to do with this, practically. After we were married, I worked up here for a while with him. Only that I knew what was going on.

M: What did they start growing when they got their ground in shape?

J: Well, it wasn't very long...I just can't remember what year it was, they started to planting cotton here. They didn't know that the cotton could grow here. As soon as they found out that cotton could grow here, why, cotton became "king" here. Up until then, it was just hay, corn, oats, and wheat. This valley grows good wheat and good corn and good oats. That was all that was raised until cotton came in, and cotton was such a better money crop that they all went to cotton.

M: What about the labor that picked the cotton?

J: Well, I never knew any shortage of labor in those days. There was lots of farm hands who lived on the farm and picked the cotton. There was one time during the Depression...when the Depression hit, the Valley shut down a lot of the gins because they couldn't afford to plant cotton, it got so cheap. The way the farmers, the owners did to keep the families living on the farms was to give them a share of the crops. They advanced them the money and said they'd give them one third of the crops. And the contractor, the man that was operating, would get one third. The owner of the land would get one third. Like Mr. White--Zack White--would get a third, Paine and Taylor would get a third, and their laborers would get one third. Now, all of them lived on the farm, the whole family would get out and work, and pick cotton. That way the family would do a lot more than just by working for wages.

M: Were these mostly Mexican people doing the labor?

J: Yes, it was all Mexican people.

M: Were they local people or were they imported?

J: No, they were local people. I don't think there's anything outside. They were people [who] lived here locally and they'd come over before. When the Depression hit, there was a lot of them, there was too much labor. That's why we had all those repatriados. This road up here would be lined clear up past Anthony with vehicles going back to México, waiting to get across the bridges. Most of them, as they got across the bridges, were broke and didn't have anything. There were

sharks over there; they gave them a little for what equipment they had: their car, truck, or whatever they'd take. Some of them had been farming up here, and they had a little bit of farm tools and what not. Juárez was swamped.

M: Did you know some of these people personally who went back to México during that time?

J: There wasn't any that I knew come here. No, I have to take that back. Anybody that was living on these local farms, I don't know any of them went back because of the arrangement they had. But like I said, they had the arrangement that the farm owners had done to keep them going. But these others that I've seen coming down here, I couldn't help but wonder where in the dickens so many people come from. Now, after I'd get thinking back, probably some of them that came, came in from other areas.

M: Not from around here? There wasn't any big movement of people packing up and leaving?

J: No, that's for sure. My brother-in-law and another farmer, that's one arrangement they had. There wasn't much cotton planted. But the local people did it. And they advanced them money to get their groceries and live on until the crops was harvested, and then they got their part of the crops. That's the only way to get through that. One year there was very little planted, and cotton went down to about 5 cents a pound. It just wasn't worth planting. Banks were going broke.

M: When did it get good again for the cotton?

J: Well, I couldn't tell you. That is, I couldn't tell you from experience. It didn't last really bad for over two or three years, I would say. I was down in México. I was

doing all right down there. I didn't pay too much attention.

I went down there right when it started bad. I lost a piece of ground that I bought here for \$600.00 an acre, and the next year it was down to \$200.00.

M: You took quite a Toss.

J: Yes. Hay that I was raising on that ground when I bought it, I sold for a dollar and a quarter; next year it was down to 25¢.

M: But then you started farming in 1945 here?

J: Yes, after I came back.

M: And you have been doing it ever since. Did you start farming right here on this spot?

J: Yes, when I started farming, I wasn't really farming lands so much, but I started poultry. I had done some construction. Like I told you before, I put in a flock of 500 chickens one year, and that paid so good that I stopped building and went to chickens. I got up to thirty thousand chickens at that time. I got quite a few [and] I bought a farm along with it. And I've been farming ever since. Now, I've sold my chickens, and [I'm] just farming the ground.

M: You've grown cotton most of the time?

J: Up until this last year I'd grown cotton and tomatoes. I used to raise a lot of tomatoes--500 or 600 tons a year for the cannery. One year I raised some onion seeds and outside of that it's been cotton. Until now, I've gone into hay and I'm glad. There's not so much labor with it. I'm getting wise along with my years. Labor conditions are hard now. We don't get anybody who wants to work anymore. And I can get my hay all put up custom, all I have to do is to see that it gets irrigated and the borders taken care of.

M: How was the labor situation when you started growing these crops in the late 40's?

J: It was good. We had several years here, what we called a bracero program. That was very good. I'd like to see that come back in.

M: Did you yourself hire braceros ?

J: Yes, I did hire quite a few braceros.

M: How many did you have at one time?

J: Oh, five or six. I guess I hired six at least. They were good simply because they were out here on contract. You had to have a place for them to stay. But they stayed there and did our work. They weren't chasing around to try to find grass over the fence that was greener. If they left, they had to go back to México. You had to get them through the employment office down there, but that was fine. They worked good. They were the best we ever had, best labor we ever had. The farmers, I think, would all like to see the bracero program come back. I liked them; in fact, when they took it out, farmers could help their braceros get their papers to stay over here, [to] get what they called their green cards. I helped practically all of mine get over, but I discontinued that because as soon as they got their cards, they'd go off. They're just like they are over here. There is only one I didn't help; it was his own fault. He went over there. He had the letter and everything; he was supposed to come over on a certain date, and he didn't come. He got drunk or something. He didn't come, so he didn't get across. But all the rest of them, I helped several of them.

M: How was the treatment of these braceros here in the Valley?

J: I think it was good. I don't know anyone of them maltreated anyplace. I think it was good.

M: Were they paid fair wages?

J: They were paid good wages. They weren't starvation wages. They were paid good wages. Of course, they weren't paid the wages that we get now, nobody was. They were paid good wages. There were plenty of them and ready and willing to come over. They wouldn't be doing that if they weren't getting paid enough. Being that it was under the government, [it] would not allow you to give them starvation wages.

M: Did they do piece work?

J: You could do piece work, contract work, or day work, either one.

M: What was the arrangement here in the Valley?

J: All my arrangements was day work because it was chickens.

There wasn't hardly any way to do piece work, except when I was picking cotton, they were picking by the pound. I don't remember that I did any hoeing or anything like that. Some of the farmers did it that way. But you could either work them contract, piece work, or day work, either one. But I had the chicken operation and I used them mostly just day work. I'd like to see them come back. Of course, they'd have to get more money than they used to get. Quite a bit more.

M: There was a problem here in 1948 that started when the government of México couldn't reach an agreement with the United States government about bracero wages and living conditions. A lot of workers were waiting in Juárez, ready to be signed up as braceros. But because of the problem in not reaching an

agreement, the negotiations broke down, so that the workers became so frantic about the situation that at one point, thousands of them were allowed to come in. This was in October of 1948. Do you remember that? A lot of people just were allowed to come through the bridge and the river illegally. Then they were signed up immediately on this side as braceros, without having gone through the regular channels.

J: I don't know about that. I'm sure I don't. I know one time when there was a couple of years there when the border patrol wouldn't pick them up over here. They'd come through and as long as they stayed on the farm and working, they didn't get on the road and travel, they wouldn't bother them. Maybe that was at the same time. Probably they let them sign up. That was regular wetbacks. But I don't remember just letting them come over and sign them in as braceros. All braceros that I ever got...you had to go ask for them, I think it was thirty days ahead of time, so that they could have them here.

M: Were a lot of illegals here at that time [1940's]?

J: Well, there could have been. I didn't know very many. I'm sure there's a whole lot more now than there was. You can see them all around the country, but I don't think there was during the braceros time. I don't think there was any illegals over here. There was no incentive for people to hire them. Now, they're getting over here and getting into heavy and light construction, where before they come over [and] they just went to farms. But I don't remember anybody having any illegals back in those days. There was one time, that is, until World War I started, there wasn't such a thing as a passport. When World War I

started is when they started requiring passports to come over.

M: In World War I?

J: Yes, that was quite a long ways back; but before that, the border was wide open and free, and you could come over without a passport. Then, because of the war, they started requiring passports, and you had to get passports. I remember I had to get one myself. I was living across the river at that time. I had quite a hard time because I was born in México.

M: You weren't supposed to have been born in México? (Laughter)

J: Well, I was born in México by American parents. In those days, it wasn't so complicated, only that Immigration didn't know how to handle it. They didn't! I had a time getting my passport to cross.

M: What were the problems?

J: Well, they told me that I wasn't a U. S. or a Mexican either!

M: Well, what were you? You didn't belong anywhere? (Laughter)

J: I had to get a lawyer to get me a passport to come over here. My father was an American citizen. He'd taken out American citizenship papers, and my mother was born here. She is an American. But I was born down there.

M: Did other people in the same situation have trouble?

J: Sure, sure. My wife was in the same situation. Instead of going through all that, she took out naturalization papers. All those people born down there had to; I guess maybe a lot of others all over México. There weren't as many as there were in that group. Yes, I had to get a lawyer. I come across, tried to get across. I was down there on that farm. I went to get my mother and tried to get across; they just wouldn't do it and they just

didn't know how to do it. There wasn't anybody in that office that understood the immigration laws; well, enough to actually give me a passport, till I got a lawyer, and he knew more than they did! And they gave me one.

M: When the machines began to be used to pick the cotton, did that change agriculture here? Did it displace a lot of labor?

J: It did. Pickers...it did displace quite a bit of labor. But the price of cotton is what brought the machines. Of course, machines come in to anything: not only cotton, but alfalfa. In fact, we have tomato pickers now. Tomatoes are picked by machine. And any way that the farmers can find to do his work cheaper, why, he'll do it. Machines did do away with a lot of hand labor, but they don't do the work as good as hand labor does. In fact, this last year when cotton was worth more, a lot of people went back to hand laborers, as far as they could get it. They would go back because the price of cotton justified it. They could get more for their cotton for hand-picked than they could for machine-picked. In fact, when you take a bale of cotton in the gin to be ginned, they want to know whether it's hand-picked or machine-picked. Yes, there's a difference. You wouldn't believe it, but a 1/32nd of an inch in the length of the fiber on cotton makes a difference in the price. Hand-picked is better if the pickers are good. Of course, if they are not, they get all the trash. In fact, I know this last year several places were hand-picking as far as they could get hand-pickers, and they had picking machines.

M: But this is an unusual case because the price of cotton justified it. What happened to the labor? Where did those people go?

Did farmers let them go when machines came in, or did they have an arrangement where these people lived on their farms?

J: Well, in the first place, when the machines come in, there were larger farms and there was more land developed. Of course, the lower labor that was doing the hard labor, the hand work, found other jobs in construction and what not. Some got jobs like driving the picker because there were more pickers and more land being put in. Has been up to now. I don't think there is hardly any more because it is practically all taken. But I don't know of any time when... A lot of labor has just gone into the cities to find work, and construction, road work, such as that. A farmer would use more local hand labor now if they were good workers. I guess I ought not to tell you too darn much.

M: No, go ahead.

J: Lots of times they make more on welfare than what they can do through their family and connections, and what not, and stamps and everything. There is too much easy welfare in the U.S. They don't work like they used to work. They just won't do it. I've had tomato pickers that I got from the employment commission down there, that I've had to fire the first day. They'd go down there and get unemployment checks. They'd go on to food stamps and what not. There's a lot of stuff that you probably don't know about, and I probably better not say it.

M: That's part of the history.

J: Oh, it is. I guess you can cut it out; but there's families here that are on welfare because their husbands temporarily abandoned them until they go on the list. Then they stay there. The husband comes back or works some other place and they have

money and they get welfare besides. I know of quite a few instances like that, which isn't right. I believe in welfare when the person needs it. ~~When people need it, it's right.~~ But there's, I would judge, ninety percent of people drawing welfare that shouldn't be.

M: That you very much, Mr. Jackson.

END OF INTERVIEW