

## Interview with Mami Oliver

I don't know too much about my father's parents, but I know he went back to South Carolina when he got the land and brought his mother down here and she died in 1905. We don't exactly know what happened. I know his father's name was Sy Forman and his mothers name was Emma Forman.

No, they were in South Carolina and his father never came down here. He just brought his mother and then his father died.

They were brought over here as slaves I believe

Yes, back then you have to belong to somebody. I think that's where we got our names from (Forman).

Yeah, but not here. She lived in South Carolina. He brought his mother here, and she died here in 1905. We never saw her, because I wasn't born until 1930, and he was way older than my mother. He was sixty (60) something when he married her, I think. We got the children, you know like, Forman, Frank, Maude, Stella, Eva, and I was the last one.

He had six (6) living when he came down here, but he had been married before.

No he didn't bring no children, he left them up there.

No, we don't know nothing about Helen until he got with my mother. He was in South Carolina, and he had lots of people up there. His wife must have died. I don't think he had too many more children because nobody came up and said they were Formans.

Yes, there were five (5) of us, and I was the youngest till he married my mother, and she had about seven (7) miscarriages. I was the last one and I lived.

Holmes. She was a Morgan at first, you know George Morgan (that's my mother). They were also raised in South Carolina. She said her mother died when she was young. And Uncle George, Uncle Frank, and Uncle Robert were living. They didn't like to keep girls, so they would marry them off. She was married to a Johnson, then he passed away, I think. Then she met my father (she was young).

Thirteen, and I think she was about fifteen (15) or (16) when she met my dad. She stayed with him until he died. He was way older than my mother. My sister said he was about in his sixties when he met my mother (she would always call him the old man). He would call her baby.

Let me see, there was Peter, Frank, Maude, Eva and Stella. I had five (5). So there was six (6) of us. He brought all of us down here in 1936. He had always had the land, because they had give him a grant or something. The President made it that each person could have one hundred and sixty-one (161) acres, if you applied for it and stay on it for

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seven (7) years. He built a one (1) bedroom little shack here for us to live in. I have the papers, and it didn't even taken one hundred dollars to build it. But we were glad to have somewhere to stay.

Six (6). My oldest sister is ten (10) years older than me. My next to the oldest sister is seven (7) years older than me. My next sister is five (5) years older than me. My brother is twenty-two (22) years older than me. And my youngest brother a head of me is three (3) years older than me, and he lives in Ft. Lauderdale now. I can remember the ages because I was young and I just kept up with the ages. We all stayed right here and there wasn't no one up her on the hill. There wasn't nothing up here but our one little wood house that Mr. Buddington built for us. And he took a five (5) year lease on the land to cut the gum and stuff. My daddy cut wood. He made his living cutting wood (pine wood). He would sell it by the \_\_\_\_\_. He cut oak wood off of his land and sold it by the \_\_\_\_\_. In 1930, Mr. bought Buddington of his land (he didn't buy it, he paid taxes on it). Four dollars was a three (3) year tax I think he said. He took eighty acres for the tax he paid for papa and then he sent him a letter stating that he knew someone that wanted to take the other eighty acres from him but papa wouldn't sell. He said he wanted to keep something but he had to do it because he didn't have the tax money and Mr. Buddington paid it for him. He got half of the land for the twelve dollar tax, but he didn't get the best part. We got a clay pit and Camp Blanding bought clay from us to build Camp Blanding (to harden the ground). They bought like \$3,000.00 worth of clay from us. We thought we were rich then. Papa put a fence around the place and bought my mother a brand new wood stove. He bought me a doll with a dress and a trunk. He bought us a lot. He bought my brother a bicycle. That was in 1939 ( I think), when they discovered we had the clay pit. Mr. Buddington thought it was on his land and he came with the Army Engineers from Camp Blanding and when they surveyed it, it showed it was on Papas land. He didn't get that part. That was my daddy's land where the museum was at. Mr. Buddington took it and cut it right in half. He didn't think that valued at anything, but it shore helped us. And we sold after my daddy died. We sold clay (we would divide the money). All the contractors bought clay from us. My daddy give the right of way back then and there was no name of the road then but we gave the right of way. Other people was getting money but we didn't get any money. He thought he was giving something to let them come through and he give the right of way to the light people ( to put lights in). We had one (1) little light line to the house. No one else had lights until then. My daddy sold Jackson's daddy two (2) acres over in the corner. He told my mother that we needed some neighbors. We use to walk down to church in Middleburg with them. That's how they got up here. All of us would walk to school together. Mr. Ed had about seven (7) girls and two (2) boys. We went to a one (1) room school. We didn't have an inside toilet in our school. We had to use an outhouse. We had to go way in the back of the white school to get water, because we didn't have any. The boys had to carry it back to the school. The girls had to keep the school clean.

My daddy would plow with a mule and cut wood. People would pay him to break up the ground. He never worked for a boss, except when he worked for the railroad. He made his own living. I don't know how he did it, but he made it. My sister and I think my

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father got here by working on the railroad. Then he must of settled. When he died we found a box with cards that people wrote him from 1891 and 1892.

Me, my sister and my brother each had seventeen acres and we gave a half acre to the church.

My brother is Private Investigator in Ft. Lauderdale. He knows a lot of things, but I don't like the kind of business he does because it's dangerous. He said the lord would take care of him. He doesn't work for anyone, he has his own business.

My dad didn't argue too much, he would just say what he meant. His cussing words were dog your skin and dig it all to the devil.

There were no cars back then for us. We had a mule and a wagon, and I was scared of that wagon. We always kept a mule or a horse (when one would die, we would get another one). It kept us going.

My daddy would go down to this Blacksmith's shop and we were scared to go by because they had all that stuff hanging on the wall. They said he killed people and put them up there. We had to walk by there for eight (8) years.

My brother went to school in St. Augustine (black college) and then went into the Army.

We weren't aloud to ride the bus, we had to walk to school. We thought that that was the way things were.

We at pork-n-beans, tomatoes and canned meat. We had to carry our own bread to school because they didn't furnish our bread. Sometimes my mom would fix us a lunch. We were never hungry because my mama canned up everything. We didn't have much meat, but we always had fish.

I've already given most of my land to the family. I still have about seven (7) acres left. My father died in the old house. We added three (3) rooms to the old house. We got our clock from my grandmother.

They named me after a lady in South Carolina. They (her and her daughter) came way down here to see my mother from South Carolina. They liked my mother. They would give her food and other stuff. I was six (6) years old and she would come with those big pans of food. Everything that was left, they would give to my mother. My mom was a good cook.

I cooked thirty-three (33) years at the Moose Haven and I got a plaque. I retired because I was tired of working.

My daddy had the whole field with cane and corn and he would make syrup. We would have to haul the cane up here and strip it. Then we would carry it down to Middleburg to

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Mr. Padgett and they would make syrup. I didn't want it because it looked like dirt. When they cooked it, they skimmed that stuff off the top. Sometimes he would get about 50 gallons and he would give it to the people that came around, even the white friends. He would give everything away.

I didn't want to work in the field cause I didn't like the dirt.

We had plenty of food. My mother had plum trees all the way up and down the road. Now we don't have any plum trees. We had pear trees and peach trees. She planted everything. We've already cut down about ten (10) trees that she planted. We cut the camphor and magnolia trees to build a house because there was no room.

We had a pretty good life. I would hear people testifying in church on how they didn't have food. We always had something to eat. I might not of been the best, but it was good to us. I don't remember a day going hungry. Mama was a good cook. Everybody like her checkerboard cake. She put different colors of dough in it and put a rack over it. People would bring us bread so we could give it to the other people.

The lord is still blessing us. My brother in law worked at the Red Barn in Orange Park and he would bring us meat because they wouldn't sell it to the black people. Now we can go in there and sit down and eat. That was a difficult time if you think back on it now.

If Mr. Huntley had any left over's in the store he would send them to papa. Papa had a credit at Mr. Huntley's store, so when we were walking home, me and my brother would go in and get us some crackers.

I was the only black person that worked at the Historical Convention. I worked there for five (5) years. Every time something historical happens, they call on me. We made a video for Patterson Elementary.

My daddy would ride his horse to Middleburg and we didn't have saddles so he threw a sack over the horses back to make it soft. My dad got threw from the horse and he started swelling up. He lived about three (3) months after that. He wouldn't go to a doctor. He said make me a \_\_\_\_\_. Some peppermint and moon shine whiskey but my mother wouldn't let him. She said your not going to make no drunks out of my children. He didn't drink much but he would make medicine out of it. My mother wouldn't touch no drink and I never drank any in my life either. My sister didn't drink. My mama told us so much about what whiskey could do to you, so we let it alone. Papa would get it and put stuff in it like peppermint to cut his cold but mama wouldn't let us use it.

My father died in 1951, right here in the old house. My father didn't suffer none. He would be laughing and talking with me. I was in Jacksonville and my sister called me and told me that papa wasn't feeling too well. I was going to take him some money so mama could get him something. When I got there, the undertaker had already taken him away. It was a sad time but we knew our daddy lived a good life. He didn't never do

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nothing. He couldn't read or couldn't write. My sister and brother would help get us clothes when my father passed away. I was 21 years old when my father passed away.

I was 17 years old when I get married but I got rid of him because he wasn't nice. I was married to my other husband for 42 years, he came home from the Army. He was my friend when I was 16 years old, but he went to California where his sister was. Then he went to the National Guards and then he went to the Army. He went to Germany for three (3) years or more. He was all over the place. He was a Sergeant when he came back. He made is grades. He got an honorable discharge from the Army.

My son went to the National Guards and he's already got a discharge. He had to go once a month for two (2) days to Gainesville. He did real well in school. He played basketball and football at Middleburg High School. He also played baseball. He went to college for three (3) years on a basketball scholarship. He went two (2) years to FCCJ and one (1) year to Avert College in Barnesville, Virginia. We went to North Carolina to see him play. They paid for our room. I thought we were going to have to pay for it. We stayed in the Laquinta motel and it was nice. The coach wrote us nice letters about him.

I was about thirteen (13) or fourteen (14) and I worked for Ms. Hall. She showed me how to cook in the restaurant. Her name was Stella Hall. She had three (3) daughters. Her daughter Margaret use to loan me skirts when we went to dances. Ms. Hall would go out in the back and catch a chicken, ring it's neck, skin it and clean it so fast. We cooked all kinds of food. It was called Hall's Restaurant. She came from Alabama. I was going to school and working there after school.

Then I got with this Navy family when I was about eighteen (18) years old. I worked out at the air base, and I like that. I liked the Navy people. I went to Alexander, Virginia with one of them, Commander Durflinger. He was a commanding officer over at Cecil Field. He took me to Washington and he worked at the Pentagon in 1953. He carried me to the Bureau of Vital Statistics. He carried me to the Mint building where they make money. He carried me across the Potomac River. We would go sight seeing. Then I worked for Dr. Weaver in the Navy. When Durflinger came back to Cecil Field, I came home because my mother died in 1954. She lived for about two (2) weeks after I came home. They wanted me to come back down there but I didn't want to go anywhere. I wanted to be with my sisters and brothers. He called me when I was working at Moose Haven and he wanted me to come see him out at Cecil Field. We went out there one night and went to his house. If I hadn't been working, I would of went everywhere with them. He brought me gifts back from everywhere he went. They went to New York and I stayed with the children for about two (2) weeks. I would make the girls hamburgers and the little boy would eat raw hamburger meat. We had a good time. I worked for the navy for six (6) years. My dad would send us money when he lived in South Carolina. He was