

Subject: Dorothy Jean Mincey

Interviewer: Meredith Stack

Date: May 2015

Location: Mrs. Mincey's house, Cullowhee, NC.

Duration: 54:00

### **Start of Interview**

MS: So I'm Meredith, and actually, my history teacher--she told me that you taught her, Pam Shuler. What's her maiden name, do you remember?

DJM: Yes, her maiden name was Harris. Her father was the assistant principal and then he was principal up at Blue Ridge where Jack worked later,

MS: Is Jack your son?

DJM: Yeah, he's my baby. He's the youngest of five, but I lost one with cancer when he was forty-two, but he had three sons so I have three wonderful grandsons.

MS: Are those your only three grandsons?

DJM: Oh no, I have nine. Jack has one, and Jim and Francis has one-- the PE teacher—they have one Mitch.

MS: So were you born around this area?

DJM: I was born in Swain County. And I lived there--my Dad died when I was four, and my mother sold out and bought the property here when I was ten so I've lived here since '37, 1937.

MS: So all this is your property?

DJM: We had forty acres originally, well momma had twenty five. Wymer and I bought eight here and seventeen up here. We had forty, and then about three years ago I gave Jim and Jack about twenty of it, divided it between those two boys. So I still have twenty.

MS: What has changed around here?

DJK: Everything. When we moved here, I lived in that house down there on the road—down, here, this way. When we first came, we didn't even have electricity. We had had electricity in Swain County, and mama had a washing machine and all this stuff. Nobody in the whole creation here had electricity here. They had it at Western because they made it at that dam—that dam at Cullowhee. Well they used to make electricity there for the campus.

MS: So, you guys did not have electricity?

DJM: We did not have electricity until 1940. In 1939 they started building the Glenville Dam, and they wanted to come across our land with a power line to take up there for the workers. They had built a lot of little houses for them to live in, and they wanted to take power to them. And, mama wouldn't let them go across our land unless they gave us electricity so they gave us

electricity, and our neighbors didn't get it for three or four more years. We finally got electricity. To wash clothes without a washing machine you had to use a scrub board.

MS: Where did you get water?

DJM: We had a spring down there—that's where we got water. Of course, now I have a deep well.

MS: How did you take baths and such?

DJM: In a wash tub in the kitchen, twice a week on Wednesday night and Saturday.

MS: So, twice a week you had baths.

DJM: Otherwise we washed our feet or took a cat bath, but we'd get in that wash tub twice a week—that was it--in the kitchen. Of course the reason we were in the kitchen because that's where the heat was--the old cook stove. See we didn't have electricity, we had a wooden cook stove, put wood in the stove.

MS: So are you the only child?

DJM: No, I had a sister. Well, my daddy had older half brothers and sisters, but they were all married by the time we left Ela and came up here. So it is just my sister and I. Momma just had two children.

MS: And she's younger than you?

DJM: No, she's older, and she lives in Maryland. She owns the house down there. Momma gave me the land, and Marie the house. I thought Marie was going to use it as a vacation home, and she's had Jack to rent it for her ever since momma died in '72, which has been a long time. She's rented it to college boys. There's four boys living in it now.

MS: Well, that is a good idea.

DJM: Well, the mama kept, the last four years or five years she lived, she let boys live with her after my stepfather died. She let boys stay with her.

And then in 1939 the flood came

MS: What was the flood?

DJM: The flood--There were downspouts or whatever back on Caney Fork and up in Canada, and the river got up halfway to the windows in our house. Everything we had was gone.

MS: Everything?

DJM: And, Our car washed from behind the house down into the hay field, way down there in the field. It was awful.

MS: How old were you then?

DJM: I guess I was in the seventh grade, I had started the seventh grade, so I guess I was eleven years old. I was nine in the 5<sup>th</sup>. I started school when I was five. My mother was a teacher and my daddy had died, and she didn't have anybody to leave me with so she took me to school. And, I did first grade when I was five. So I was always younger than everybody in my class, but I'm now eighty seven.

MS: What year were you born?

DJM: In 1927, the day after Christmas—December 26, 1927.

MS: What do you remember most about your childhood?

DJM: Working.

MS: Where did you work?

DJM: Here, here, here, hoeing corn.

MS: Farming and stuff?

DJM: Farming, Yes. My mother was a school teacher, but school didn't last very long way back then. I went to school, of course, at Cullowhee, and my first, fifth and sixth grade were in an old classroom building that was where Brown cafeteria is now. And, I don't think they use Brown cafeteria anymore.

MS: At Western? I don't know where that is?

The only things that were at Western back then... And then when I was in seventh grade the WPA—which was something that President Roosevelt did-- they came and built the rock gym, Breese Gym, they built the auditorium, and they built the McKee building. And we moved to the McKee building. That is where we went to high school. We had the auditorium for graduation. We had a few little basketball games over in that rock gym. And the Baptist church was built about that time. But the Stillwell building wasn't there, that used to be a football stadium—where the Library is. The library used to be upstairs in the Joyner building—I don't know if you have even heard of the Joyner Building. It was up on the hill.

MS: Wow, that is crazy. So you went through middle school and high school?

DJM: Well, I went through middle school at the classroom building at Cullowhee, and I went to high school at the McKee building in Cullowhee.

MS: How many were in your class?

DJM: I think there were fifty two. And I looked it up not too long ago, and there's only sixteen of us left living, two boys and the rest of them are girls.

MS: Only 6 left living?

DJM: Sixteen, but only 2 boys.

MS: Well, I think girls live longer than boys.

DJM: Well, my husband died eight years ago of course he was eighty six, he was seven years older than me.

MS: So, what were your parent's names?

DJM: My momma's name was Maude Wiggins Sutton Sherrill. My dad was Andrew Jackson Sutton, and we named Jack after him. That is the reason Jack's Jack. My husband's name was Wymer Lee so we named Jack, Jackson Lee for his granddaddy and his daddy.

MS: Oh, I like that. When I was doing research on you another name came up, Bonnie Mincey came up.

DJM: She's my other daughter in law. She's the one that married my son that died.

MS: OK

DJM: The one that died of cancer.

MS: Of Cancer, yeah.

DJM: She used to teach at Cullowhee also, she taught Special Ed. I taught fifth grade. Francis taught PE. And she taught Special Ed. There were three Mrs. Minceys, and they called me the old Mrs. Mincey. And they called Francis the PE Mrs. Mincey. And Bonnie was the Special Ed. Mrs. Mincey. And there's still a Mrs. Mincey over there. See Trish is still over there. Bonnie and Bill moved away, and there was just two of us. And then I retired, and there was just Francis and then Trish started teaching over there.

MS: So teaching has been part of your family? Do you know how long? Did your grandma teach?

DJM: No,

MS: But your Mom did?

DJM: My mother was the first one, she had a brother that taught school.

MS: What grade did your Mom teach?

DJM: Everything from one through eight.

MS:

DJM: And I taught everything from one through eight at one time or another. Back then you didn't have maternity leave and when you got pregnant you had to quit teaching after four months. You were not even allowed to wear maternity clothes and go to school. You had to quit teaching. And you just lost your job. So, I hadn't finished college when I got married and Deborah as born. So I had to go back a year to college, and I finished college. I was still living with my mother because my husband was in the Navy. I hired somebody to stay with her, with the baby, and I taught school at Glenville, the first grade. My certificate was one through eight.

And I taught first grade. And then, the next year I had another baby, Barbara, my other daughter was born. And of course I lost my job, so then after she was born, I substituted at the McKee building for about four months that year. But then the next year after that I had to go to Waynesville-- there were no vacancies in Jackson County, and so I had to go to Waynesville and teach the seventh grade. Of all the bad things on earth that was it.

MS: Yeah, right in the middle of middle school.

DJM: I got the low section of 11 seventh graders. They were almost special ed they were so bad. And mean, oh my goodness, they were some of the meanest boys on earth. Anyway, that was my day. And the next year I came back to Jackson County and I taught in Canada--up in Canada. They had just put in a new school up there, consolidated a bunch of schools. I taught up there.

DJM: And then Jim was born and I lost my job again.

MS: Oh my goodness. So, how many times did you lose your job?

DJM: Every time I had a baby. Five times.

MS: Five times.

DJM: So I lost my job five times, and then I went to John's Creek after he was born, and then I started at Cullowhee. No, I didn't. We went to Virginia. We bought a house in Norfolk, Virginia, and I taught four years in Virginia while Wymer was in the Navy. And then he [Wymer] got recruiting duty in Colombia, South Carolina, and I had, Bill was born. And the next year Jack was born, and then we moved back here. He [Wymer] retired in 1960 from the Navy, and Jack was born the year he retired. After twenty, he had twenty years in the Navy,

MS: Did you move a lot because of that?

DJM: No, we only moved...we went to Norfolk and then we moved to Columbia and then we moved back here.

But I had to teach in Waynesville in 1960 the year we built the house, I had to teach in Waynesville to get back into the county--another seventh grade.

MS: Oh, my goodness. Was it better this time?

DJM: Oh, it was a pain in the neck. Anyway. I taught. We had to have money. We just built a house and had five children. I had to. Then, the next year I was at John's Creek--for two years. And I taught the first, second, and third one year and the fifth, sixth, and seventh the next year. And then I got to Cullowhee, and I taught the fifth grade for twenty-three years.

MS: Twenty-three years, that is a long time.

DJM: I had thirty four years in all. I didn't pay back North Carolina for those Virginia years. They wanted too much money for it, so I just taught 4 more years in North Carolina. I retired on 30 years. But I had to have a Masters. The first group to get Masters from Western. I got my Masters in 1953.

MS: And you went to Western?

DJM: I got my BS degree from Western as well as my Masters.

MS: I bet Western was so small.

DJM: It was.

MS: Do you know when Western first started?

DJM: My mother went to Cullowhee normal school. It was a two year normal school, and then she started teaching after two years. Then she started taking classes in Chapel Hill and different places. And the reason I know so much about wildflowers is she took a class in botany at Chapel Hill one summer, and she knew the names of every little weed and every little everything.

MS: That is awesome. I love plants.

DJM: I learned them from her.

MS: Do you love plants? When I walked in I noticed all your plants.

DJM: I cross-stitch. That one right beside you. That is an afghan I did.

I made six quilts. Well, really I made seven or eight quilts. I gave one for each of my kids—wildflower quilts. I have also painted them in oil painting and water colors.

MS: So have you always loved watercolors and painting?

DJM: My husband was allergic to oil paints, and I used to paint. We had a camping trailer, and I used to use oil pants and paint out in the camping trailer.

MS: When did you first start painting? How old were you?

DJM: I never used any oils—well I was teaching at Johns Creek, I guess it was about 1965, somewhere around there or '62. A friend of mine was a real artist, and she taught up there. And she, come here I will show you what she did for me.

She did those—the two birds. And then she helped me do one and I have got out--we have a cottage at Big Ridge and I have them out there.

But, then I did these.

MS: I love those.

DJM: That is an oil. And then, I did these over here.

MS: Are these all your favorite flowers?

DJM: Yeah. I then I did the quilts. I made six of these.

MS: Is this where you sleep?

DJM: No, I sleep way back here. And I did this in cross stitch. And this in cross stitch. I did this one of birds. My husband loved birds, and I did that one of birds.

MS: Was it hard?

DJM: It took a while. We used to have a trailer at the beach and I did those when we had that trailer down there, then we sold it.

DJM: Those are my six grandsons. This is Jared. He was a little bitty thing. This is Mitch, Francis's son.

MS: Francis is?

DJM: She is the PE teacher. That is her son. His Dad worked for the power company and Mitch now has a job with the power company.

That is all six of my grandsons when they were babies.

MS: Oh, Did you make that quilt in there?

DJM: No, I didn't make that one.

MS: So, do you have any watercolor paintings in here?

DJM: I have got one or two. Those two back there in the corner—they are watercolors.

Oh, I love this. Is that an African violet?

DJM: No, it is an Iris and a yellow Ladyslipper. A dwarf iris. And these two are watercolors—there is a trillium and a jasmine. And this is a jasmine. And these are cross stitch.

And those big long things are cross stitch. This one is flower and this one's birds. They are supposed to be bell pulls. I decided to have them matted and framed so they would not get dirty.

MS: I like that.

DJM: Then, I made this Afghan. I did this one when my son was sick.

MS: So, you just get a normal blanket?

DJM: No, you buy it's already like that. I just did the cross stitching.

That was hard to do because you could not pull the thread real tight because it would go underneath these and hide. I had a hard time doing this.

MS: This one looks like it was really hard—because of like all the small. These are all really good. That is really cool. Do you sell your cross-stitch stuff?

DJM: No, I give it to my children. I have done all kinds of Christmas stuff. I made them all 6 Santa Clauses a piece and all kinds of things.

MS: See, I really like art.

DJM: I also have a garden.

MS: You also have a garden, too?

DJM: Down over the hill. I went down this morning and sprayed my tomatoes. I have two rows of potatoes, two rows of onions, and a row of tomatoes. And I have some cabbage and potatoes in a row together. I have two rows of beans, two rows of okra, squash. I went down yesterday and found some bugs hatched on my potatoes and I even found some on my tomatoes. So, I went early this morning and sprayed everything.

MS: With pesticides?

DJM: Yes, And also I mix my tomato blight stuff with my pesticides. I sprayed. I sprayed everything down there.

MS: Wow, I can't believe you're still doing that kind of stuff

DJM: Everybody in my Sunday school class thinks I'm crazy because I still mow the lawn. And I'm eighty seven years old.

MS: You are really healthy.

DJM: Most of them quit when they're eighty, but I do have a lady vacuum for me because my left shoulder hurts, hurts me to vacuum. I can't wash windows. I can't raise my left arm. When my daughters are both going to come in July for a week so I am going to have them do the windows.

MS: So everything else you do?

What church do you go to?

DJM: Cullowhee Baptist Church.

MS: Have you always gone to that church?

DJM: I joined when I was twelve years old.

MS: Twelve years old?

Where is that at?

DJM: Next to Western's Library.

MS: So has your church changed a lot since you were little?

DJM: Nobody goes to church anymore for some reason. I don't know. At one point we'd put chairs in the aisle. Western used to have their commencement in our church when it was brand new and they didn't have an auditorium, you know, they didn't have anywhere to have it--of course it was Western Carolina Teachers College.



MS: So that is what it was called? For teachers only?

So would you say there's more older people there at your church right now?

DJM: We've got a few younger people but not many. And it's pathetic. And a friend of mine goes up to the Tuskasegee Baptist, and she said there's only twenty-seven [members] at their service last Sunday.

MS: That is not a lot at all.

DJM: We have more than that, thank goodness, but not many more. We probably have sixty, which is terrible. I mean, people just don't go. But we still have twelve in our Sunday school class. And they come. We go. We usually go every Sunday unless we are sick. So, we have twelve of us. We range in age from about seventy-five to ninety two. My best friend is ninety-two.

MS: Really, Is it a girl or guy?

DJM: Oh, it's a lady. She taught school with me. Frank Watson's mother. Pokey Watson. I don't know if you knew any of the Watson kids or not. No, they have already graduated.

MS: Heather and Danielle Watson? Twins?

DJM: No.

MS: We have Watson sisters at our school.

DJM: No, her grandchildren have already finished.

DJM: But, she taught school with me at Cullowhee. She taught at Scotts Creek and then at Cullowhee. I taught fifth grade and she taught sixth grade.

MS: Do you remember what a normal day was like in the school when you taught?

DJM: We didn't get out of school as early as they do now. We started at eight in the morning and got out around 3:30. Now, they start at 8:00 and are out before 3:00. I pick Jared up at about 10 until 3:00. I have to go over there about 2 o'clock and sit there for forty-five minutes. He wants me to be number 1 or 2. I went yesterday, and there were 7 in front of me already, and I got there at 2:05.

MS: So, you taught Science and ...

DJM: I taught everything, all subjects.

MS: How did you do the worksheets? You know how you can print out worksheets now?

DJM: When I first started teaching we had a pan of jelly-like stuff, that you would put a pan down with a lot of ink on it, and you'd make a print on it. Then you would lay papers on it...that I forgot what they call it—hexagraph, I believe was what they called it, and then eventually we got mimeograph machines. But to start with...years, and years ago we didn't have things like that.

MS: That is what I figured.

MS: Did the classrooms have heaters? Did it get really cold during the day?

DJM: I never did teach where there wasn't a heating system. There was always a heating system. Now, my mother taught at schools back when she was young and they had to build their own fires. They had a big stove in the middle of the classroom, and they had to build their own fires. They would carry water from springs nearby and use a dipper and a bucket for the kids to drink.

MS: They all shared the water?

DJM: Yes, everybody used the same dipper. It is a wonder everybody didn't stay sick all the time. But that was back in the 20s.

MS: So how many students were usually in your classroom?

DJM: Thirty or thirty-two. Once in Virginia, when I was teaching in Virginia the school got so big I once had fifty- four by Christmas time.

MS; You had 54 and it was just only you?

DJM: In my classroom. I even had to move my desk out in the hall because I had to use the sink counter as a desk. There was no room for anything. I had 54 kids. But then after Christmas time, we went on shifts, and I taught from seven in the morning until twelve o'clock, and then I helped the other teacher for two hours. She came in at 10 and helped me a little and then she taught until 4pm in the afternoon. But we used the same classroom.

MS: You had 54 in your same classroom. You were the only teacher? Were they well-behaved? Or no?

DJM: All you could do was give busy work, you couldn't do much else. You couldn't do much else. But then we went on shifts, and it was okay. And then they built a new building for the next year so we had more space.

MS: What were the buildings like? What were they made out of?

DJM: Brick, just like they are now.

MS: So how was the classroom set-up? Do you remember that?

DJM: Well, the kids were usually in straight rows, and the teacher had a desk was up front, usually.

MS: What do you remember most about teaching?

DJM: When I first started teaching the desks were fastened to the floor up in Glenville. They were those desk where you sat in one and the person's book were in the back of you. And those were bolted to the floor, those desks were. That was the only year I taught where they desks were fastened to the floor and you couldn't move them.

I always kept mine in rows. Some people put them in bunches and all kinds of ways, but I guess I was old fashioned. It was hard to keep them from cheating off each other anyway.

MS: Same now, kinda.

DJM: Right.

MS: What else has changed since you were younger?

DJM: Automobiles, nobody had one hardly.

MS: So how did you get to school?

DJM: Well, I rode a school bus. And my mother when we first moved to Cullowhee she didn't have a car, and she rode with somebody else to go to work. But then after a while my stepfather—they got a car, and he finally taught her how to drive because she had never driven and she was getting old then. And it was hard for her to learn but she finally learned. And then the flood came and washed the car down in the mud. And we drove that same car after the flood. The water went down. You could beat on it and the dust would fly out of it where the mud.

MS: Where the mud had been. Is that the Tuckasegee down there? And that's what flooded?

DJM: Yeah.

MS: And you said you lost everything?

DJM: Yep, that's it, well we carried everything. When the water got to the front porch, They carried the mattresses and the cushions of the couches and the living room furniture upstairs. We carried everything upstairs and by then we were wading in water to get out of the house. And we took an oil lamp, we didn't have electricity, we had an oil lamp, and we came and stood on the porch of that little building behind the house. And it was pouring the rain. At two o'clock in the morning is when we waded out of that house. It was nighttime. And when daylight came it was beginning to go back down. The people that lived across the hill from us came across the hill to see about us. We had a big barn here in this field, and it washed away. And our horse was in the barn. Well we didn't find it for about three days, and finally we found the horse. It would not step in a mud hole for the rest of its life.

MS: It was so scared. It was traumatized by it.

DJM: It had been in that flood. But the people across the hill came over and invited us to have breakfast, so we went over there. When we got back to the house, my mother and stepfather worked seventeen straight hours with wheelbarrow and shovels getting the mud out of the house so it wouldn't ruin the hardwood floors.

MS: There was that much mud in the house?

DJM: In some rooms it was eight inches deep. And they had to haul it out with a wheel barrow because we had oak floors and they didn't want them to get ruined. The people across the river, they just left theirs and moved away, stayed with an uncle or something. She had four boys. The Red Cross came through and gave them all new furniture. My Dad told them that we still had

three meals a day and we didn't need anything. Our dining room furniture—it was veneer—it was all curled up. The sewing machine. Every piece of furniture in the house that was wood had buckled up and we used it for several years until momma replaced it later.

MS: You guys used your stuff wisely.

DJM: We raised most of our food.

MS: You had a farm?

DJM: This was the farm.

MS; You had an actual farm?

DJM: We produced our own food on the farm. We had two cows and one horse, chickens and pigs.

MS: Did you eat the pigs?

DJM: Every fall of the year we would kill pigs.

MS: Did you kill the cows too?

DJM: Send the calves to market, over to Bradleys toward 441 in that cutaway, there was a meatpacking place and we could take it over there and get it processed.

MS: Did your mom make your own clothes?

DJM: Yes, such as they were. She was not a very good seamstress.

MS: She wasn't?

DJM: No. We didn't have many clothes. We had one pair of shoes a year, usually. We went barefoot in the summer.

MS: Isn't that crazy, how different it is now? I don't know how many shoes I have.

DJM: I have a closet full, but anyway. When I grew up, we had one pair of shoes a year. Brown Girl Scout shoes. She made Marie and I wear old knee anklets. Hated them. No one else in school wore anklets. We would take those big long things and fold them up under our feet and stick them under our shoes. \

MS: Because you were embarrassed.

DJM: We didn't want those old knee socks. She tried to keep us from freezing.

The funniest thing, my friend she said her mother made her underwear out of flour sacks. Mama made petticoats out of flour sacks. Because we bought flour in a big bag back then.

She said, some little girl was swinging on a swing. And a little old boy yelled and said he saw self-rising. Evidently, the little old girl's mother hadn't rinsed the "self-rising" out of the flour sack. And he could see self-rising still written on her underwear.

MS: That is so funny. Did you have a bunch of clothes made out of flour sacks?

DJM: I don't know. Mama used to go up to there to Blackwood Lumber Company and there was what you called a commissary, and she would go up there and pay ten cents a yard for cloth to make us a dress or two. Cobble it up. They weren't very well made but, anyway, that's what we wore. I usually had three dresses a year.

MS: Three dresses a year...Did you wear pants?

DJM: No. Girls didn't wear pants.

MS: Girls didn't wear pants?

DJM: Not back then. Teachers didn't wear pants. I remember when I first started teaching we were allowed to wear pants. You had to wear a top that came to your finger. You had to stand up, and your top had to come to your fingers, where your fingers go, right there. So this friend and I got us a pattern and we made about four pairs of pants a piece and we made vests that came that length. And then we put different blouses with them. And we had about four outfits that we wore the whole year with those vests.

DJM: Crazy world?

MS: That is kind of strict.

DJM: That it was. But that is the way things were.

MS: Did the kids have uniforms or anything?

DJM: No.

MS: Did you guys pray in school?

DJM: Yes, we always had a Bible story every morning, and we always said the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance until the government decided we couldn't do that anymore. So, I haven't pledged to Allegiance in my latter years because you weren't allowed to say the Lord's Prayer because of the different denominations.

Jack made that pretty vase up there on the mantle.

MS: I was looking at that.

DJM: And he made those two little bowls on my TV.

MS: How does he do that?

He has a shop up behind his house. Wymer and I bought him a lath before Wymer died, He took it up to school at Blue Ridge before he had his shop. We spent \$6000 dollars on that lathe—it was a big one. He turns bowls. He is very gifted.

MS: Does he sell them?

DJM: Yes, That is about a \$400 dollar vase.

I found a glass tube thing at Walmart that fit right down in it. I used flowers for church in it once. You can't put water in it. I have a vase down inside of it. I had another one that was larger than that and I took it to Ray's Florist shop and had them put artificial flowers in it. And it was gorgeous. I brought it back home, and I didn't have anywhere to put it. So, I gave it to Jack and Trish. He had given it to me originally.

MS: So what is your favorite kind of plant?

DJM: I don't know. Yellow Ladyslippers, I guess. I have two kinds of Yellow Ladyslipper. I have got the babies and the big ones. Out the back of my house, they bloomed. On the big ones there were 16 blooms and on the little ones there were 22 ones. I have never seen the baby ones in any wildflower book. They always just say Yellow Ladyslippers. Maybe they don't even know there is that variety. But we found them out on Big Ridge. We had a hundred and some acres up on Big Ridge. We built the cottage in 1988, but we had an old camp since about 1970. And we bought the property in 1970, and we had an old shack that we lived in.

MS: So you own this land and that land?

DJM: Yeah, and also land in Georgia. We bought fifty-six acres in Georgia.

MS: How did you guys get that much money to buy all that property?

DJM: My husband retired from the Navy, and then he was realtor. He was in real estate. And, I was teaching. But in Georgia, we've got a two bedroom, two bathroom trailer, and they go down there and deer hunt.

MS: Do you guys still have that?

DJM: Yes, we still have that.

MS: Are these some of the books you made? Did you take a picture of all these flowers in your backyard?

MS: No, my friend Ethrie Chancellor did the pictures. And I did the cross stitch patterns.

MS: You made these patterns?

DJM: Yes.

MS: Was it hard to make?

Well, I used graph paper and drew it on there and then had to figure out the colors, different colors. And I cross-stitched them and then she made a picture of the cross-stitch. The little picture is the one that shows the colors.

That's Cullowhee lilies--Down in our property in Georgia, there is a whole swamp full of those Cullowhee lilies. Now, they are selling those for people to plant. The Atamasco lily, that is the Cullowhee lily. I have brought them from Georgia to here and after one year, they died. I have never been able to grow them here. They like a moist place and my hill is too dry. Down there in Georgia it is almost by a little creek—a swampy area where they grow.

MS: What is your favorite kind of flower to cross-stitch?

DJM: Yellow Ladyslipper, it is my favorite, period. My favorite flower. And I have done all the flowers. At first we started doing flowers that no one, that nobody had cross-stitched before and then we finally did a few that were.

[They are looking at her book]

DJM: Jared learned every one of those flowers. When we did that book, he was four years old. We did it in '08--right after my husband died and right after her husband died and we got together and did that book. And Jared learned every one of them. And he drew those little pictures. Trish has a little book that he did when he was in kindergarten. That kindergarten teacher fastened those together and made a little book. And he learned the names of all of them.

MS: That is awesome. Is he your grandson? I guess it runs in your family.

MS: So, do you know the names of all the wildflowers?

DJM: Yes. I get confused on them sometime, but I have several books.

The best book we had was this Reader's Digest book of North American wildlife and it had the names of all the wildflowers in it.

MS: Did you read a lot when you were little? Did you have lots of books?

DJM: Yeah, because my mother was a teacher. She bought Childcraft--some Childcraft books. And there was one in particular that taught you showed you how to draw pictures. It would show you how to draw a little bit and then I used to fiddle with it all the time. And a set of encyclopedias back when I was young, because she was a teacher, and she realized you needed books. I have bookcase at the front door full of books. Nobody ever comes to my front door because my house is turned backwards. So, in my entrance hall, I have a big book case.

MS: I thought this was your front door.

DJM: That is supposed to be the back door. Really, that was supposed to be a porch. We were building the house but we were living in South Carolina. We looked at that porch out there. We asked them how much they would charge to make that a room instead of a porch. And they said nothing because it would save them all those bricks. So we made a room for the washer and dryer and the deep freeze. It has been the mud room. The kids pulled their shoes off. If they were muddy and left them there.

MS: So your children grew up in this house?

DJM: Yeah, Jack was born the year we built it. He was born in March, and we moved in Thanksgiving. So this is the only house he remembers living in. And of course, Bill was only two years old. I guess Deborah was in the fifth grade, no she was in the sixth, and Barbara was in the fourth and Jim was in the first. I guess, the year we moved in here.

MS: So all your kids are really, really close together in age?

DJM: Yeah, the three older ones. And then there's five years between Jim and Bill. We thought we had our family, and then we had two more. You didn't have such thing as a birth control back then, though. It is a wonder you didn't have a dozen. But anyhow.

MS: That is another thing that has changed... family size.

DJM: Right. I have, my oldest daughter, she has three children but she has nine grandchildren. Her oldest daughter has four. And her son has three and her younger daughter has two. They are my nine great-grandchildren.

So, I have nine grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. My nine grandchildren's pictures are over there on the wall, right, by the cuckoo clock.

DJM: Did you find those? [referring to the book]

MS: The pink ones. Are the pink ones the rare ones?

DJM: The Yellow Ladyslippers are the rare ones. The pink ones are everywhere. They are under Jack's pine trees. But they won't transplant. They will live a year and die. They like the dry hill, so they are up there naturally.

MS: Is there anything else you want to say about growing up around here?

DJM: Well, one thing was we ate our own food. And mama would take green beans and she would can green beans, She would dry them. She would take them and hang them on a string and dry them. And they we made pickle beans. I pickled some a year before last. I mixed beans and corn and put them in a churn with some salt and left them for fourteen days. They are good, they are delicious. My mother said when she grew up that they did a whole barrel of corn and a whole barrel of pickled beans in their cellar and ate them in the winter. Mama even dried some pumpkin one time, I can remember, she put it upstairs in the attic. Of course, we dried apples all the time. Dried fruit. We made sauerkraut. But we didn't have electricity or a deep freeze. We got a deep freeze after electricity, after 3 years. And a refrigerator. We had the spring box to put our milk and butter in, is all we had, that three years, That is all we had.

MS: What is that?

DJM: We built a box up there on the spring. And they built a box so that the water—cold water--was running through it all the time. You set the milk jugs and something with your butter in it. That is what we used for three years until we got electricity and could have a refrigerator or an ice box.

MS: How did you get the milk and stuff?

DJM: From the cows. We milked the cows and you bring it to the house, you poured the milk through a cloth, mama bleached out flour sacks. And you would put it over your container and pour your milk through it. It would remove some of the impurities and after about two days there'd be cream on the top. We'd skim that off and let it sour and it was called clabber milk. And, then we'd churn it and get our butter and buttermilk. The other milk was called skim milk, when you took the cream off, then it was called skim milk.



MS: I didn't know that.

DJM: But mama would always leave some cream in it because we didn't like it without some of the cream in it. She called it blue john. If it didn't have any cream at all, it was called blue john because it was kind of bluish looking. People that get skim milk now that is what they drink, blue john, with no cream in it. How on earth that they make it last more than 10 days at a time, I don't know, without it going sour. That is all the preservatives they are putting in it these days. But I go and get milk, I get the one with the longest time on it and sometimes it will be good for two weeks. Back then it would sour in three days, ordinarily, unless it was processed or pasteurized.

MS: Was that your job to go get the milk?

DJM: Oh, I milked. I milked with both hands. Sat with a bucket between my knees.

MS: Was it hard?

DJM: No. I milked with both hands. I milked every morning and the afternoon. My sister didn't like to milk. She liked to sit in the corner and read a book.

MS: She didn't like to do the work.

DJM: No, she was lazy. She never did work. She has always been lazy. She married a man in the Navy, and she never did have a job. When she met him, she working in a restaurant in Baltimore, MD, not a restaurant, a theater, the manager of a theater in Baltimore, Maryland. He was a commander in the Navy, and they got married. She never did anything. Of course, she joined the Garden Club. She was president of the state of Maryland Garden Club at one time. So, she is still into the Garden Club. But she is in bad health right now. Her daughter is helping her out. She is two years older than I am.