Name of Project: R.O.O.T.S of Sunflower County

Date of interview:

Location of Interview: Indianola, MS

Name of Interviewer(s): (A)

Name of Interviewee(s): John C. Skelton

Name of File: 059.MOV

[0:16] **A:** Where are you from? Are you a resident of Sunflower County?

[0:20] **B:** I was born in Sunflower County. I’m a veteran service officer. I assist veterans in applying for benefits through the VA. That’s basically all I do and it’s not a full time job, it’s part-time.

[0:45] **A:** What brought you to Sunflower County?

[0:47] **B:** My momma [laughter] I was born two miles from here.

[0:53] **A:** Why are we called Sunflower County?

[0:58] **B:** Why are we called Sunflower County? I reckon because we are on the Sunflower River but I’m not sure about that. We were a part of Washington and Bolivar Leflore (?) at one time and they created Sunflower County out of parts of those.

[1:13] **A:** What do you like about Sunflower County?

[1:23] **B:** I reckon because I was born here and I never envisioned myself living anywhere else besides here in Sunflower County. I like the climate and the people and that’s about it.

[1:41] **A:** What problems do you feel are in your community here in Sunflower County?

[1:51] **B:** I’d say unemployment may be one of the biggest problems and that’s really, probably about all.

[2:04] **A:**What changes have you seen in Sunflower County?

[2:09] **B:** Uh, I want to start to say weather but we’ve had hot weather for a pretty long time [laughs] Well one of the changes I’ve seen is, I’m old enough to remember, when a big portion of the people in Sunflower County all lived out in the country part of Sunflower County and now there are a very small percentage of people who live outside the city limits so the town is in here (?) I’d say at one time probably over 50 percent of the people lived probably in the country and probably now it ain’t over 15 percent that live in the country. I use to leave Indianola and go to my house, which was three miles away, and at the time I would pass about 12 homes going home—same route now, I don’t pass any of them.

[3:18] **A:** As a young person, is there anything I should know about Sunflower County?

[3:42] **B:** The first is you have to be an honorable citizen and follow the rules and laws of the county and everything and you’ll usually do alright.

[3:57] **A:** Are there any significant events that you witnessed in the past coming up to be your age?

[4:12] **B:** The B.B King homecoming every year was an event that everybody looked forward to and I don’t know anything else particular, any other events that we have the (inaudible) of 1986, none of ya’ll were born then. We had a big celebration for that of the town and all.

[4:53] **A:** Could you tell us a little about your time in the Korean War?

[5:10] **B:** No, I wasn’t in Korea. I was in the service but not in Korea. The Korean conflict ended on January 31st, 1955 and I went in December 4th, 1954 which the Korean conflict was officially over about a month and a half after I went in the service but I was in all the other times. I was sent to Germany, I stayed about 13 months in Germany and I stayed in the service 21 months. I got out 3 months early to go back to school. They allowed that if you were going to miss a whole year if you were not going to be able to start at the beginning of the year you could apply for an early release, no more than three months [laughs] and I got out to go back to school (Delta State)

[6:22] **A:** Do you feel like Indianola, as a community, was better in the past or is it better now?

[6:33] **B:** There are a lot of aspects, there are a lot of things better, there are a lot of things that ain’t as good. I would say probably better now than it was in the past. There’s more money, well it’d be the same everywhere else but it’s better than when I grew up. You know what I had to study by? You ever heard of a (inaudible) lamp? But later on when we got out of school we got what they called an Aladdin lamp (?) boy, that thing was bright. We sat it on the dining room table. I had two brothers and that’s where we would do our homework. That’s way back in the uh late 40s—early 50s.