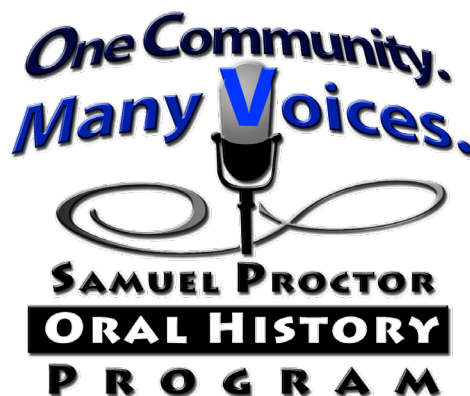


Girlye Rolin and Florence Tullis

**Poarch Creek Project
CRK-019**

Interview by:

**Dr. J. Anthony Paredes
August 15, 1972**



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CRK 019 Girlie Rolin and Florence Tullis
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project
Interviewed by J. Anthony Paredes on August 15, 1972
1 hour, 14 minutes | 56 pages

Abstract: Girlie Rolin and Florence Tullis speak about their work as midwives. They discuss how people had babies at home before hospitals, and the transition to hospital births. They talk about the tradition of waiting nine days until people could carry the babies around the house. They speak about different traditional remedies for babies' illnesses, and go into detail about teething and cures for thrash. They then speak about customs surrounding funerals, naming babies, and holidays. They discuss the circumstances under which mothers would either breastfeed their babies or give them bottles. The interview concludes with a discussion of a variety of different medicinal plants, and a story about faith healing.

Keywords: [Poarch Band of Creek Indians; Health; Traditional medicine]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
P R O G R A M
University of Florida

CRK-019

Interviewee: Girlie Rolin and Florence Tullis

Interviewer: Dr. J. Anthony Paredes

Date: August 15, 1972

P: Testing one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. The date is August 15, 1972, and I'm in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Tracy Rolin interviewing Mrs. Girlie Rolin and Mrs. Florence Tullis about customs having to do with babies and that sort of thing. Perhaps, Mrs. Tullis, you could begin by talking about what you were talking about the other day—the practice of midwifing, which you used to do.

T: Well, I just mostly, whenever I was a midwife or just when they would needed me, you know, and they would come to get me, you know. Then I would go help them out, you know. See, I couldn't—they got where they wouldn't let us midwives doctor without licensing. I never did have no license and so I was scared. And what I done, I done just to help people out because I didn't have no license or nothing.

P: How long ago was that that they started requiring to have license?

T: Way back when Aunt Bessie was living. Girlie, how long back was that?

R: Well, they didn't have license. Aunt Lizzie—

T: Joyce—when Joycie started out that were?

R: Yeah, but Joycie had to get license?

T: Well, what year was that?

R: I don't know, though.

P: Well, maybe if you could remember some of the children that you've helped to bring into the world before they required license and about how old they are now. That would give some idea.

T: Well, some of the children that I helped bring into the world is about thirty, and some of them twenty-five, and some younger than that, and some twenty. But the oldest ones about, I reckon, is about thirty.

P: How did you learn to be a midwife?

T: Just being around with other women, with the womenfolks and just watching them, that's the way I learned.

P: I've never seen a baby being born. [Laughter] So, is there anything special that a midwife had to know?

T: Yes, there's right smarts that you have to know. It's a things that you should know and if a person didn't know what they was doing, you'd let a person lie there and die. I've knowed people to near about let them lie there and die before they'd give up for a doctor to come.

P: When you were being a midwife, where was the nearest doctor that you could get to come?

T: Atmore.

P: Was there one particular doctor that you usually used?

T: Well, no, sir. Not one in particular. But one particular doctor mostly that I would use because he was the one that always would help me because I didn't have no license. [Laughter] See?

P: Who was that doctor?

T: Dr. **Peevey**. Well, there was another doctor was pretty good too, was Dr. McKinley. He was an old doctor and I had a good many friends and he did too. I thought one time I was gonna get into it to catch him one baby, but this man's—this woman's brother knew him and got him to send off a birth certificate for me. That's all saved me too, from getting into it. [Laughter] They was talking about, you know, turning me up some of their people did, you know? Her brother knew him and got him to send a birth certificate off from Montgomery and all and that. That was all there was to it.

P: But years ago, there were some babies that didn't have birth certificates?

T: Didn't have none. No, didn't have any.

P: And maybe that's why some people around here don't know how old they are.

T: That's how come they don't know. Back when I was born, now, there wasn't no birth certificates when I was back. None was us back in olden people a long time.

P: But you told me the other day how you and your family knew how old you were?

R: Yeah, my daddy—daddy always kept up with it in the Bible. He put it down in the Bible with our family.

P: Mrs. Rolin, how many of your children were born with a midwife at home?

R: Two.

P: Two? The rest were born in a hospital or—

R: Well, no, at home.

P: At home with a doctor?

R: With the doctor.

P: Did you have any children in a hospital?

R: One. [Laughter]

P: That was your last one?

R: Yes, that was Linda Gail.

P: And how old is she?

R: She was born in 1948. She was, she's [19]48.

P: How about your children Mrs. Tullis?

T: I've had all mine at home but one.

P: With a doctor with all those or with midwives?

T: Midwife with one of mine and the other two was with doctors. One out here in the hospital, that was a doctor's home.

P: I was gonna ask you, back in the days when all babies were born at home, in the room with the mother having the baby, was there ever anybody else beside the midwife?

R: Yes, sir, there sure was.

P: Who?

T: Lots of times there'd be two, three in there. There'd be up to three in there.

P: Would they ever let the men in there?

T: No, they wouldn't hardly let the men—

R: Well, some men would be around but not right in there with them.

T: Well, I tell you sometime they had to have the men in there back in them days and time. Womenfolks had such a hard time back in them time. Now, Marie—this girl that stays with me—when her first one was born they had to have men folks too to help with her, didn't they?

R: She had convulsions.

T: She had convulsions. They had to hold her until the baby was born.

P: When you were midwifing and back in the old days, what did they use to cut the cord with?

T: Scissors.

P: Scissor? Did you bandage it or anything afterwards?

T: Oh yeah. See, you tied it together each way. You know, they tied it each way before they ever cut it. Then they cut it in between in there and, and all and then they bind it together.

P: You know, I see in the movies sometimes like in a western show or something, when a baby's getting ready to be born, they always say, boil some water. What's that boiled water for? [Laughter]

T: That's to clean your instruments to where there won't be no germs on it, see? You are supposed to have your hands clean you see, and your fingernails. I used to, when I would go to do something like that, I would cut my fingernails off just as close as I could get them and have me some Lysol water fixed and all like that to where I could keep my hands washed between that Lysol water where there would not be germs on my hand, you see, to get on the little baby or on the mother.

P: Now you say you learned midwifing from just watching older—

T: Just watching older—being around, watching people—

P: Was there any particular one older person that you sort of were apprenticed to for a while, or was it just lots of different ones?

T: Just lots of different ones. I seen a lots of it before I ever offered to, you know, to catch any babies myself. I was just caught one night. How come me, I reckon to ever catch a baby by myself that night. A man come to my house, we just had moved off down in Florida. And this man come to my house and he was near

about scared to death. And he said, lady, he said, I've come over here to get you to go over to my house. He said, my wife is sick, and he said, I want you to go over there. Said, she's fixing to have a little baby and said, I want you to go over there. He said, the doctor ain't come, said, I sent at him but he ain't come. Well, when I got over there, there was one little baby done born. The first ones I ever caught in my life was twins. [Laughter] When I got over there and there was one done born and he said, well, Lord, what in the world. Like to have scared the man to death sure enough when that one was born and wife looked the same as ever, you know. And I said, oh, well, she's just gonna have twins. Well, he looked like he didn't know what to do then. So I went ahead and doctored her, and directly another one was born. And then she had twins. No doctor never did come.

P: And that was your first one?

T: That was my first ones.

P: How many babies have you caught in your entire life?

T: Well, I haven't exactly kept up with them, you know, just how many I have caught in my life. But I've caught a good many of them. They been around—I just couldn't hardly tell you how many, but I've caught around fifty, sixty, seventy-five. I've caught five for one woman, I know.

P: Five from the same woman? Have you caught babies for all races of people, or just Indian people?

T: No, no, no. I haven't caught no babies for no Indian people. I never did catch their people for no Indian babies. All I've ever caught babies for was for white people. I ain't never caught none for none of my race of people and no colored people neither.

P: Were there ever any—I'll ask Mrs. Rolin—were there ever any midwives other than Indian midwives who used to help Indian women have babies?

T: Yes, sir.

R: Yes, sir.

T: Excuse me for saying it.

P: [Laughter] Either one of you, that's all right.

T: Yes, because there used to be midwives—colored ladies—and they depended on them as well as they did anybody else, because they were good midwives.

P: Who were some midwives that in your time are ones who caught most of the Indian babies?

T: What's was her name? Old Aunt . . .

R: Johnson?

T: What's her name? Emma Johnson, old Aunt Emma Johnson.

P: Emma Johnson?

T: We always called her old Aunt Emma Johnson. She was an old colored lady.

T: She caught more of them than anybody else till Joycie learned how. Then Joycie down here, Calvin's wife, down here she learned how by watching, I reckon, Aunt Emma Johnson, and then she went to catching babies.

P: Have you ever known of a case of a woman who was say, caught off by herself or at home and there wasn't anybody around who had to have a baby by herself without anybody to help her?

T: Yes, sir.

P: Has that happened often in the past?

T: Not much, but it was happening one time. It happened to sister Girlie here.

[Laughter]

P: Tell me about that Mrs. Rolin.

R: Well, this was a daughter, Marie, that lived with her. She was staying with me at the time the baby was to be born. So, he leave, Tracy did. Coming up here was Dan McGhee, lived here at the time. He get him to go get a midwife and he didn't get too far away from the house before the baby was born.

P: And you had to help do it?

R: I had to get the baby, and pick it up, she—

P: You had to cut the cord too?

R: No, I didn't do that. I hate to hear about telling you it was born when she was out on the porch. So, I had to pick up this afterbirth and get the baby and everything.

And she walked by herself to the bed. I got the baby up, and all this other, taking him to bed until the midwife got there.

P: Back in the days before babies were born in hospitals, what did the Indian people in particular do, if anything, to help the mother's pain when she was having the baby?

R: Well, I was just fixing to tell you that not long ago, when the lady got sick in the community to have a baby, all the women around mostly came and stayed. And while they was having those children, they would have to catch a hold of them and just let them bear to these pains to have that child. Just have to hold them down sometimes.

P: Just hold them.

R: Just hold them.

P: And if it was bad, that's when a man would have to come and help hold?

R: Yes, if they couldn't, I guess we'd have to get them.

T: And they didn't know much to give them but some kind of tea. My first baby was born, my daddy stayed out in the woods down in the swamp near about all night to get me some kinda—what kinda tea was that Girlie? What kind of bark was that daddy got, hunting on the tree? I never will forget it.

R: Which tree was it? Bay tree?

T: Bay tree.

P: Bay tree. Bay tree bark?

R: Bay tree bark, yes.

P: And that was to kill the pain?

T: No, no. That was to bring it on. That was to make my pains more severe to bring for the baby to be born.

P: And your daddy did that for you? Is that in any sense traditional, that a girl's father gets that for her, or anybody?

R: Well, just most anybody.

T: Just anybody that was there, you know, the day.

R: My daddy was there and he went and got it.

P: One more question on midwifing. Did a midwife or anybody help the mother or talk to the mother, say several days before her time was due? What would they tell her?

T: Well, back in them times, the mother would talk to the daughters and tell them that had children, you know—

R: About what they had to do and how they to do

T: How they'd have to do and how they'd have to bear to the pains, you know. And all, they still do that.

P: What I was asking about was anything like what they call pre-natal care now, when you go to a doctor for several weeks before the baby is born to have checkups and things. Was there anything like that?

R: No.

T: No, sir, see there wasn't no—

R: Just wait for the time.

P: You just waited till the time.

T: They wasn't do it near a doctor, they didn't go to doctors then, back in them times. No, they didn't go to doctors.

P: So it's only been like in the past—well, how old is your last one that was born in a hospital now?

R: 1950.

P: [19]50. So she's about twenty three. Would you say that it was about 1950 that most of the women from out here started having babies in hospitals?

R: Well, Linda was born in there in 1948. That was the child I had later in 1950.

Unidentified man: One of our babies that is dead was born in that hospital too.

R: Well, that's what I'm telling him. I haven't done told him about the one that was dead, but she was born in a hospital in 1950. See, Linda was born in 1948.

P: And she was born in a hospital too?

R: Yes, she was.

P: But before about 1948, were there many Indian babies born in hospitals, do you think?

T: Not many.

P: Well, I am gonna give Mrs. Rolin a chance to talk at length here. Next thing I wanted to ask about is if you could tell me in all the details that you can remember about this custom of the mother staying in bed and then carrying the baby around the house, how that went.

R: Well, they always wanted the mother to stay in bed nine days. And the ninth day, they wanted them to get up and go around the house. They thought after then they would be able to be up and down. Put something on their head, they didn't want them to go out bareheaded. [Laughter]

P: Would it have to be a hat or a bonnet or?

R: It didn't mind, one of them, just something on their head. Way of taking care of theirselves, they thought, not to be out bareheaded.

P: Was it thought that being bareheaded was bad for the mother's health or what?

R: Yes, thought maybe she may take cold or something, you see.

P: And she would go outside and walk around the house?

R: That's right.

P: How many times would she walk around the house?

R: Just once. Come back in.

P: And that was on the ninth day after the baby was born?

R: That's right.

P: Now was this the time at which the baby was carried around the house too?

R: Well, I believe it was, wasn't it, Florence?

T: Yeah, ninth day.

R: The ninth day they always take the baby around the house.

P: And who took the baby around the house?

T: There's a lot of people

R: Just whoever wanted to take it around the house. If I wanted to take one around there, I'd go around with the baby and come back with the baby. And then the mother would go.

P: I see. So, the mother and the baby didn't go at the same time?

T: No.

R: No, the mother and the baby didn't go at the same time.

P: Now, I have heard some say that whoever it is that carries the baby, the baby's supposed to take after that person?

T: Yes.

R: Yes.

T: It'll have ways like it, I'll tell you that. Because there's many one of them does.

P: What was that Mrs. Rolin?

R: Taking it around—the one taking it around, is pretty well true. With our children, seems like that we had.

P: Mrs. Tullis, what kind of ways are you talking about the baby would grow up to have?

T: Well, you know, like if you . . . what I mean, it would take ways after—like if you'd get mad about something, or be quick-tempered, or something like that, you know, well, that child would take ways back like that after you. That's what I was talking about.

P: Could either a man or a woman carry the baby?

T: Yeah, woman or man, either one.

P: Now could a man carry a girl baby?

T: Yeah.

P: And a woman could carry a man baby?

T: Yeah.

R: For a baby, it didn't make no difference.

P: Now, did the mother have any choice in who carried her baby around?

T: Well, yeah, some of them did. [Laughter] Some sure did.

P: How did that work?

T: Well, lots of them didn't want them didn't want them to take them around the house because they didn't want them to have ways like them, you know. That's the reason.

P: Would they come right out and say, no, I don't want you to take my baby?

T: No, they wouldn't ever say. I ain't never knowed them to do that, but they wouldn't want them to carry them around the house. They'd get by it some way or another.

P: I can't imagine it. How would they get by it? [Laughter]

R: Well, there is one carried one of my babies around that I didn't . . . She was a good woman now, understand, but she cursed and a lot of them get mad and had such a temperament.

P: But you couldn't stop her from carrying?

R: No, I couldn't stop her. She wanted to—

T: She wanted to carry it around.

R: I let her take it around the house.

P: Was it usually a relative that carried the baby or not?

T: Not every time.

P: Kinfolk—it wasn't necessarily kinfolk that did that? Now after that was done, was there anything else special that was done like that?

R: Well, they always wanted the woman to stay in the house a month. They didn't want her to do any work but take care of herself. Didn't want her to sweep, mop, or nothing like that.

P: Just yesterday, somebody was telling me that whoever carries the baby is supposed to talk to the baby. Have you ever heard of that?

T: No.

P: I think it was John Lee McGhee was saying that whoever carries the baby talks to the baby, and is not supposed to tell what he says to the baby. You ever heard that?

R: I didn't never know that.

P: Maybe that's a Hog Fork custom?

T: Maybe that's where they done that.

P: So old customs like this, they might be different from say, here and Headapadida? Compared to—

T: Yeah, they was different.

[Break in Recording]

P: Now, when the baby was carried, was that immediately after the mother walked around, or would that be a little bit later, or what?

R: it would be immediately after the mother went around.

P: What about the father during this time? Was he involved in this in any way?

R: No, he would mostly be away working.

P: Both when the mother and the baby was carried around, how many other people would go with her? Was there any set number or anything?

R: No, no set number.

T: No set number.

P: Now, let's say if there were a whole bunch of people at the house when the person who was gonna carry the baby said he wanted to carry the baby. Would he go by himself, or she go by herself, or would others—

T: Sometimes one would walk around and the other one would walk around with them. They would say, well, I'm gonna go anyhow, and they'd go around with them too, yeah. They'd go around anyhow because they wanted to go around with them because they would not let them tote the baby. They'd go around anyhow.

P: Do you recall ever happening that there was any people that had hard feelings over not being able to carry a particular baby around?

R: I don't think so, no.

T: I don't remember. I've had lots of them to say, I wish I had never let her carry my young'un around the house. [Laughter]

P: Because of the way the child grew up?

T: She's got ways just like her.

P: Now let me ask you what happened to this custom when babies started being born in the hospital?

R: Well, I don't believe, since they was born in the hospital we did that because I don't remember Linda being taken around the house.

P: You can't think of a single case of a baby born in a hospital that was carried around?

T: Huh-uh. They just brought them out. They didn't carry them around the house.

R: Not that I know of.

P: Now do you think—do the same rules apply with the person who carries the baby out of the hospital. Do you think that the baby will grow up to have that person's ways?

R: Well . . .

T: Yeah.

R: It feel that way.

T: The one that carries them out, they still feels that way with them.

P: Right now you think people feel that way?

R: Yeah.

T: Yes.

R: I don't know of them taking around the house anymore.

P: That's all gone now, they don't do that anymore. Do you remember back when you were small, the older people people talking about was there ever any more to this custom than what you've described? Long years before you were born?

T: Well, we don't know. That's as far back as we can remember, you know, back.

R: Well, Grandma **Treacy** was a midwife, and Aunt Lizzy.

T: I know.

R: My mom or daddy's sister, Lizzy Jackson, was a midwife. Now, she delivered one of my babies.

P: That was another thing I needed to ask. Did the midwives stay at the house for awhile after the baby was born? How long?

R: Yes, well, Aunt Lizzy, where I was living at the time, she stayed about four or five days. She really stayed with me.

P: This custom of carrying babies around the house, do you happen to know whether that was something that was strictly Indian, or did you ever know of white people or colored people doing that too?

R: No, I never did know of anybody else doing it.

T: No, I never knew somebody else doing it.

P: The only people you've known to ever do that were Indian folks?

T: That's all we ever paid any attention to doing it, it was the Indian.

P: You spoke of the mother having to have her head covered. Was there anything like that about the baby?

R: Well, that baby was all wrapped up, you see.

P: Did people used to put bonnets on babies years ago?

T: Long dresses.

P: Boys and girls?

T: [Laughter] Long dresses. They wore long dresses too.

P: Now one thing that I wondered about, at this Episcopal Church here, they christen babies, when they're babies. Could you tell me about how that is usually? Let's say back when the Episcopal Church first came, had there ever been any other churches that christened babies?

R: Never did when they were smaller. They waited till they got up about twelve years old before they'd baptize them.

P: How did people around here feel about that idea of baptizing babies?

R: Well, when they first came here they all felt all right. But later some of them, you know, I can't think of any babies that was baptized when they first came in here.

P: In a lot of places folks make special clothes for the baby to be baptized in. Do you all do that here too?

R: No, we didn't at that time. Later we grew up to that, but we didn't.

P: Can you think of any other customs that people used to have about bringing up a child proper? Was there ever anything special attached to the babies first teeth or anything like that?

R: No, I don't believe.

T: No, sir. They just had old rules that they went by. They'd put things around the babies around the babies' necks, you know, to keep them from cutting teeth hard and things like that.

P: What kinds of things do they put around their necks?

R: They put buttons around their necks, and go out and dig this sassa—these old weeds in the field and make beads and put around their necks.

P: Now was that for the baby to chew on or—

T: No, it'd just be around their necks. And they'd claim it would keep them from having a hard time cutting their teeth.

P: What kind of weed was that did you say?

T: What is it Girlie? The name of that medicine? You know, I can't think of it.

R: Wasn't it sassafras?

T: No.

P: Was it something called **tredsass**?

T: Tredsass.

R: I believe that's what it was.

P: I've heard some talk about it. And you make the beads out of roots of that?

T: Uh-huh. You know, it's got a little hole, you stick the needle through it, and just make the bead and put around it. Then they'd put nine shirt buttons around the neck.

P: Nine shirt buttons and those beads?

T: Uh-huh.

R: One or the other maybe.

P: One or the other.

T: One or the other of them.

P: It would be nine beads or nine shirt buttons. A couple of people have told me—I'd like to hear ya'll talk about it on tape—about putting mole feet around the babies' necks. You ever heard of that?

T: Yeah.

P: Tell me how that's done.

T: Since we out here, talk about that.

R: Well, they dug them all up, and then they died. Left that little hide and let it dry, you know.

P: Oh, they let the hide dry?

R: Yeah.

T: Dry.

P: And then what would they do?

R: That's when they'd put it around the—

P: The whole hide?

T: No, see they'd put a string through it, you know. Put a string through it and then put it around its neck.

P: The whole hide of the mole or just part of it?

T: No, just through his foot.

P: Through the foot. I see.

R: they used to put hog jaw teeth, too, around the baby's neck.

T: Yeah, hog jaw.

R: When they kill the hog and they cook those jowls. That last old tooth in there, they would save that, put it around a child. Mine never did wear any, but I've seen the old ones do it.

P: And all these things we are talking about, they weren't for the baby to chew on, they were just—

T: Huh-uh. They were just around there to keep them from having a hard time cutting the teeth.

P: What about any other medicines for babies, like for hives, for example.

T: Well, they give them a lots of tea for that.

P: What kinds of tea for hives?

T: Well, I give mine mostly asafoetida tea.

R: Horsemint tea.

T: And give them horsemint tea. And give them a little whiskey. [Laughter] Yeah, I'd put a drop or two of whiskey in a little bit of sweetened water and give them that.

R: And the red bark tea.

T: Yeah.

P: Red bark tea? What kind of tree?

R: Oak.

T: Red oak.

P: Red oak? And that's good for hives too?

R: Yeah. Made a tea of that.

T: You know babies have what they call boll hives too.

P: Boll hives?

T: Yes, sir. Because Aunt Tild had one to die and the doctor said boll hives killed it and . . .

R: Sycamore. Is it a sycamore?

T: Yeah. Sycamore bark is good for that.

P: Made up into a tea?

T: Take the bark off of the north side of the tree, and take it and make tea out of it. That's good for that.

P: What about diaper rash? Back in the old days was that a problem babies had?

T: Yes, but they didn't have nothing like they got now for diaper rash. Back in olden days they went out to the stumps, where the stumps was, and got them some rotten wood and would beat it up fine and put it in a thin cloth, and make them some powder out of it. And that's what they had for diaper rash. That's what cured the diaper rash on babies back in olden times.

P: What did people make diapers out of back then? Anything special?

T: Just anything—as the old saying—as they could their hands on.

P: Would they ever make diapers out of flour sacks?

T: Yeah, sure did.

R: Lots of them.

P: Speaking of that—

T: Old sheets and . . .

P: Was there ever a time around here when people used to make their—grownups make clothes out of flour sacks? Those flour sacks that have designs and flowers and things on them?

R: There used to be big sacks—what did you call them, Florence, that made dresses out of?

T: Well, they was feed sacks. Them was feed sacks. They bought the feed sacks, you know, but they was flowered, the sacks, you know. You could buy them, they was just printed cloth, you know. They used to buy them and make the clothes out of them.

P: What about thrash? I've heard about thrash as another baby disease.

T: Yes, that's another baby one.

P: How do you cure that one?

T: Well, olden people way back yonder didn't know much about it. When they was way back yonder, to doctor the thrash, they would take a—I knowed my mamma

to take a old fryer and take her a clean white rag and put some Vaseline on this rag, and get this smut off of a fryer. Would be lit the fire, put it on the fire and let it get smutty, and she would take that off there and mop that in that baby's mouth and just have its little mouth just wet as it could be.

P: Now, I've heard about some people who had special skill in curing thrash.

T: Yeah. Our Aunt Bessie did. Aunt Bessie—

R: Roberta's mother Aunt Bessie.

T: She used—

R: People in the community, oh she doctored them for thrash. Anybody had a little baby and got the thrash would come to her. And she did tell me the little verse she used to—no, she never did tell us. She said she did want to tell somebody this before she died, but she didn't. Now she did the same thing. She got a washcloth, and got this off in the frying pan and she said something and wiped that child's mouth out.

P: Do you know whether it was a Bible verse or what?

R: Well, I just really don't know. But she did tell me one time for burns.

P: For burns. What was the one for burns?

R: Something to say. She would say, two little angels come from Noah. One brought fire, and the other brought frost. Go out fire and come in frost. I still do that if I get a little burn.

P: Say that one again slower. [Laughter]

R: Two little angels came from Noah. One brought fire, and the other brought frost.
Go out fire and come in frost.

P: And that's for just anybody's burn?

R: Yeah, burn, for anybody's burn.

P: Now people who are good, say at curing a particular thing like thrash, is there anything special about them that makes it possible for them to cure those things?

R: Well, we always said Aunt Bessie was a good woman. She tried to live a good life, but other than that I didn't know.

P: Have you ever heard anyone say that somebody that is good at curing thrash has to be somebody that is never seen their daddy?

T: Uh-huh. I've heard that too.

P: Say it in your words.

T: Yeah, they say anybody that's never seen their father, that they can tell, blow their breath in a child's mouth, take it and blow it in their mouth three times, and they say it'll cure the thrash on them. Because I know them old people brings their babies down to my home, to J.C., one of my nephews. He has never seen his father, and they bring their babies down there and gets J.C. to blow his breath in their mouths to cure the thrash on them.

P: Years ago, did the Indian people out here—did they ever use colored people for taking care of thrash and things like that?

T: No, we never have.

P: Did they themselves ever doctor white or colored babies?

R: Aunt Bessie did.

T: Aunt Bessie did. She doctored white children.

P: Did she?

R: She sure did. Well, they never did deal with the Indian children, well it is much different than what it was then, wasn't it Florence? When one died, they'd dress them and sit at home and things, they had to. We didn't have no funeral home. They always kept them home. Sit up with them.

P: How long would they sit up with them?

R: Well, for about two nights and one day. If he died the day, you know, maybe the night, they'd keep him next day and then the next day they'd have the funeral.

P: Back in the old days, did you have to report a death to the county coroner and get a death certificate or not?

T: Well, way back yonder, they didn't, but they did get where they had to. Way back, years back, they didn't long time, but then they did get to where they had to report it.

P: Did people used to build their own coffins out here?

T: Yes, they have done it.

R: Some have.

T: Yes, they have.

P: Now I have heard, I guess it was Father Merkel or somebody, talking about how funerals amongst the Indian people, he's seen as people go by, they put their hands on the . . .

T: Uh-huh.

R: Yes.

P: Tell me about that.

T: Yeah. When there was a—used to lay people out, they laid people out on like a board or something, you know. They didn't take them to the funeral home. They would lay them out on boards, you know, a table, or like this, you know.

P: In a house?

T: In the home. And all things like that. And most everybody now knew about it, if I know anybody, and I go to a funeral, near about it now I near about put my hand on anybody. When I go to a funeral you know, I can see them. They always say you won't study about them, and you won't dream about them. That's the reason why—

R: Then they won't worry you.

T: Then they won't worry you they say.

P: If you put your hand on them?

T: If you put your hand on them. That was an old rule—reason why people always do that. They say if you put your hand on them, you know, and all, and if they see you touch them, they wouldn't bother you.

P: And you won't think about them later on?

T: You won't study about them, you know, like you would if you didn't. That's what made people do that.

P: Now, I know among my people when somebody dies, there is usually a big feed at the house. Did you all do that? Did you have a lot of people bring food and things?

T: Yeah, yeah.

R: We do now, but we used to didn't.

P: You didn't? When did you start doing that?

T: Well, it's been several years ago and, but . . .

P: How did that get started?

T: Well, I don't know, sir. Couldn't hardly tell. People just got to, you know, sitting up and people would go at night and buy stuff, I reckon, and then people got to where they would cook—

R: Thought it was best for each other to fix something.

T: Fix something and carry to have to eat. They got where now, people don't cook. When there's a funeral now, everybody cooks and carries it and keeps plenty of food cooked to the house.

P: If somebody was dying, and they were still living, but people could tell they were gonna die, would a lot of people come to the house or not?

R: Yeah, sure would. Lots of them if they thought one was gonna die. House would be full.

P: How long—would they just come for a short while, or stay, or what?

R: They'd come stay until mostly he'd—

T: Till they passed away.

R: Die or thought he got better. They'd stay with him.

P: Do either of you remember ever going to a funeral where there wasn't actually a real preacher there, but somebody else took charge? Tell me about that time.

T: Yeah, I went to where they had a funeral and there wasn't a preacher there. They just, you know, talked and said a few words and all, and told about the person, you know, and all.

R: Something nice.

T: Yeah, and all. They wouldn't say much, just . . .

P: When a person was being taken to the cemetery, how was that done?

T: Mostly in way back years ago it used to be in wagons, and then it got to be taken in trucks.

P: Would it be just like it is now with everybody going along behind?

T: Yeah.

P: In wagons or—

T: Wagons.

P: Do you ever remember a time when a person was carried to the cemetery on foot and the pallbearers would carry them all the way from the house to the cemetery?

R: No.

T: No, sir. I ain't never remember.

P: Has there always been the custom of selecting pallbearers for funerals?

T: Pallbearers.

P: Now if a baby dies, as a baby, is the funeral the same as if he was a grown person?

T: Yeah.

P: One thing we talked about the other day that I wanted to ask you talk about is picking names for babies. How did you all, for example, decide on names for your babies?

T: Well, I don't hardly know myself how they done that. They just maybe . . .

R: They would pick out their own names, mostly.

P: Has there ever been a preference for naming children after somebody?

T: Yeah.

R: Well, I was named after someone.

T: Yeah, there's lots of them that's named after people, you know, picked names and named after people. They'd say, name them after so-and-so. They have books now with names in them, you know. In a hospital they'll give you a book now and you pick out the names in a book now in the hospital if you want to name the babies there.

P: Now, the Episcopal Church has godparents, of course.

T: Yeah.

P: Before the Episcopal Church came here, has there ever anything sort of like godparents that people had?

T: No, sir.

P: There wasn't somebody that would stand up for the baby at church or anything like that?

R: Sure wasn't. All my children were baptized in the Episcopal Church.

P: I have noticed in the various churches that I've gone to that taking a birthday offering seems to be an important thing. Has that always been the custom?

T: Well, no. It ain't always been, but it's been for several years back. It started several years back. But it ain't always been.

P: Years ago, did people have any little party to celebrate birthdays or anything?

T: No, used to not celebrate them.

R: Now, you know they have got where they do, but years ago—but we used to work our birthdays, you know, we couldn't look forth to a birthday.

P: Would, like for a child—would her mother make a cake or anything like that?

T: Yeah. We'll make a cake or something like that, you know.

P: Speaking of celebrating things, would you two ladies tell me about old-fashioned Christmas that you used to have years ago, what did then?

R: That means when we were children?

P: When you were children, yeah.

R: Well, when it was Christmas time, we was glad to see Christmas. We didn't get fruit and stuff like we do now. And when you would see Santa Claus come that Christmas evening night, he always brought us fruit.

P: Did you put up stockings?

R: Yes, we hung stockings, or put a box under the bed, or something so he could put the stuff in it.

P: You sometimes put a box under the bed instead of the stocking?

R: Yeah, sometimes a box, hats, anything that hold this for you or he wasn't going to get at you. [Laughter]

P: Did y'all have Christmas trees when you were little?

T: No, never.

P: When was the first Christmas tree that you can remember?

R: I don't know if there was back after the Episcopal people came around, those people brought some. We sure didn't have none when we grew up.

[Break in Recording]

P: I think the place where we stopped was, you had just said when the first Christmas trees you could remember, Mrs. Rolin.

R: Well, I think that was in 1929, I believe.

P: And the Episcopal Church started those?

R: Yeah, we didn't know what no Christmas trees are.

P: Mrs. Tullis, I didn't get on the tape what you said about your mother decorating for Christmas? Would you say that again please? Or your grandmother?

T: Oh, my mother?

P: Uh-huh.

T: She would decorate with a holly bush—the limbs, you know, around in the house, because they are with the red berries on it. Because it said if you decorate with the holly bush, the limbs, that you would have a good Christmas. I used to do the same thing. I used to hunt me a holly bush tree if I could find one, with the red berries on it.

P: Speaking of holly, do you remember holly ever being used as a medicine of any kind?

T: No, sir. Didn't use it for medicine.

P: What about New Year's Day? Was there any special thing about New Year's Day when you were young?

T: No, sir. I don't know anything special on New Year's Day.

R: Yes, we always cooked—

Unidentified male: Peas.

R: Black-eyed peas and hog. They said if you had that on New Year's, you would have it all year—have good eats all the year.

P: If you had hog jowls and black-eyed peas, good eats all year. [Laughter] Can you think of any other customs or beliefs people used to have about bringing good luck?

R: They used to nail these old horseshoes up on their house, and if you had one of those, you would have good luck all year.

P: Were there ever any customs about when a young couple got married, things people would do to try and make sure they had good luck in their marriage?

R: No, I don't believe—

T: No, sir. I don't remember nothing back.

R: Well, from what we've said then, it would seem like when a baby was born, that's when the biggest—not very big—but the biggest kind of custom was carrying the baby around.

R: Yeah. When this lady got sick, you would send an old —call Dr. Peavey, was our main old doctor then. He used to say when the apple got ripe, you know, it would fall, you know, it wouldn't let you in the doctor. [Laughter]

P: When the apple got ripe, it would fall.

R: It would fall, yes.

P: A minute ago, Mrs. Tullis—or quite a while ago—you mentioned that the first baby you caught was one of twins. Do you remember whether there was ever any special beliefs about twins, whether there was anything attached to being a twin, whether that was thought to be good or bad or special somehow?

T: Well, no, sir. I didn't never have no idea of nothing like that.

P: Well, I'm just searching around.

T: Like you said, they come twins when you don't think it sometimes, and then it don't.

P: Oh, the other thing you were telling about the other day, I asked you if people used to build cradles for babies and I think you said some, but where did the baby usually sleep?

T: Well, the babies always slept with the mother.

P: Until they were how old?

R: Probably about two years old.

P: Two years old. We were also talking the other day about baby bottles. When did people start using baby bottles around here?

Unidentified male: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

R: It's been since the younger-aged people—

T: That ain't been so many years ago since they been raising the babies on bottles.

P: A lot of young women now are going back to breastfeeding.

T: Breastfeeding babies. Yeah, lots of them going back to feeding the breast babies.

P: Years ago—well, not so many years ago—but like when you were having children, about what age did most women try to wean their babies?

R: When it was two years old.

T: Two years old.

P: Two years old. Years ago, before there were baby bottles, what would happen if a mother did not have any milk for her baby?

T: Well then, that's when they had to give them bottles. They could tell by the way the baby grew and how it filled out, whether it was getting anything to eat, you know, from the mother. And if they seemed like wouldn't fill out like they ought to, then the doctors would put them on the bottle.

P: What would happen though, years before they had the baby bottles?

T: I just don't know what. I don't know what happened.

P: Was it ever the case that, say some other woman who had a baby, would she take the baby?

T: Yes, sir, because right down here, there is two children raised right down here. This one that runs this store down here, and a boy—a man that lives right down there was raised because his mama died.

R: No, her mama died. **Otha** Martin.

T: Otha Martin's mama raised Kelly, 'cause her mama died. And they both were of the same age, so she taken Kelly and raised her from the breast, too.

P: But even years ago, most women, if they had to, could get bottles and nipples.

T: Yeah.

R: Seems like women never did have to put them on bottles. They always raise their children on the breast as far back as we knew.

P: Do you remember whether there was ever any special diet that a mother was supposed to eat—anything special she was supposed to eat before or after the baby came?

T: Yes, sir.

P: What was it?

T: Me, I lived off of mostly just eggs and grits and rice. [Laughter]

R: Till it was a month old, wasn't it?

T: They wouldn't let us have nothing to eat like they do now. My mama wouldn't let me have nothing to eat hardly. Not, you know, peas and things like that. They didn't let us have things like that to eat.

P: Did they have any special reason for that?

T: Well, they would claim it would give the baby the colic [Baby colic is a common condition that causes babies to display signs of distress without any known cause]. Because if we eat it, it would give the baby the colic and make it sick.

P: So eggs, and grits, and rice—

T: Grits, and rice, and chicken and dumplings is mostly what I ate for a month, till my baby was a month old.

R: Sure did.

P: I'm back to babies again. But before the baby was born, would the mother have to stay in bed or did she just keep right on with her activities?

T: No. No, just go right on up to the time—

R: She was able to keep going right up to the—

T: Long as she was able to go.

P: Another thing that I remember from our conversation the other day was you were talking about the measles and how people used to keep their houses dark and all. Would you talk about that again just like the other day?

T: Yeah. Well, when people had measles or things like that, you know, people, I don't know, people were scared of disease more so than they are now. I don't know. People ain't particular with disease now like they used to be because people used to think they children had measles, they'd put them in the bed and they kept them in the bed till they broke out with their measles until they shedded

off their measles and kept them in there till they knowed they was all right. They were—

P: You said they kept the house dark?

T: That was when they had them babies. That's when them babies was little was when they kept the house dark. And that's when you didn't see nobody wear glasses all the time, neither. I know when my ma, times would come using light like that, you didn't see no light in my mama's house when she had a little baby. All the light was cut out of the houses and we had burnt lamps then. That's all the lights we had. You didn't see people neither where they had to have a pair of glasses by the time they got up to fifteen and twenty years old.

P: But on the ninth day, the baby would go outside?

T: Yes, sir.

R: Yes, sir.

T: They went outside.

R: Ninth day, you went out.

P: One more thing on babies, back in the days before they had all this baby food and so forth, what did mothers do to get their babies on to solid food? What kind of things would they give them?

R: Well, they didn't get much done till after that breast, until it got a month old. Then they would give soups and—

T: Cornbread, beans, you know, little . . .

P: Now, I remember my mother talking about how when she was growing up in North Alabama, mothers sometimes used to chew the baby's food for him beforehand. Do you remember if they used to do that?

T: Uh-huh. Lots of mothers used to chew their food for their babies.

R: How about grits and things? Did you them-

T: That's right, that's what I used to feed mine is grits.

P: We were talking a long time ago about *sofke*. Did you ever give *sofke* to babies?

T: No, I never did give *sofke* to babies.

P: But you did say once that that was something that sick people used to—

T: Yes, sir. That's what sick people used to eat. I said I didn't know of anybody had to have it, who knows how to make it. **Reen** Rolin was the onliest person that lived—that was Aunt Bessie's sister—she was the onliest person I ever knowed that knowed how to make it. And she could make some of the best *sofke* that you ever eat. And I don't know of nobody else can knows how to make it, do you?

R: No, not now around here.

T: I don't know of nobody now.

P: But both of y'all did eat it when you were young?

R: Yes.

T: Oh, yeah. Yeah. We've eat it, yes, sir.

R: We used to cook the old little lye corn, boil it in a wash pot.

T: Wash pot.

R: Outside.

P: To make hominy?

R: Yes.

T: Yeah.

R: That would make it and then, you know, wash the corn clean. After we thought we'd washed it so many times, we could clean it then and then fry it.

T: Called it big grain hominy.

P: Big grain hominy. Now is that what grits are made out of—big grain hominy?

T: Well, yeah, it's made out of corn just like that. It's just ground. Grits is just ground up fine, you know. But it is made out of corn, just like meal—corn meal. Grits is made out of corn, just what big grain hominy's made out of.

P: Well, I can't seem to think of anymore about babies or anything like that.

[Laughter] Very quickly, the other night you were telling about a bunch of different plants for different diseases and things. Could you remember those again and tell it to me? We went out and got some low bush myrtle, was the first—

T: Yeah, yeah. That was the low bush myrtle. Well, we mentioned about the gopher grass, you know.

R: It was good for the kidneys.

T: And what else was it we mentioned about?

R: Horsemint tea.

T: Yeah, the horsemint tea.

R: Good for a cold. And the yellowroot was good for pellagra somehow.

T: Pellagra. Yeah, I knew yellowroot was good for the pellagra. That's a wonderful medicine, is yellowroot, if you could get it.

P: Is it good for anything besides pellagra?

T: I don't know, sir, whether it is or not, but it's really—well they say it's good now though for pellagra. I don't know.

P: I think you mentioned fever grass.

T: Yes, that's right. Fever grass.

R: Was good for the fever.

T: And like—what is it now?

Unidentified male: Gopher grass.

T: I already said the gopher grass. What's that other kind of...

R: Sassafras.

P: Sassafras.

R: Sassafras tea, yeah.

P: Sassafras tea.

T: And he said he would drink sassafras tea.

P: And you said your mother used to give that to you for what?

T: For your blood, to purify your blood in the spring of the year. Mama used to make us some of it in the spring of the year and feed it to us. She said that was good to purify your blood. Sassafras tea was in the spring of the year.

P: I have heard some people mention something called pinetop tea.

T: Yeah.

R: Yeah.

P: Now, what is pinetop tea made out of?

T: Little old pine trees out there.

R: These pine trees right out there.

P: The green needles?

R: Yes.

T: Yes, green needles.

T: This the green now . . .

P: And that's good for what?

T: Good for bad colds. You take a bad cold and make you some, and it's good. It tastes good too. I like it. Sweeten it, you know, boil it.

R: Shucks was good for tea, too.

P: Corn shucks?

R: Corn shucks.

P: One thing that I haven't heard anybody talk about at all, and that's any medicine for like sores or cuts on you or anything like that. Did you ever know of any medicines for that that people used to make?

T: Well, no, I don't believe I do. I don't know no medicine that they made for sores.

P: What about sore eye that children—or pink eye—that children used to get? Any medicines for that?

T: No, I don't know. Pink eye—

R: Seems like there was some, but I can't think of it.

T: They boiled some—there's so much I forgot till I . . .

P: Now, one thing I've noticed is that people like yourself seem to know an awful lot about these different medicines, yet there were people called the medicine man like Norman—

R: Yes.

T: Yes.

P: Did they just know more than other people or what?

R: Well, he just kept up with these roots more than we did, you see, studied them. When we forgot them, Norman was getting them, you see.

P: He just remembered all of them?

T: Yes, sir, he remembered them.

R: He remembered all of them and he got them. Now, you wouldn't think if he told me—my legs used to hurt me, feet would burn me and he told me to get a quart of vinegar and a pack of needles—white vinegar, and put those needles in this vinegar. Let them stay so long and make a liniment and then rub with it.

P: Just from sewing needles you're talking about?

R: Yes, and rub your legs.

T: And it'll eat them needles up. I mean that vinegar will eat them needles up.

P: Till they just disappear.

T: Disappear. There won't be nothing in there.

[Break in Recording]

T: Good liniment too. She used to rub with it all the time.

P: In addition to herb medicines like that, has there ever been much faith healing and things like that around here?

T: Well, yes, sir. They . . .

P: That's some of the liniment right there?

T: And the needles was put in that.

P: It smells different than just plain vinegar.

R: It does.

Unidentified male: Is that a needle in there?

R: There was a pack put in there.

T: There was a pack put in it.

R: And it turned it that color, you see.

T: It turn it that color and they'd turn it up.

P: And it does work you say?

R: Yes, it's good.

[Break in Recording]

P: Okay. [Laughter]

T: You're talking about faith doctor, or faith work. One time I was sick, that's the reason Marie's with me today. When my baby girl was born, she was three

weeks old, and I taken town with a hurting, I believe it was in this side, and I just couldn't go, I couldn't do nothing. And I stayed home, down at my home a week and Girlie here come down there. My husband couldn't go to work, and he was working in shipyard, and she come down there that Sunday. She begged him to let me—well, he had to stay home to tend to the baby, 'cause I couldn't tend to the baby or nothing else and had my other two boys, you know, and they were small. She begged him to let me come stay with her and for him to go back to work. So he deciding that he'd let me come up here and stay a week with her. Well, while I was up here, Girlie begged Marie to go—didn't beg her, asked her—to go stay with me till I got better or stay a week or two with me. She just went to stay two weeks with me. So, she went and she's been with me now ever since then. That's been twenty-nine years ago. And as I started to say, I had went to, I reckon, every doctor around here near about, hadn't I? And just spent money, and spent money, and medicine wasn't doing me no good don't seem like. No medicine I taken didn't do me no good. And Mr. Charlie Hall was carrying a bunch to DeFuniak Springs, Florida, every two weeks on a pick-up truck over there to a faith doctor. Some of them said to me, why didn't I go. Well, when I'd have a spell with the side, it would just hurt me so bad, just looked like I couldn't hardly live and all, I just couldn't hardly stand it and all. So my husband, he was afraid for me to go. He was afraid I couldn't make a trip over there. But I kept saying I wanted to go, I was gonna go try. So, me and one of my nephews' wives, she wanted to go too. We decided we were going. We saw Mr. Hall about going with him. And he said, yeah, we could go, and we went. And I made four

trips to him. The first trip I went, I didn't have a very bad spell that whole day. It just seemed like to me I had a spell but it wasn't very bad, you know, it was light. It didn't hurt me too bad and all. So then, in the next two weeks, we went back again. Well, I made four trips to him, thank God. In them four trips I made to that doctor—and he only charged a dollar. He didn't charge nothing, but we give him a dollar each time we went. Them four trips, thank God, I ain't never had to have nothing else done to my side.

P: Did he just pray, or lay on hands?

T: He had a crippled wife. His wife was crippled. A bus had hit her and cut her leg off or something. Anyhow, she was one-legged. She would sit by the bed. He had a bed for the womenfolks and one, two rooms like. And one room was for the women, and one room was for the men. He'd put you on the bed, and they'd lie you on the bed and he'd start at your head up here like this with his thumb and he'd come down with his thumbs just like that. He'd come down, right on down with his thumb, right down like that, and then he went—he'd go out, right out to the bottom of your feet. And you could feel that man when he'd go, was going down on you. I don't know how. It felt just like electricity going through you. I said, I don't know what he had. I didn't see nothing on him or nothing but . . .

P: Was he a preacher at a church too?

T: No, sir. He just came to be a faith doctor. He didn't claim to be no preacher or nothing.

P: Well, he must have been pretty famous if people were coming up from here once a week down there.

T: No, once every two weeks we went.

P: And it was Mr. Hall that started taking people?

T: Uh-huh. He was the one that carried the car. He carried a pick-up-truck load. But, Lord have mercy, you couldn't hardly get to see that preacher. You ought to see— [inaudible]. I mean that man, that doctor there. The people was there. They was coming from everywhere to see him. And so I went and then made them four trips. And what got me, I just kept getting better and better. From the first trip I made, well I kept a getting better and better and thank God, till I got—I guess I got all right. Thank God I ain't been bothered with it no more.

P: Was this doctor, incidentally, was he white or what?

T: He was white.

P: Other than real faith healers like that, has it ever been the practice to—say somebody's real sick—to have a prayer service for them?

R: Yes.

P: Where are those usually conducted?

T: Well, most anywhere's wherever there's sick folks.

P: At church or in homes?

T: In homes.

R: He's sick in his home and wants them to come and pray, they just send for 'em.

P: Is that led by a preacher, or can just a group go?

T: Group can go and pray, you know, but they mostly gets their main head manager of—like Mace [McGhee], you know and all—to go with a manager.

P: Has there ever been anybody here amongst the Indian people who was a real faith healer that you know of?

T: No, I don't know. I don't know of any.

P: Well, I don't think I've asked everything there is to ask, but thank you very much.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by: Nicole Cox, August 1, 2012

Audit edited by: Scott Kraff, August 8, 2012

Final edited by: Diana Dombrowski, August 20, 2012

Abstract by: Evangeline Giaconia, October 13, 2021