

LULU WILSON, blind, bedridden Negro, does not know her age, but believes that she is ninety-seven. She was born near the Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky. Lulu owns a little home at 1108 Good Street, Dallas, Texas.

"Course I's born in slavery, ageable as I am. I'm a old time, slevery woman and the way I been through the hackles, I got plenty to say 'bout slavery. Lulu Wilson says she knows they ain't no good in it and they better not bring it back.

"My paw warn't no slave. He was a free man, 'cause his mammy was a full blood Creek Indian. But my maw was born in slavery, down on Wash Hodges' paw's place, and he give her to Wash when he married. That was the only woman slave what he had and one man slave, a young buck. My maw say she took with my paw and I's born, but a long time passed and didn't no more young'uns come, so they say my paw am too old and wore out for breedin' and wants her to take with this here young buck. So the Hodges sot the nigger hounds on my paw and run him away from the place and maw allus say he went to the free state. So she took with my step-paw and they must of pleased the white folks what wanted niggers to breed like livestock, 'cause she birthed nineteen chillen.

"When I's li'l I used to play in that big cave they calls Mammoth and I's so used to that cave it didn't seem like nothin' to me. But I was real li'l then, for soon as they could they put me to spinnin' cloth. I 'members plain, when I was li'l there was talk of war in them parts, and they put me to spinnin' and I heared 'em say it was for sojers. They marched round in a li'l, small drove and practices shootin'.

"Now, when I was li'l they was the hardes' times. They'd nearly beat us to death. They taken me from my mammy, out the li'l house built onto they house and I had to sleep in a bed by Missus Hodges. I cried for my maw but I had to work and wash and iron and clean and milk cows when I was most too li'l to do it.

"The Hodges had three chilluns and the olderes' one they was mean to, 'cause she so thickheaded. She couldn't larn nothin' out a book but was kinder and more friendly like than the rest of the lot. Wash Hodges was jes' mean, pore trash and he was a bad actor and a bad manager. He never could make any money and he starved it out'n the niggers. For years all I could git was one li'l slice of sowbelly and a purty, li'l piece of bread and a 'tater. I never had 'nough to stave the nongriness out'n my belly.

"My maw was cookin' in the house and she was a clink, that am the bes' of its kind. She could cuss and she warn't 'fraid. Wash Hodges tried to whop her with a cowhide and she'd knock him down and bloody him up. Then he'd go down to some his neighbor kin and try to git them to come help him whop her. But they'd say, 'I don't want to go up there and let Chloe Ann beat me up.' I heard Wash tell his wife they said that.

"When maw was in a tantrum, my step-paw wouldn't partialize with her. But she was a 'ligious woman and 'lieved time was comin' when niggers wouldn't be slaves. She told me to pray for it. She seed a old man what the nigger dogs chased and et the legs near off him. She said she was chased by them bloody hounds and she jus' picked up a club and laid they skull open. She say they hired her out and sold her twict but allus brung her back to Wash Hodges.

"Now, Missus Hodges studied 'bout meanness more'n Wash done. She was mean to anybody she could lay her hands to, but special mean to me. She beat me and used to tie my hands and make me lay flat on the floor and she put snuff in my eyes. I ain't lyin' 'fore Gawd when I say I knows that's why I went blind. I did see white folks sometimes what spoke right friendly and kindly to me.

"I gits to thinkin' now how Wash Hodges sold off maw's chillun. He'd sell 'em and have the folks come for 'em when my maw was in the fields. When she'd come back, she'd raise a ruckus. Then many the time I seed her plop right down to a settin' and cry 'bout it. But she 'lowed they warn't nothin' could be done, 'cause it's the slavery law. She said, "O, Lawd, letme see the end of it 'fore I die, and I'll quit my cussin' and fightin' and rarin'." My maw say she's part Indian and that 'countable for her ways.

"One day they truckled us all down in a covered wagon and started out with the fam'ly and my maw and step-paw and five of us chillun. I know I's past twelve year old. We come a long way and passed through a free State. Some places we druv for miles in the woods 'stead of the big road, and when we come to folks they hid us down in the bed of the wagon. We passed through a li'l place and my maw say to look, and I seed a man gwine up some steps, totin' a bucket of water. She say, 'Lulu, that man's your paw.' I ain't never think she's as consid'ble of my step-paw as of my paw, and she give me to think as much. My step-paw never did like me, but he was a fool for his own young'uns, 'cause at the end of the wars when they sot the niggers free, he tramped over half the country, gatherin' up them young'uns they done sold 'way.

"We went to a place called Wadefield, in Texas, and settled for some short passin' of time. They was a Baptist church next our house and they let me go twict. I was fancified with the singin' and preachin'. Then we goes on to Chatfield Point and Wash Hodges built a log house and covered it with weather boarding and built my maw and paw quarters to live in. They turned in to raisin' corn and 'taters and hawgs. I had to work like a dog. I hoed and milked ten cows a day.

"Missus told me I had ought to marry. She said if I'd marry she'd togger me up in a white dress and give me a weddin' supper. She made the dress and Wash Hodges married me out'n the Bible to a nigger 'longin' to a nephew of his'n. I was 'bout thirteen or fourteen. I know it warn't long after that when Missus Hodges got a doctor to me. The doctor told me less'n I had a baby, old as I was and married, I'd start in on spasms. So it warn't long till I had a baby.

"In 'twixt that time, Wash Hodges starts layin' out in the woods and swamps all the time. I heard he was hidin' out from the war and was sposed to go, 'cause he done been a volunteer in the first war and they didn't have no luck in Kentucky.

"One night when we was all asleep, some folks whooped and woke us up. Two sojers come in and they left more outside. They found Wash Hodges and said it was midnight and to git 'em something to eat. They et and some more come in and et. They tied Wash's hands and made me hold a lamp in the door for them to see by. They had some more men in the wagon, with they hands tied. They druv away and in a minute I heard the reports of the guns three or four times. Nex' day I heard they was sojers and done shot some conscripts in the bottoms back of our place.

"Wash Hodges was gone away four years and Missus Hodges was meaner'n the devil all the time. Seems like she jus' hated us worser than ever. She said

blobber-mouth niggers done cause a war.

"Well, now, things jus' kind of drifts along for a spell and then Wash Hodges come back and he said, 'Well, now, we done whop the hell out them blue bellies and that'll larn 'em a lesson to leave us alone.'

"Then my step-paw seed some Fed'ral sojers. I seed them, too. They drifted by in droves of fifty and a hundred. My step-paw 'lowed as how the Feds done told him they ain't no more slavery, and he tried to pint it out to Wash Hodges. Wash says that's a new ruling, and it am that growed-up niggers is free, but chillun has to stay with they masters till they's of age.

"My maw was in her cabin with a week old baby and one night twelve Klu Kluxses come to the place. They come in by ones and she whopped 'em one at a time.

"I don't never recall just like, the passin' of time. I know I had my little boy young'un and he growed up, but right after he was born I left the Hodges and felt like it's a fine, good riddance. My boy died, but he left me a grandson. He growed up and went to 'nother wat, and they done somethin' to him and he ain't got but one lung. He ain't peart no more. He's got four chillun and he makes fifty dollars a month. I'm crazy 'bout that boy and he comes to see me, but he can't help me none in a money way. So I'm right grateful to the president for gittin' my li'l pension. I done study it out in my mind for three years and tell him, Lulu says if he will see they ain't no more slavery, and if they'll pay folks liveable wages, they'll be less stealin' and slummerin' and goin's on. I worked so hard. For more'n fifty years I waited as a nurse on sick folks. I been through the hackles if any mortal soul has, but it seems like the president thinks right kindly of me, and I want him to know Lulu Wilson thinks right kindly of him.
