

EX-SLAVE STORIES
(Texas)

PHILLES THOMAS, 77, was born a slave of Dave Miles, who owned a plantation in Brazoria Co., Texas. Philles does not remember her father, but was told by her mother that he was sent to the Confederate Army and was fatally injured at Galveston, Texas. Philles stayed with her family until she was seventeen. then married William Thomas. They now live at 514 Hayes St., Fort Worth, Tex.

"I don't 'member much 'bout de war, 'cause I's jus' a young'un when it start and too small to have much mem'randum when it stop. I's still on de place where I's born when surrender come, de Lowoods Place, own by Massa Dave Miles, 'twixt Brazoria and Columbia. Massa Dave sho' have de big plantation but I don' know how many slaves.

2 1937
"When I's a young'un, us kids didn't run round late. We'uns am put to bed. When sundown come, my mammy see dat my feets am wash and de gown put on, and in de bunk I goes.

"I can't 'member my daddy, but mammy told me him am sent to de 'Federate Army and am kilt in Galveston. She say dey puttin' up breastworks and de Yanks am shootin' from de ships. Well, daddy am watchin' de balls comin' from dem guns, fallin' round dere, and a car come down de track loaded with rocks and hit him. Dat car kilt him.

"Mammy marries Bill Bailey after freedom and moves to de Barnum Place, what Massa John Miles own. I stays with mammy till I's seventeen and help dem share crop. Den I leaves. Dat de way with chillen, dey gives you lots of trouble raisin' dem and den off dey goes. When my chillen am young'uns dey's on my lap, and when dey's growed up, dey's on my heart.

"Us have de hard time share croppin'. Times was hard den and de niggers didn't know much 'bout takin' care demselves. Course, dey better

off free, but dey have to larn. Us work hard and make 'nough to live on de first year us free. Us raise cotton and veg'tables and when I's not holpin' mammy I goes out and gits a li'l work here and yonder.

"I marries in Galveston, to dat old cuss, settin' right dere, William Thomas am he name and I's stood for him ever since. Him am dock wallop'in' when I's marry to him. Sho', him am a dock walloper. If you wants to talk big, you calls it stev'dore on de wharf.

"Dat cullud gen'man of mine allus brung in de bacon. We'uns am never rich, but allus eats till de last few years. Us goes on de farm and it hand and mouth livin', but us eats someway. After while, us come to Fort Worth and he works as mortar man and cement mixer. We'uns live good till de few years back, when him break down in de back and can't work no more.

"It am ten chillun us raise but only five livin' now. One live at Stop Six, right here in Fort Worth, and de others am all over de world. Us don't know where dey am. Since Bill can't work no more, us git de pension from de State and dat \$26.00 de month for de two of us.

"Does I ever vote? Christ for 'mighty! No. Why yous talk dat foolishment. Why for dis igno'mous old woman want to vote? No, sar, and no tother womens ought to vote. Dat am for de mens to do. My Bill votes couple times, when us in Galveston, and I tells you 'bout dat.

"Dey gives de eddication with a couple cups whiskey and de cheroot. When de whiskey and de cheroot works on Bill's brain, dere am den de smart nigger, and he votes 'telligent. I asks him what he votes for and him say, 'I's vote for what am on de ticket.' 'What am on de ticket,' I says. 'How does I know, I can't read,' Den I says, 'Better yous not vote, 'cause maybe yous vote to put youself in de jailhouse.' So I guess him think 'bout

dat and him see what foolishment and troublement him maybe git into, and him quit votin'. We'uns am lucky with de trouble. Guess it 'cause we'uns knows how to 'have. When I's young my mammy larn me how to 'have and where I 'long, so de patterrollers and de Ku Klux never bother we'uns. Now, we'uns so old us can't git round, so us double safe now.

"Gosh for 'mighty! What yous want next? Now it for me to sing.

Well, yous can't put de bluff on dis old nigger, so here it am:

"Put on my long white robe,
Put on de golden crown,
Put on de golden slipper,
And forever be Jesus' lamb.

"But I likes 'nother song better, like dis:

"Herodias go down to de river one day,
Want to know what John Baptist have to say,
John spoke de words at risk of he life,
Not lawful to marry yous brudder's wife.'

"Not dat am 'nough. If I's here much longer, yous have dis old woman dancin'.
