

High and the prejudices within the educational system because they occurred after 1941 and do not fit the time period of the pre-arsenal communities.

When asked at the end of the interview if he had any other comments that would provide an understanding of the social context of those who lived in the pre-arsenal communities, Walter commented strenuously about the absence of justice for Black people in the legal system. He said Black people had no recourse in either civil or criminal matters. Walter Joiner said that once he was talking with a lawyer he knew, Billy Johnson, and he told him that there had been no convictions of a White [person] crime against a Black [person] in the local area. Walter thought back and said this conversation took place in about 1971. He said the attorney doubted what he said and looked back through records. He couldn't find any cases of conviction.

Walter said a White man could shoot a Black man, and the law wouldn't even look into it. [One example of that was found in this research on RSA land.] He said that no court would convict a White man of a crime against a Black man (or woman).

The same was true for civil matters. He said Black people were not given receipts when they paid bills or mortgage payments and, as a result, were often cheated. He said that was how Connie Horton lost his land. In addition, Walter indicated that there was an unwritten set of rules that Black people knew to follow if they didn't want trouble.

In his description of buying the first school bus, it becomes apparent that Walter and others got around some of the rules sometimes, but also knew their limitations—they knew when going against the norm would be, to use understatement, “detrimental,” to themselves and to others. They bought the school bus under what were false pretenses, not because any false information was given, but because the White people who knew about it never imagined it was being bought for anything other than hauling Black workers to farms. They got around the insurance issue. They accomplished taking the youth from Pond Beat to Council School where they could attend the upper grade levels. When they were told by the White plantation owner in Whitesburg not to stop and pick up “his people” or the bus would burn, they did not. They knew their bus would burn—then no Black youth would be transported to Council School.

When the New Deal came, and dependable Black tenant farmers needed to be informed so that they could have the opportunity to apply for a loan, there was no doubt in the tenants minds that the typical White plantation owner did not want anyone to come to his plantation to talk to “his people.” He did not want to lose good labor. The tenant farmers [or day help] lived in his houses and were dependent upon him for all aspects of their livelihood. Talking to “his people” when he didn't want “his people” talked with was definitely against the rules. Breaking the rule would cause potential bodily harm to the intruder as well as censure to the tenant who listened. As a result, it seems an early example of the “networking” that is so touted today took place.