

Black people from the other communities helped to identify a number of tenant farmers who would have high probability for success in getting a loan. Someone would ask around and learn what church that farmer attended. A Black man attending a Black church was not something that would stand out, so the target for the loan was informed about the opportunity during the course of a church service or event. Once the potential loan applicants were identified, the county agent would help to look quietly for a landowner who wanted to sell a large parcel that could be divided. It seems probable that having to conform to the rules of discriminatory social interaction resulted in increased cohesiveness in Black communities.

The researcher sensed that Walter expects prejudiced behavior from White people. He does have grounds to do that. The phrase “guilty until proven innocent” comes to mind. However, Walter’s comments also show that he has no problem getting along with White people who treat him fairly and with respect.

He seems to have a very high regard for Sam Harris, Sr. Walter explained how Sam Harris, Sr. had discretely, but regularly, given him rides to Huntsville on Mondays and from Huntsville to Pond Beat on Fridays so he could manage to stay with a relative during the week and go to school and then get home on weekends to tend to farm chores and crops. Then he mentioned his adult years when working as an engineer he had gone to the farm of the aging Sam Harris, Sr. at his farm on Bob Wade Lane. When one of the womenfolk had brought a plate outside for Walter to eat, the aging Sam Harris had said to take him to a table, that dogs ate standing up, not men. There was no doubt in the author’s mind that Walter Joiner felt more than respect for the White plantation owner Sam Harris, Sr.

Walter related another story of interaction. A White boy (Wilson’s son) he grew up with in Pond Beat saw him at a gas station across the Whitesburg Bridge in “gasoline alley.” The boy, now a man, was delighted to see Walter and put his arm around him in greeting. The man’s companion rebuked him for “hugging” a “colored man,” and the man explained to his companion that Walter was his old friend. Walter Joiner remembers the White boy who threw rocks at him from the bus. He also remembers the White boy who was his friend and is still his friend.