

[Hopes 'at Somebody Will Come Along]

Archie George (Negro)

180 [Sampson?] St., NE

Atlanta, Georgia.

By William Jenkins

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... HOPES 'AT SOMEBODY WILL COME ALONG TO TALK TO

"Yeah, I'll tell you all about myself, I got plenty ob time. I jes set right here all day long and hopes 'at somebody will come along to talk to."

"I'm from [Lithonia?]; I was born there on a farm. My dad and mother had five children, me and four sisters.

"Yeah, I called 'em Dad and Mother, but I was de only one ob de children 'at called 'm 'et - the rest called 'em Mamma and Papa.

"My dad he died about nine years back; my mother died when I wus small. I have a sister in Cincinnati and one in [Decatur?]. The rest is dead. Dey said 'at my mother died wid T.B.'s She wus sick jes 'bout one year. My dad he jes got sick and died. He wudn' sick long and I don't know what he died wid, but he didn' die wid no T. B.'s. One ob my sisters died wid pneumonia and de other 'n she got shot. She went in a room where another man and woman wus fightin' and got shot accidentally. My other two sisters is married and is gittin' along right well.

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“We worked de farm in Lithonia on halves. The man furnished all de seed, [feed?], mule, tools, and ever'thing; and we got half uv ever'thing we made. Yeah, we had plenty to eat and I guess I had a right good time when I wus [er?] growin' up. I sho did want a bicycle though but I never did git none. I had 'at mule to ride though and 'at wus better 'n a bicycle but I didn' know it then. Yeah, my dad could er bought one if 'en he ['ad?] wanted to 'cause we most always had some money left over 2 after seddlin' -up time. When we had a good crop we'd have about five or six hundred dollars left after all de bills wus paid.

“I never went to school much, jes about two years. I can't write none to do no good and I can read jes a little bit. My sisters went to school a whole lot more 'an I did. I done most ob de work. I don't remember much about 'at school. [We?] jes had two teachers and I don't jes know how many went but de wus a good many. [Naw?], we didn't have no playgrounds nor nothin'. It wus jes a country school.

“We played marbles most all de time when I wus a little boy. Sometimes we played baseball though.

“When I wus a pretty good size boy, I used to work here in Atlanta in de winter time. I wus a pretty [bad?] un then. I got locked up for shootin' crap or eye-ballin' most ever' [Saddy?] night. Awe, eye-ballin', [dat's?] when you aint gamblin', you is jes watchin' de game. Dey locks you up though jes de same. My boss-man he always got me out. Yeah, dey had 'at kangaroo court in 'at jail. If 'en you paid 'em a quarter though you wouldn' git no licks. Yeah, I always give 'em 'at quarter.

“I went to North Carolina to work at Big-Rock [Quarry?] when I wus about twenty-four years old. I made five-twenty er day up there drillin' rock. Awe, I worked in 'at rock quarry at Lithonia some and 'at's where I learned to drill rock. Dey jes paid me a dollar and er half er day for workin' there though. Awe, I jes made er dollar and er quarter when I wus drivin' teams in Atlanta.

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"I didn' stay in North Carolina long, jes 'bout six months. I 3 went to [West Virginia?] to work in de coal mines. I made eight dollars and one penny er day er drivin' er mule in dem mines. Later on, I made ten er twelve dollars er day loading coal. 'At wus hard work but de more you worked de more money you made. Awe, I could load about four er five cars er day. Dey wus cars dey use in de mines, dey holds four er five tons.

"[Naw?], we 'ad plenty ob work to do ever' day in de week. I never did git laid-off none, not one day. I'd work about three er four months though and den I'd jes stay off er week er two. Naw, I wouldn' git tired er workin', jes tired er goin' to work ever' day. Naw, when I'd go back dey would always put me back to work.

"I still shot craps most ob de time when I wudn' at work and I made money when I gambled. Sometimes I'd win two er three hundred dollars. Naw, dey don' lock you up fer gamblin' up there. They don' pay no attention to you. Naw, I wouldn' lose near as much as I'd win. Naw, I didn' save none ob my money. I wus a fancy dresser in 'em days and I spent most ob my money on women.

"[Naw?], I never did git married. I wouldn' marry no woman pig-in-the-sack. Dey might be er 'possum in 'at sack. I had to try 'em before I married 'em and when I tried 'em, well, I jes never did marry 'em. I would er married one though but she wanted to git married too quick and we fell out.

"Dey got me in de army in 1918. I wus sent to Camp Lee. Naw, I didn' do no fightin'. I jes stayed at de camp. Naw, I wudn' scared, I 4 wanted to go to [France?] and fight. Some uv 'em wus scared though but most uv 'em wanted to fight. Naw, dey wudn' nothin' but colored men in my company. We 'ad some white officers though. When der war wus over dey sent me down here to Camp Gordon. Den dey let me out.

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"I stayed around here [fer?] a while and den I went to Tom Creek, Va. I got a job loadin' coal at de V. I. C. mine. I worked there 'bout four years and 'at's where I got my legs cut off.

"One Tuesday mornin' I went to work and dey wudn' no empty cars on de tracks to load de coal in. I walked up to where de cars wus, and when de engine started to pushin' down to where we wus er gonna load 'em I went to swing on one to ride down there and my foot slipped and I fell under de [car?]. De wheels run over me and cut off both my legs up above my knees. I wus in de hospital for seven months. When I got out dey sent me to de poor farm. My cousin, Ethel Brown, come 'air and got me and carried me back to West Virginia to live wid her.

"Naw, dey didn' pay me nothin' fer gittin' my legs cut off. Dey aint never give me one cent. Dey give me some artificial legs but I aint never been able to use 'em. You see when you git both yo' legs cut off above yo' knees you can't git about on no artificial legs and crutches. You see when I gits to standin' up on 'em legs and crutches I can throw my legs out in front of me but, wid my legs like 'at, how is I gonna git my crutches off the ground then and how is I gonna git my legs back under me again. You can't do it so you jes falls down. If I had jes one knee joint I could git about on 'em legs all right.

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"I stayed wid my cousin [fer?] two or three years and den I went to Lynch, Kentucky, and lived wid another one ob my cousins, Doll Hawk, fer 'bout two years. Den I went back to West Virginia to live wid [Willie?] Hawk. He is another cousin ob mine.

"I got me a truck and sold produce in West Virginia. I made five er six dollars er day. I made my own livin' fer a while but then it got so I couldn' sell enough to pay the boy I had drivin' 'at truck so I had to quit. 'At boy wrecked 'at truck a while after 'at when he had it borrowed and I never did git [it?] fixed up no more. 'At truck never wus no good much nohow.

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"De American Legion man got the government to pay me forty dollars er month. Den I could pay some [board?] and de folks didn' mind me bein' aroun' so much.

"When Roosevelt got in office he cut my check down to thirty dollars. I show will be glad when de Republicans git back in, so I'll git my ten dollars er month back again. Year, I's er Republican. I voted for Hoover and Landon. Naw, I won't vote next year if I's still down here. I jes votes when I's in West Virginia. Us Niggers don' vote down here.

"I think dis WPA had jes made er lot er lazy Niggers. When I had my legs I didn' want de government to give me no job nor nothin'; I could always git one fer myself. Well, maybe jobs is harder to git now den dey wus twenty years ago. I never thought about it like 'at. You is right, it wus about eight or nine years ago when I had to stop sellin' produce 'cause I couldn' sell none hardly. Will [said?] he had been ever'where for 6 er job and couldn' find none. I guess he is havin' a hard time er payin' de rent and de bills. I pays him four dollars er week though fer my stayin' here and [Essie?], Will's wife, she works and makes six dollars er week, but Will he stays out of er job 'bout half de time and when he's got one he don' make nothin' much.

"Yea , I gits tired settin' here all de time. I don' think about nothin' much. You see, I done got used to it now. I can git down de steps and go down to de corner but it's more trouble 'an it's worth. I has stomach trouble and it keeps me feelin' bad pretty near all de time now. I has had it fer years. I's been aimin' to go out to Forty Eight Hospital and see if I can't git somethin' [done?] fer it but I jes keeps puttin' it off.

"Naw, I don' never go to church; I used to go sometimes before I lost my legs but not very much.

"I's goin' back to West Virginia, if I gits to feelin' better. I believe I like it better up there. Money is easier to git up there.

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“Well, I guess I'll be settin' right here when you comes back along. I'll talk wid you any time.”

Archie seems to be about fifty years old and would weigh about one hundred and seventy-five pounds, if he had his legs. Both legs were cut off high above his knees. His clothes were old and tattered; he had a worn-out piece of leather under him, which was laced around his hips and leg-nubs.

He moves himself along by raising his body from a sitting position with his hands, then throwing his body forward, then lowering his body to a sitting position again. He uses two wooden “[trowels?]”, he calls them (they are made like plasterers' trowels), to protect his hands and to increase his reach about four inches.

The house where Archie lives has four rooms and is in good repair. Archie's cousin, his cousin's wife, and Archie live in two rooms on the left side of the house. Another couple occupy the other two rooms. All the furniture in the left side of the house is new and a [new?] rug is on the floor. A large console radio stands in the front room. Archie sleeps in the kitchen on a cot. They cook their meals on an oil stove. There is no bath/ room in the house; a flush toilet is in the back yard. There is no sink in the kitchen; a [spigot?] is on the back porch. Both rooms were very clean and neat, quite a contrast to Archie.

I guess Archie is still sitting in that doorway waiting and hoping ““At somebody will come along to talk to””.