School Day

I were the smart one with the dumb idea.
I don't really know if the kids these day are any different than the days I were growing up. Probly the oppitunity are better now than they were when I grew up. Studying habits are the same. Parents still have to make kids get their home work and try to make them understand education is the best thing for you. For me when I was going to school my greatest ambition was to get a good education. But at the same time my dumbest idea were to get a education without studying. I soon learn better. I guess I was pretty dumb in school because of the four wall. I could never think very well when I was box in. Or let me say force to do something even if it was for my own good.

My sister were much different. Ruth were the smartest of us all. Bessie Lee was smart enough to get by. She was good at doing things and studying but did it only when she had to. Mother had to keep us seperated doing our home work. Bessie Lee would not let no body do any. She could find the most unusual thing to do to interrupt your study even if she was on the other side of the house. She would do thing like start coughing out loud and continue. She would whistle, sing, or keep calling somebody. Even at school she had to be put by her self. Most of the time she had to sit by the teacher. My biggest problem was when I got old enough to go to school, Mother had all ready taught us the school basics: counting, time tables to the threeses, and reading.

We learn to read at school but also at home and Church and Sunday School. Many of the grown folks did not know how to read. Those who did probly learned from Bible reading at home. Famleys read the Bible together every night before bed time and then have prayer. At our house every body would get on ther knees, except Dad who was respectful but might be
rolling a cigarette. During my young days Mother would pick out scriptures in the Bible and begin to read. Then she would tell one of us kids to pick up where she left off from. The words we could not pronounce she would spell them out and pronounce and say, You spell it and pronounce it. Ruth could always pronounce good. I was hard to learn and Bessie Lee, you had to make her learn.

Not only in the homes did you learn how to read but there was prayer meeting where everybody were taught to read. The leader would call on almost any body to read a scripture, lead a song, or pray. It was embarrassing to some of the peoples who could not read or did not want to pray or did not know the song. Then some body sitting close would say, Go ahead. I'll help you. Some body would pass the Bible or hymn book to the person and some one beside them read or sing with them. There were some the next week who would overcome their shyness and before many weeks would be leading songs. Most everybody went to Church and Sunday School and prayer meeting, so it was a advantage to young parents who had not finish school to have members of the church help in this way. The elders who could not read might think they were too old to learn but they insist on the young ones being taught at church.

The school I went to I think have a problem being identified by some peoples. The school may have had a different name before I went to it, but as long as I can remember, the school and church I went to was call Shepton Colored School and Shepton Church. This building was across Preston Road and 500 yards to the west of the road. It was about forty feet by thirty feet. It face south and had one door and a porch all the way across the front. There were windows down both sides and in front. No windows in the back. Inside in the back there were a platform three feet by five feet and a podium which stay in the place all the time. The teachers four leg table that sit in
front of the platform and podium were use for the teacher desk. I don’t remember any book or library kept there. The teacher had a foot locker in her car with books. The books that we had were old and raggy. And I can remember when Mr. Sigler would bring use books out to the school at Shepton. All the book I ever got was all ready torn up. The cover were off. Leaf were missing.

One thing about going to school in my school days: you were taught very good. What you learn usually stuck with you. Each grade were divided up in groups and to this day I don’t see how the teacher taught thirty or thirty-five kids, grades from the first to seventh. I think it was the home work you had to take home and bring back every day and the determination of the kids and the parents, along with a leather strap.

Audrey Thornton was the only teacher I remember until her last year, seventh grade. She drove her Dad Cadillac car and carry her book and school work in a big bag to and from home every day. And the last year when she was going to have a baby, the seventh grade was taught by her husband, Lucius Davis, who was a teacher out of Dallas.

There were a boy and girl toilet out on a rocky hill. Two basketball goles. And they did have a basketball team! It would be mix with older boys who had finish and school boys. We play teams like Frisco, Cilina, Rock Hill, White Rock, and Carlton. The school had two cole burning stoves. In winter the kids would take turns standing around the stove to keep warm. School would start one month early for a month and then turn out for kid to go pick cotton. Hours of school were from 8:00 to 4:00. There were wheat field around the school. Every year old man Fred would come down to school and tell Audry to keep the kids out of the fields. We knock down too much wheat.

Regular school were broke down in two session. We start to school in August and again in September or October. That's
because of cotton picking time. And for most famleys, country and city, cotton picking time were the only time whin you could make any money. The whole family got involve in picking cotton. You pick five and a half day a week. Then on Saturday evening were the best time of our life. We got to go to town. Pretty often during cotton picking we got that one pair of church and school shoes, two pair of Long John, two shirt, maybe three. And two or three duckings (overalls)—two for school and one for church—paper, colors, and cedar pinsel and tablets for school.

One thing I found out at a early age while going to school is there were only very few select black farm kids that got to finish high school or even think about college. The country school only went to the sixth or seventh grade and if a black farm kid were able to get through those grades, that were all the education they got because there was no way to town. Mostly farm kid made it through the fifth grade and that was it.

I think I was very fortunate to be able to finish school. One reason was whin I finish the sixth grade Dad gave up share cropping and we move to Allen on the Moore farm where we had 300 acre to work and Moore gave Dad all he could make on the farm. But that another story. I started to school in Allen. I was going to the seventh grade. About half way through the seventh I had to quit school and work the farm, so I flunk the seventh grade and by the time the next school year started and the crops were ready to harvest, Dad move us back to Ray Haggard place.

Any way Shepton School only went to the sixth grade and about that time Plano had gave Plano Colored School a bus and we started to school in Plano. I had to start all over in the seventh grade, but I was smart enough to catch up to the eighth grade and that is how I got to finish High School.
Shepton Colored School. One thing about going to school in my days: you were taught very good.

my other education I got was self study courses I taken on my own in the army. Whin I got out of the army I went to Richland College and Grayson County College. I still lack a few hour from getting my degree in personell business management. Again I taken up farming and again farming stop me from getting an education. Maybe soon if I can give up some of my fishing pleasure I'll go back to school.

Again I say it was hard for a farm family with kids to get a high school diploma. My sister Ruth, as smart as she was, only got to the tenth grade and Bessie Lee got through the ninth grade. Out of all of my Shepton school mates that stayed on the farm, none never did finish school. If I can remember, Shepton School close about 1946 or 1947. I would have to look up the
record to be sure. Audrey, the teacher, got pregnant and retired. I think about that time. I don’t even know where any of my Shepton school mates is these days. If any body no any Shepton school kid of the 1935 to 1945 time, please get in touch with Eddie Stimpson, 1000 F Avenue, Plano, Texas 75094. Phone (214) 423-3767. Thank you.