

AU 138
OH 1975.06
TR 193

Interviewee: A. M. Dantzler
Interviewer: Charlotte Capers

Title: An interview with A. M. Dantzler, July 27, 1973 /
interviewed by Charlotte Capers

OH 75-06

DANTZLER, A. M.

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MDAH

NARRATOR: A.M. Dantzler
INTERVIEWER: Charlotte Capers
DATE: July 27, 1973
PLACE: 701 East Beach, Pass Christian, Mississippi
SUBJECT: The Dantzler family and the part it played in the development of the lumber industry in South Mississippi

Dantzler: My great-grandfather is the man that started the business, back before the Civil War.

Capers: What was his name?

Dantzler: William Griffin. He originally came from Georgia, I think. He was smart enough during the Civil War to take his sawmill machinery up in the Pascagoula River Swamp and bury it, so the Yankees wouldn't get it.

Capers: Where did your great-grandfather come to from Georgia?

Dantzler: He located at Moss Point, I believe. I am not too sure. My grandfather married William Griffin's daughter and was in the cotton business in Mobile before the Civil War.

Capers: Is this the Dantzler family?

Dantzler: Yes, L. N. Dantzler, the first. He was in the War and got wounded somewhere. I believe it was Shiloh, and he was held prisoner out here on Ship Island for a while afterwards. After the War he went into business with his father-in-law and later bought him out.

Capers: Where was this?

Dantzler: All at Moss Point. In the middle '80s, I guess it was, he took his eldest son, who was my father, J. L. Dantzler, and the second son, L. N. Dantzler, Jr., into the business and it was incorporated in 1888, which I have been told is one of the earliest industrial charters in the state.

(Mrs. Dantzler entered the group)

Capers: I'm sure it is.

Dantzler: They gradually built the business up, and at one time in the early 1900s we owned nearly 400,000 acres of land.

Capers: Was that in one county?

Dantzler: No, in about six counties.

Capers: There is not that much land in one county, is there?

Dantzler: Oh, yes.

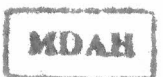
Capers: What counties?

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- Dantzler: Harrison, Jackson, George, Stone, Perry and Forrest, the six southeast counties. My father was really the leader in accumulating land and timber. A lot of the land they had came to them because they would go to buy a man's timber and he would say, "You are not going to get this timber and leave me with the land to pay taxes on," and that's how they accumulated quite a bit of it. In 1907 my grandfather died, and they increased the capitalization, and they took in the other two brothers and three sisters, making a total of seven stockholders.
- Capers: Name the seven.
- Dantzler: J. L. Dantzler, my father, was the eldest; L. N. Dantzler, Jr.; A. F. Dantzler; G. B. Dantzler, were the boys, and then there was Mrs. A. M. Cowan, Mrs. George L. Izzard and Mrs. Annie Laurie Bozeman...they called her Kate. The capital was raised from \$200,000 to \$500,000.
- Capers: Now, what was the date of this?
- Dantzler: 1907 or '08, after my grandfather died. We were at that time shipping about 150 million feet of lumber a year, 95 percent export.
- Capers: Where did you ship it to?
- Dantzler: South America, South Africa, Europe and the West Indies.
- Capers: That was a terrific industry in this part of the country at that time.
- Dantzler: One hundred fifty million feet is a lot of lumber. We also had a fleet of schooners that plied between Moss Point and the West Indies. Of course, they didn't go down as far as South America.
- Capers: So did you operate a ship yard, or....
- Dantzler: During World War I we had a separate corporation, the Dantzler Boat Company, I believe...no, Dantzler Shipbuilding Company. We built wooden ships and I think we launched three before the war ended. The story is that one of them was the only one that made it across the ocean - all the rest got sunk. Ours never did get back. All the rest of them that were built, I don't know if they sank or what!
- Capers: You don't know what happened, they just never came back?
- Dantzler: At that time we had about six sawmills. We had what we called the railroad mills on the old G & SI, which is now the IC. We had one at Howison, one at Ten Mile, and one at Bond, Mississippi, just above Wiggins. Then we had one later at Cedar Lake, back of Biloxi, two at Moss Point, one was on the north side of the river and one on the south side. Years ago we had one at Vancleave, too. We never had more than six at one time.
- Capers: How was the lumber industry coming along at that time in Mississippi? Were the Dantzlars the pioneers? Were the Crosbys and the Westons operating at the same time?

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- Dantzler: The Crosbys came in a little later than we did. I think they came in probably after the first World War.
- Capers: What about Mr. Roland Weston?
- Dantzler: Have you read the Mississippi Harvest?
- Capers: I am not sure....
- Dantzler: Well, anyway, the Westons go back to a Maine family.
- Capers: Yes, we have that information at the Archives. Roland Weston was president of the Mississippi Historical Society and gave the Archives a lot of old company papers, etc., which I would like to interest you in doing if you have any old family company papers, because the Archives is a very reasonable place to put these. The families aren't going to be interested except to take their children and grandchildren into the Archives and look at them.
- Dantzler: Well, Charlotte, the University of Mississippi has a lumber archives.
- Capers: Yes, I know that.
- Dantzler: We have some papers up there.
- Capers: Well, I could comment on that, but I won't take up your time. I think that is fine. They do have a lumber archives. Unfortunately, there is competition among state agencies for manuscripts, and things get split. I really think there ought to be one place so some poor soul trying to do research in the lumber business won't have to fly all over the country.
- Dantzler: International Paper Company bought us out in '66 and agreed to give our old records to the University of Mississippi Archives, if and when they get through with them. I don't know whether they'll do it or not.
- Capers: Was the old Claiborne house on your property?
- Dantzler: No, I don't believe it was.
- Capers: International Paper Company in about the 1960s tried to give the Department of Archives and History the old house over at Pearlinton that was owned by J. F. H. Claiborne, the historian. Well, we couldn't take it anyway because we didn't have any money, and we had no way in the world to do anything about it legally, so it finally rotted and it was sad. It just collapsed. It was a real interesting old house.
- Mrs. Dantzler: It was a pretty old house.

- Capers: It was. I went out there and Mr. Weston took me. Mr. Weston and I were big buddies when he was president of the Historical Society. I do want to tell you that, yes, we do have the history of how they got here and where they came from. I am foggy in my own mind about it, and I don't know what connection they had, if any, with the Lutkens. Mr. Pete Lutken, who was president of Lamar Life, came from Logtown.
- Dantzler: One of the founders of Lamar Life was Horatio Weston and that's how the Lutkens and the Westons got together. There wasn't anything way back, that I know of. The Westons came from Michigan down here.
- Capers: The Lutkens came from Finland or one of the Scandinavian countries....
- Dantzler: In our export business we owned one-third interest in the Standard Export Lumber Company which was merely a sales organization out of New Orleans, and the Westons used to ship through this same outfit and so did Crosby and Edward Hines, all the bigger lumber companies.
- Capers: Who were they? Old line big lumber people?
- Dantzler: I don't know who the United States Lumber Company was. They were around Hattiesburg.
- Capers: They were operating at the same time....
- Dantzler: And Newman Lumber Company....
- Capers: Now was Newman a Mississippi group?
- Dantzler: I think so. I wasn't in the lumber business until 1943 when I came back over here. We moved to New Orleans in 1912 on account of my father's health, and so I wasn't connected with it until I came back over here in 1943. I was trying to think of some of the others. There was another that operated right up here, just north.
- Capers: Do you have any boyhood recollections of the actual operation of the business at Moss Point? I don't know anything about the equipment, sawmills or anything like that. Are they much more sophisticated now than they were then?
- Dantzler: Much, much more. But in fact the lumber business was the most archaic business for many years, and it's just in the last fifteen or twenty years, I'd say, that there have been innovations. In our circular mill on the north side of Dog River, we had a saw that took a half-inch kerf. Every time it went through a log, it knocked a half-inch of sawdust. You see how wasteful that was. Then the band saw came along, and that was much thinner. It didn't take as much of a cut.
- Capers: Did you have any kind of scientific harvesting of the trees? Or did you just go in and cut them?

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- Dantzler: We were very fortunate in having a man named Posey Howell who started leaving seed trees back in the early 1900s. That was a primitive form of forestry, but it was very effective, because you get reproduction that way.
- Capers: When the lumber companies came in, in the early 1900s, they just came in and cut out the trees, didn't they?
- Dantzler: Charlotte, I tell you they were hogs, of course, and they didn't have any idea about ecology or anything. The taxing authorities had a lot to do with that clean cutting because Edward Hines, an outfit out of Chicago, had some land over here in Hancock County; and he went through and took what was economical for him to take, but he left a lot of small timber because it just didn't pay him to bring it in. That was when timber was assessed just like the land, they'd assess the land and then they'd assess the timber, and the next year his assessment on the timber was just the same as it had been before he cut through it. So he made a protest and they said, "Well, you've still got timber there," so he gave an order to cut everything down that stood, and if they couldn't bring it in they were to leave it on the ground; and that's the reason that that country was so bare for years and years.
- Capers: Has that country got a second growth?
- Dantzler: Yes, it's coming back. St Regis owns most of it and has planted a lot of it. IP (International Paper) has some of it.
- Capers: What was kind of the end of the family-owned firm? When these big companies came in? That hasn't been too long ago, has it? Was it just economically not feasible, or was it just such a good deal that you had to do it?
- Dantzler: Well, ours was such a good deal and then, Charlotte, family corporations get unwieldy after a while. Ours started out with three stockholders, and then seven stockholders; then we ended up - when we sold out we had about eighteen principal stockholders and then a lot of kids that had five to ten shares - about thirty stockholders altogether.
- Capers: So it was all a family thing....
- Dantzler: Yes, and there wasn't anybody who had control of it.
- Capers: So International Paper came in and bought you out.
- Dantzler: Yes, in 1966. Now they bought the Rand Batson land in 1946 or '47.
- Capers: Where is that located?
- Dantzler: That's over in Pearl River County and Lamar. They had about fifty or sixty thousand acres, I guess.
- Capers: What kind of labor force did you have to work when you were a boy? Do you remember?

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Dantzler: All Negroes, practically.

Capers: All Negroes. Did it require that they be skilled?

Dantzler: No, one thing about the sawmill business is....

Capers: ...They just dumped them on and "let 'em rip!"

Dantzler: Well, the sawyer who was generally a white man, was the only skilled man.

Capers: What's a sawyer?

Dantzler: He's the man who handles the saw, handles the carriage that carries the log into the saw and out of it. Of course, they had millwrights who were skilled.

Capers: What's a millwright?

Dantzler: He's a mechanic. He keeps the machinery going. That's one thing about the lumber business. When labor was cheap, they didn't have to think about labor-saving machinery, but now...like harvesting timber for pulpwood, that used to all be done by Negroes; and they had as many as they needed and they didn't have to pay them much. Now they have a machine that one man sits on and cuts the pulpwood, takes the bark off of it, and stacks it on a truck behind him all in one operation. That's what they had to do on account of the labor situation.

Capers: I guess from what you say that what was required to run a lumber business was good sense on the part of the owners and managers, and not too much equipment...just a good strong back.

Dantzler: Well, now, we had our own railroad and most of it was done by railroad logging. Oxen would bring the timber up to the landing, and it would be loaded by crane onto trains. We built the roads ourselves; we had a shop down here at Gulfport that made repairs on our locomotives.

Capers: That's fascinating. That was like a whole little kingdom, wasn't it?

Dantzler: I tell you what we did, Charlotte. Old - what was his name - Silver?

Capers: Jim Silver? He started the lumber archives at Ole Miss.

Dantzler: He asked us about our records. The office was at Moss Point at that time. We had an attic full. I never got up there, but this attic was just loaded with old records, so I told him if he would bring a truck down here - and they did - and they took two truckloads.

Capers: I am glad they did. I think that's wonderful to save them. Well, now, you know John Moore. Did he come to you? John Moore wrote the book on the Learned family, lumber people.

Dantzler: Yes, I have a copy of that. He kindly sent me a copy of that.

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- Capers: What about the Learned people? Now, have they been down in Natchez all the time?
- Dantzler: Yes. Now they are the oldest sawmill outfit.
- Capers: They are the oldest?
- Dantzler: From what I understand. But they were primarily a hardwood outfit, over on the river....
- Capers: Yes. Well I didn't know there were many hardwoods around.
- Dantzler: Oh, yes. There used to be, and there still are quite a few in the swamps.
- Capers: Do you know Peggy Peabody, and Howard? Well he's Mr. Learned's - what - grandson, I believe.
- Dantzler: His mother was a Learned, I think.
- Capers: Yes. I'm always very confused about them, because he speaks kind of with a northern accent, yet he's right straight in the line of those Learned's.
- Dantzler: He must have gone to school in the north.
- Capers: Well, I think one of his parents was from the east, or maybe a whole generation of his family lived east, and then he came back. I don't know, I'm a little bit confused on it.
- Dantzler: Well, we continued like most lumber companies, and just gradually cut out the merchantable, and we started trying to sell off the land. We did sell off quite a bit. We sold the Government 91,000 acres at \$3.75 an acre, in 1932-1933. A lot of it was within ten miles of the Coast. It's the Biloxi Circle of the DeSoto National Forest. We struggled along. We built one little mill up at Ten Mile in 1937. It was supposed to run eight years, I believe, and we finally shut it down at my behest in 1949, so it really ran twenty-two years, and could have run forever. We got interested in tree farming and raising timber. We couldn't sell our land, so we decided to turn around and start raising it back, which we did.
- Capers: Yes. Well, you're really a forester, too!
- Mrs. Dantzler: He's a forester in thought!
- Dantzler: The only thing I did smart was to get some smart foresters!
- Capers: That's real smart!
- Mrs. Dantzler: The only thing you did smart was to persuade the old man to let you get some smart foresters to start reforesting. They were the old school -

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"cut out, get out", you know.

Capers: Conservation is a relatively new idea, I guess.

Dantzler: They thought if we didn't hit oil....

Mrs. Dantzler: They were counting on hitting oil, you see. They were drilling all the time.

Dantzler: We had twenty-six dry holes, and we haven't got a drop.

Capers: You never got any oil on your whole property? Isn't that interesting! Imagine that!

Dantzler: ...But this tree farming...in 1950 we had gradually "snuck up on it." In 1950 we had a survey made of our timber holdings and it showed that we had about one hundred million feet of timber. In the next fifteen years we cut about seventy-five million feet. In 1965, (we put in our own continuous forest inventory in 1957 - which my uncle and my father would turn over in their graves if they thought we could get the amount of volume you had on 107,000 acres from 120 acres - that's what it amounted to) our continuous forest inventory showed that after cutting seventy-five million feet of the one hundred, we had 227 million feet.

Capers: My goodness! Isn't that something?

Mrs. Dantzler: That was "selective cutting," wasn't it? Leaving the right trees there?

Dantzler: We had a chief forester who turned out to be one of the most able guys in the business. He's now with International Paper. He had three men under him. So we had four graduate foresters, and we cut selectively and planted a lot, and I think that was why International Paper paid us such a premium for our land.

Capers: That's what I was saying. It seems to me that you had it developed to its absolute peak of efficiency when they came in.

Dantzler: Well, it was building up. Of course, we were not nearly as well-stocked as we could have been, and the land is not nearly as stocked now as it was when we sold it; because they are on a pulp-wood rotation, which means clean cut, plant, let it go for twenty or twenty-five years and then cut again....

Capers: Clean cut and that will give you little trees?

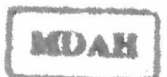
Dantzler: Yes. That will give you pulpwood.

Capers: So you get pulpwood from little trees. So they don't ever plan to get...their money is in pulpwood.

Mrs. Dantzler: Their crop is over about twenty years. They clean cut. They get what they want...plant again.

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- Dantzler: We used to raise a tree to its highest and best use, which was either a pole or a saw log. Of course, we didn't have millions tied up in paper mills like they do, either.
- Capers: Yes. Well, paper is the whole thing that they do now, isn't it? Where does the lumber come from...that people build with and good hardwood?
- Dantzler: Well, International Paper has a complex up here at Wiggins. I think it's an eleven or twelve million dollar complex. They have a plywood mill, a 2 x 4 stud mill. They take the plywood cores...you know how they make plywood veneer?
- Capers: I know roughly, yes.
- Dantzler: You end up with a core of about five inches. They run those cores through an automatic machine, and 2 x 4s come out....That's where a lot of the lumber comes from.
- Capers: They just laminate them together?
- Dantzler: No, no. They just take a core about that big around and put it into this automatic machine which cuts a 2 x 4 about - oh, anywhere from eight feet up.
- Mrs. Dantzler: You mean they make a 2 x 4 out of a round thing?
- Capers: Of course, I understand nothing, as you can tell, about the business. I don't understand that, but I think that it is an interesting fact and I accept it as a fact! I don't know how it happens!
- Mrs. Dantzler: Well, I didn't know that!
- Dantzler: And there are all kinds of new saws and chips - I think they call it a "saw and chipper" - and at the time that it cuts a kerf it makes chips instead of sawdust. Now that's a very new development.
- Mrs. Dantzler: Well, the laminating process is really something.
- Dantzler: Oh, yes. These beams you see in churches and schools....
- Mrs. Dantzler: ...Laminated beams, and they're supposed to be stronger than steel.
- Capers: Well, laminated beams are what - just lots of little boards put together?
- Dantzler: Yes, each board is laid together and pressurized....
- Capers: You see, we laminate paper is the reason I'm so brilliant about lamination. We take an old document - if you gave us some of your old documents and they were about to go, we would take the acid out of the paper and then we would put cellulose acetate on either side of the paper, and with terrific heat and pressure, laminate it so that it would become part of the paper. That's what happens with lumber, isn't it?

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Dantzler: Yes.

Capers: Well, I think this is most interesting, and I'm very ignorant on the subject, but I think that when people want to do a real serious study about the lumber industry they can go to Ole Miss and go through the documents; but we also would like to have something for them in our Department, and I see no reason why state-supported agencies shouldn't refer back and forth.

Dantzler: Oh, they should!

Capers: Your comments here would guide someone if we didn't have sense enough to tell them...to the University of Mississippi Lumber Archives.

Dantzler: I'm ashamed to say that I haven't been back. I was up there very shortly after we gave it to them and it was all just piled up on the floor. I don't know whether they've ever done anything with it or not. I understand that they have.

Capers: I am sure they have if they can. It's hard to get help to do anything, but we're in the best shape now in our Department that we've ever been, because we have about five young men who are just out of college and they are all working on sorting collections for years that we have not been able to get to. They've just been in boxes, and we have our new building which made it possible for us to spread out a little. We're about to fill it up and we haven't been in it two years!

Dantzler: I hope to get up there some time.

Capers: I hope you will, when you come to Jackson, Mississippi. Now let's talk a little bit more. I want to ask you about one more thing. Are there any private family lumber businesses operated in this part of the state now, or has International Paper or

Dantzler: International Paper, St. Regis, and...well, that's about the story in here. Georgia Pacific has bought up a lot of them.

Capers: That's a thing of the past, having your own little lumber business.

Dantzler: Georgia Pacific bought out the Favres, St. Regis bought Crosby - one Crosby, from Crosby, Mississippi, Hollis. Then Osborn, from Picayune, has his leased to the

Capers: Is that L. O.?

Dantzler: L. O., Jr.

Capers: I was going to ask about him. I thought he still operated some.

Dantzler: Well, his son-in-law has a sawmill....

Capers: That's the Gammill boy, at Hattiesburg, Stewart Gammill.

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Dantzler: They've got a plant at Hattiesburg, and I think they've got a plant at Picayune, too. Young Johnny Squires works with him. Did you ever know John Squires?

Capers: Yes, sure. I didn't realize that.

Dantzler: I don't know of any....

(End of Side One)

The Pascagoula Hardwood Company, which is an outgrowth - or descendant - of the old Eastman Gardner outfit in Laurel, owns about forty thousand acres in Pascagoula Swamp. Of course, that's a family deal.

Capers: Well, the Laurel...those people aren't still operating a family deal, are they?

Dantzler: Well, they own this thing. They don't operate at all, but it's just owning the land. And I think they've had offers to buy them out.

Capers: Was there any particular way of life comparable to - you know, we study about the sharecropping system in the Delta - was there any particular operation that was more complex than just the owner and the people they employed? There wasn't anything like how the people came to the commissary and managed their business? They didn't have anything, did they?

Dantzler: No, they paid them off in script. It was more or less like a commissary....

Capers: Explain script. Mr. Weston told me about script, but I've....

Dantzler: Well, it's just token money that they gave them instead of money, and they'd come in and get it cashed or pay for things with it. Every sawmill had a commissary.

Mrs. Dantzler: They bought all their supplies from the commissary and they could get some cash, too, if they wanted any.

Dantzler: No, they never did, I don't think.

Capers: They were paid in script. Is that correct?

Dantzler: Yes, I think so. That was before my time.

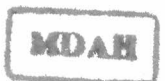
Capers: Yes, I know it was. I just wonder about how that works. That would be an interesting historical thing, because we don't know.

Dantzler: I'm not sure about it, how they did it.

Capers: Well, I'll check into that. I'll let you know if I find out!

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Mrs. Dantzler: There was a commissary in Moss Point when we lived there in 1923, 1924....

Dantzler: Yes, but that was a separate corporation. That was not like the commissary of the railroad mills. They were owned by the company.

Mrs. Dantzler: I was going to say they didn't take any of my script. They took cash.

Capers: ...Took your money! Well, you know, Mr. Thigpen keeps writing all these things. Do you ever see him?

Dantzler: No, I never have met him.

Capers: Apparently he just has a country store....

Dantzler: At Picayune, isn't it?

Capers: Yes, at Picayune, and his reminiscences are real interesting. We've got them all in the Archives, and I expect he may have dealt with that. I don't know. There's one more thing, unless there's something you would like to say about the business, but I would like...that's from an economic point of view. We're talking about economic history of Mississippi and the lumber industry. Now, from a family history point of view, to have it of record about your family, do you know where - you say that Mr Griffin, your great-grandfather, came from Georgia.

Dantzler: That's what I've have always heard.

Capers: I think it is interesting where people migrated from to Mississippi. Mr. Dantzler came from Mobile.

Dantzler: That was my grandfather; but my great-grandfather Dantzler came from Orange County, South Carolina, and he settled up here near Merrill. In one of old Claiborne's reports, he had written up about J. L. Dantzler and the number of slaves he owned and the number of acres... he was evidently a big planter up there. Then L. N., his son, came down to Moss Point.

Capers: Well, that interests me, because that's the only way history is interesting is people. When you think of Mr. Dantzler coming from South Carolina, you've got...I guess most people in Mississippi really came from South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia. I don't know why they came - they came for land, that's why they came.

Mrs. Dantzler: Well, it was the "westward movement"....

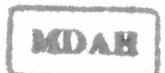
Capers: ...Westward movement, rich land was opened up by the Indian treaties. Most of them came, I think, around the 1820s. They opened up that big land all around Jackson in the Treaty of Doak's Stand, and I think that a lot of people from the Carolinas and Georgia and Tennessee thought this was really the "promised land."

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- Capers: He was an early settler. Do you know where he came from to South Carolina? That sounds like a German name.
- Dantzler: Well, of course, during both World Wars we were either Swiss or Dutch, but actually, we came from Germany. But I never have found out what part of Germany. I've got an old family history where Jacob Dantzler came from Germany and settled up in South Carolina. He had three sons. One of them came down to Mississippi and the other two stayed up there. He was supposed to have come over here before the Revolutionary War. My sister and all of the Dantzlars belong to the DAR. I had a letter from an old Dantzler. He wrote me, inquiring about this branch, and we corresponded quite a bit. He wrote me one time - he said, "Of course all the Dantzler women have gotten in the DAR on account of their forebears having fought in the Revolution. Actually, they ran a grog shop and sold whiskey to both the British and Americans!"
- Capers: (Laughter) Well, they were always very enterprising! That's like the Natchez people going on so about the DAR's and the UDC's and everything else. They never manage to be on the right side - or rather they were on the right side, the winning side. Where are you from, Mrs. Dantzler?
- Mrs. Dantzler: Tennessee. Nashville.
- Capers: Nashville. Yes, we're old companions.
- Mrs. Dantzler: Baird is Scotch, you know.
- Capers: And you all met at Vanderbilt?
- Dantzler: We met when I was at Vanderbilt.
- Capers: Did you live in Nashville?
- Mrs. Dantzler: Yes, in Nashville, out on Hillsboro Road.
- Capers: I remember we talked about this once before, but I wasn't clear whether you lived between Nashville and Columbia, or you lived in Nashville.
- Mrs. Dantzler: No, we lived right in Nashville. Of course, when we grew up, when we were kids, we were three miles out of Nashville on Murfreesboro Pike, which was country. That was country then.
- Capers: Yes, it sure was pretty country, though, wasn't it? I loved it.
- Mrs. Dantzler: We lived between Nashville and Murfreesboro, but were only three miles out....
- Dantzler: Did you ever hear of the Fugitives?
- Capers: I know who they were. I've read their....

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Dantzler: I've got a picture that I show my friends down here and they can't register how cultured I am!

Capers: You're very cultured. I know what you are talking about. Have you got the picture?

Dantzler: I am sitting between two of the Fugitives! We were fraternity brothers.

Capers: Oh, grand! Well, you know Robert Penn Warren. Was he one of them?

Dantzler: Yes.

Capers: I think he's very attractive. I've seen him recently.

Mrs. Dantzler: Alan Tate, A. M. Dantzler and Jesse Wilkes.

Capers: Isn't that great!

Dantzler: Now, Tate is quite a poet.

Capers: Yes, Alan Tate certainly is; and he was supposed to come to Jackson recently, you know, when we had Eudora Welty Day up there. I don't know why he didn't make it. Isn't that a nice picture?

Mrs. Dantzler: He was home having twins!

Capers: Oh, that's right! He did have babies after he was....

Dantzler: Let's see. It was our fortieth reunion. He was sixty-two years old, or sixty-three.

Capers: Yes. Well that was very spirited of him.

Mrs. Dantzler: Spirited of her!

Capers: Yes, I know!

Dantzler: She was an ex-nun. She was a nun at one time.

Capers: That was a very spirited nun. She was trying to make up for a lot, wasn't she!

Dantzler: He lives at Sewanee now. He's an associate professor up there. He's retired, more or less.

Capers: Did you know those people in the Fugitive group there at Vanderbilt when you were in school up there?

Dantzler: Yes. Those were two of them.

Capers: Well, you knew them, but the regular "jolly fellows", were they jolly fellows or were they intellectually separate....

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Mrs. Dantzler: Alan Tate was a Phi and he lived in the Phi house. They had a lot of trouble because he made long distance calls all the time and wouldn't pay his bill.

Dantzler: Well, he just couldn't remember to pay his bills. That was the main thing. Finally the treasurer... Alan's brother was sending him to school, so the treasurer got his brother to send him the check and he would take out all that was owed and then give what was left to Alan. What was Davidson's name?

Mrs. Dantzler: Oh, I can see him right now. He played the piano. Davidson....

Dantzler: No, that isn't the same Davidson.

Capers: Was Weaver up there then?

Dantzler: Who? Bob Weaver?

Capers: No, Herbert Weaver.

Dantzler: I don't remember him. There were two Weavers up there, from Tupelo. John Allen and Bob. There were a bunch of boys up there from Tupelo when I was... the McGeoys.

Capers: Well, McGeoy was still around up there. McGeoy is business manager, isn't he? A young fellow named McGeoy worked for Vanderbilt, or did three years ago, well not all that young, but younger than I am. Have you all been up to see Sara, or has Sara been down to see you?

Dantzler: She came down for our fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Mrs. Dantzler: She went to New Orleans with us to celebrate our golden wedding.

Capers: Oh. Well, you look mighty cute and perky for your golden wedding.

Mrs. Dantzler: We're pretty perky people!

Capers: Well, I know that! Now, we haven't gotten the family all straight. What about your children?

Dantzler: They both live in New Orleans.

Capers: They live in New Orleans? Who are they?

Dantzler: One of them is Mrs. Frazier Rice and the other one is Mrs. Harold Hart, whose husband is with the U. S. Engineers.

Mrs. Dantzler: Mrs. Harold Hart right now; he is with the Engineers. She was married to John Shober and they are divorced.

Dantzler: ...And Babs was married during the War to Donald Baxter, Jr. and he was a Navy flier and was killed out in the Pacific.

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Mrs. Dantzler: So she was a war widow at age nineteen.

Capers: That was sad. Those girls had a hard time. What about this house. What's the history of this house? How old is it?

Dantzler: Well, the front wall is over one hundred years old. The rest of it - we built this.

Mrs. Dantzler: It had only three front rooms!

Capers: Really? Whose house was it?

Dantzler: I've always known it as the Pardue place. They were from New Orleans and this was a summer home originally.

Mrs. Dantzler: P-A-R-D-U-E.

Dantzler: I don't actually know the real history of it.

Capers: It certainly is a charming house.

Mrs. Dantzler: Thank you, ma'am. It's just like Topsy, it "grewed", you know. We've been "a-growin'" it for twenty-five years.

Capers: That's the best kind! I love your mantel.

Mrs. Dantzler: That was in there with about a hundred coats of....

Dantzler: That was originally in the house.

Capers: Don't you really like that old wood....

Mrs. Dantzler: Oh, I just love it!

Capers: I just think that's the prettiest color!

Mrs. Dantzler: I wouldn't let them take it out.

Capers: What is that, pine?

Mrs. Dantzler: Yes, heart pine and cypress. Some of it's cypress. That's what they made all those old mantels...that's what they made all the old houses out of, pine and cypress.

Capers: I know it. I'm learning a lot now with the restoration of the Governor's Mansion because of Mr. Edward Jones. He is the architectural consultant to the White House, and he's very knowledgeable in the period we are working in. He has insisted...he's changed the architect's plans completely, which is a good thing because I don't think they quite knew what they were doing, but he's got them back on the track of heart yellow pine for the floors, and he doesn't want them to find...they keep saying, "Oh, well, we'll try to get it," and he doesn't want that at all. He wants to get an old house and buy....

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Dantzler: That's the only way he's going to get it....

Capers: ...Only way, and he knows that. And he's just having the hardest time in the world trying to do it right, in spite of the authorities!

Mrs. Dantzler: Now, when was that built originally?

Capers: 1841.

Dantzler: It's a beautiful old house.

Capers: It's a beautiful old house and Mr. Jones is crazy about the house. He really wants to work on it, but the obstacles that the State of Mississippi can throw in his path are limitless and I'm right in the middle of them, because I'm trying to....

Mrs. Dantzler: Well, fight with him!

Capers: Well, I am! I'm on his side, but it isn't easy, because I'm working for the State and we have to work through the Building Commission....

Dantzler: That was in this house when we got it.

Capers: He says he knows a house in Georgia, he's from Albany, Georgia, where he can buy the floors and the house is exactly the same age as our Governor's Mansion. It was a very fine house, but for some reason it's being torn down.

Mrs. Dantzler: Well, those old floors have the most beautiful color. They are still out in our little guest house. I could save them out there. Here I couldn't save them because they'd been just mutilated with matting tacks...down that deep, they couldn't pull them out!

Capers: Well, I hate to tell you, Martha, Mr. Jones says...it's too late now, Mr. Jones would have made you save them, though, because we had the same thing in the Governor's Mansion. We have just pock marks with matting tacks. He says, "Don't fill them, just finish them." I guess the dirt will fill them up. He says they really won't be that bad.

Mrs. Dantzler: There was a row every twelve inches, I guess maybe every ten inches. And then, the termites had been a little busy around the fireplace, you know.

Capers: I know! Well that's bad, and there's not much you can do about that.

Mrs. Dantzler: Out in the little old guest house, the original floor is out there. And they're the wide heart pine floors and they are the most beautiful color. There's no way to get that color. Now, we had these floors specially cut at the mill. You see, the mill was still going when we were working on the house. So Dan got the wide pine floors, but it isn't that old pine. There's no way. It's not heart pine and there's no way to get that color except just age. If you stain them it's not the same.

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Dantzler: Heart pine takes about a hundred years to get heart, or seventy-five anyway. It's not a dead part of the tree, but it's the inactive part of the tree, and then you've got the sapwood on the outside, and all those virgins, the sap would be just about that big and all the rest would be heart.

Mrs. Dantzler: You mean the old virgins were all heart?

Capers: All heart and nothing else. (Chuckle) You've got to have heart!

Mrs. Dantzler: Dan told me this, which I thought was interesting. He said when you say, "Oh, they've destroyed that virgin pine tree," and of course, they are beautiful, but Dan says that after a certain length of time, I don't know how many hundred years, or hundred and fifty, or what, but they deteriorate, just like all old....

Dantzler: Back in the early 1900s, around 1912 I guess, the Old Southern Pine Association had all their logging superintendents look for the oldest trees. Of course, they didn't have increment borers then, so they would have to take a part of the stump. And they would count the rings. I think the oldest tree that was found was two hundred and eighty years old.

Capers: In this part of the country. And that's any kind of tree? Or is it a pine tree?

Dantzler: No, this was a pine tree.

Mrs. Dantzler: Now, the oaks around here are older.

Capers: That's what I was going to ask you about in a minute. I was thinking about an oak that I saw today.

Dantzler: Oh yes, they are much older. But now, that would make it, say roughly, three hundred years. That would have been back in 1612, which is over a hundred years after Columbus discovered America. What happened was the Indians used to burn the woods periodically and something would destroy a whole crop and then they would come back.

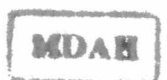
Capers: Jean Clark took me to see Mrs. Parker this morning over at DeLisle and that oak tree, that big oak tree that she has in the front is simply a beautiful tree, but how would you make some estimate as to the age of that tree? I think we ought to record, if we know them, the ages of the very old trees.

Dantzler: A forester could take an increment borer and tell you by going into it. That just takes the core out of it.

Mrs. Dantzler: There are several around here that are, I heard, registered. There's one back there where that little day camp used to be, and it's much larger than Sally's, much larger. The limbs go down like the old one down at Gulfport. And they said, I believe, I don't know, that they

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can be three to four hundred years old.

Dantzler: Oh yes....

Capers: Well, Mrs. Parker said, (someone enters), she said...and I question this in my own mind but you'll be glad to know I didn't question her... but she said that that tree, we're talking about that gorgeous tree of Mrs. Parker's, she suggested that it might...you may speak to Mrs. Clark!...she suggested that it might be six hundred years old.

Dantzler: Well, it might be. I don't know anything about it.

Capers: Could a tree live that long and prosper?

Dantzler: Oh, some of these sequoias out on the Pacific Coast are a thousand years old.

Capers: Well, that's very interesting, because if that is six hundred years old, it is one of the oldest trees anywhere around here, I would think.

Dantzler: I wouldn't know, but....

Mrs. Dantzler:How does Sally know that?

Capers: I don't know.

Dantzler: Tom probably told her.

Mrs. Dantzler:Tom probably told her, and if he did, you can deduct!

Mrs. Clark: Well, I wouldn't be surprised, because I remember as a child hearing people talking about the age of these trees and like they were here before the discovery of America.

Capers: Well, sure, if they're that old!

Clark: So wouldn't that...of course, there again, it may be just a tale that was told.

Dantzler: Well I was telling Charlotte that pine trees, they don't get that old. They fall down and get red hearted and just....

Mrs. Dantzler:The old virgin pines just fall down.

Clark: ...Especially if there's a strong wind!

Capers: Did you say red hearted? That's an interesting thing. Sounds just like a song...she got red hearted and then she died!

Dantzler: That's a defect in the timber, I'll tell you!

Capers: I think it would be a defect in a...I have terribly tall pine trees in my yard of my little house at home, and unfortunately, I'm just

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like the lightning rod of the neighborhood. I've lost three pine trees in less than two years.

Dantzler: By lightning? Are they out by themselves?

Capers: No, they're not out by themselves.

Clark: She's almost in a forest. You know, Jackson has so many trees, and these are really beautiful trees.

Capers: No, they're not out by themselves. They are beautiful trees, I've never seen such tall trees, but I'm getting so I'm not so crazy about them, because I'm going to be squashed soon!

Mrs. Dantzler: Well, they really attract lightning! They really do!

Clark: Better they hit the tree than your house!

Capers: I've got a whole bunch of them. I think I had eighteen, and now I have fewer. But they're big - they're huge - and I've got one that's a twin, but it looks like it's sick. Does it mean anything when the bark starts falling off?

Dantzler: Yes, maybe beetles.

Capers: Well, that's what I thought. I've gone and bought me a bunch of troublesome trees!

Dantzler: Get the Extension Service to come out and look at it.

Capers: See about the beetles? Will they come and....

Dantzler: I don't think beetles get into oak trees, I don't know.

Capers: This is a pine tree. Well, who is it I call in Jackson? The forestry service?

Dantzler: Yes, call the State Forestry Service. They ought to be able to send someone out there.

Capers: I should do something about it, but it costs so much to have the darn things taken down, and I've just paid for three and I just didn't want to know what the disease was!

(End of Tape)

(Transcribed by Eleana Turner)

(Typed by Mary H. Mingee)

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