

Perhaps the most egregious example of humiliation to members of the community that are attributed to a Mansfield merchant are those described in the oral tradition as having been made by the business of T.E. Blessing--Furniture (Salesman) and Undertaker. One man said, "The Black folks didn't have a funeral home in Mansfield. And we used Ernie Blessings. . . The Black folks would use him, but he wouldn't use his good hearse for Black folks. He would always use a van. . . and half of the casket would be hanging in the van and half of it out." The same informant continued:

If you expired today, tomorrow they'd have that funeral and they would use. . . his old van, a work van. And he'd put just enough of the casket inside. It would be so short. . . Half of it would be hanging out. And the grave would be. . . shallow. The body would just barely be covered up. He wouldn't embalm you or anything. . . I heard later, in the nineteen forties that he wouldn't do any embalming. He'd just put you in a box and got through with it before your body started deteriorating [28].

Members of Mansfield's community finally stopped using T.E. Blessing's funeral home. "Black folks eventually got wise to that. (Rev. C.C. Carson--Pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church) finally said: 'You can stop that. . . Coming up that street with your casket hanging out.' And that's when we started using the Black funeral homes in Fort Worth" [29].

Anglo residents purchased spirits from those members of the African-American community involved in that business. This however, did not change their attitudes to any great degree and conditions remained unchanged for decades.

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For Mansfield's African-American sharecropping families, the cotton picking season--which required large numbers of hired hands to bring in large amounts of the crop in a short time period--often provided further opportunity for abuse by Anglo land owners. A woman told the following narrative:

This farmer wanted all his cotton open before. . . you started to gather it. So, we went on to another man's farm and we were gone. Stripped his cotton first. And then when the other guy's cotton was ready we were going to come back to him, the man whose farm we lived on. But, he got the devil in him and he didn't like it. And he came to us one night. I'll never forget, he came to my Daddy and was mad with him and said, "I want you to be out of my house tomorrow." (Didn't give him any reason or anything.) My Daddy came back into the house and said, "He said we have to move." And he said, "Where am I going? With all of these children?" [30].

Whatever occurred that might change or improve the lives of these families appears to have been viewed in the context of a strong Christian belief system. The same informant continued:

And as the Lord would have it, that night before my Daddy went to bed, there was another guy with a farm, I'll bet it wasn't two miles from us. He came there and blew his horn and called my Daddy out. And he said "I've got a lot of cotton I need to gather in. And I need to get it in before the weather gets bad." And my father said, "Well, I don't know when we'll get to it. This farmer told us we have to move." And my father said, "I'm going to have to go and find a place to carry my family." And this other farmer said, "I got a place for you." So, we moved the next day from one man's farm to the other's [31].

Often, Anglo landowners' children were little better than their parents in expressing the prevalent racial attitudes. One man stated that as a child in a share-cropping family:

