"Just Like Yesterday"

Recollections of Life on the Fort Hood Lands

Volume II

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United States Army Fort Hood
Archeological Resource Management Series
Research Report No. 49

January 2003

"Just Like Yesterday":
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Prepared for

Directorate of Public Works
Environmental Affairs Office
Fort Hood

by

Prewitt and Associates, Inc.
Cultural Resources Services
Austin, Texas

in partial fulfillment of
Contract DAKF48-99-D-0009
Delivery Order No. 7

January 2003

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Edith York Faris

Date of birth: 15 March 1915
Community affiliated with: Friendship
Interviewed by William S. Pugsley III

WSP: This is Bill Pugsley. We are in the home of Edith Faris in Gatesville, Texas. It is Wednesday morning around 10:30, on April 25, 2001. We will be speaking to her about her memories and thoughts concerning life on the Fort Hood lands before the army came in 1942. [This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.]

If you would please, would you give me the name of your parents and your brothers and sisters, starting with the oldest and going to the youngest?

EYF: My father's name was Will York. My mother's name was Lena York.

WSP: What was her maiden name?

EYF: Andrews.

WSP: Was your father's name Will or William?

EYF: It's William.

WSP: All right. And brothers and sisters?

EYF: One brother, Lonnie York. And my sister Pearl York Blackford.

WSP: And you? Are you the youngest?

EYF: No, I'm between my brother and—and my sister.

WSP: Edith York Faris.

EYF: Yes.

WSP: All right. If you would, please, describe your family home as you remember it, the different rooms?

EYF: Well, our house was kind of in an L-shape, and it had three bedrooms. We didn't have what we called a living room. We had a kitchen. And at the back of the house there was a porch clear across the back of two of the rooms, and then where the other rooms went down there was a porch clear down the length of that. And that was our house.

And of course, we had barns and things like that around because we had cows, chickens, turkeys, and horses and all of that. And our crops that we raised, we had corn and cotton, and maize, and then we had hay—'cause I helped bale hay—and we cut maize heads, and I picked cotton, chopped cotton. And I gathered corn. I had chores that I did.

WSP: Before we go to the chores, let us return to the house.

EYF: Okay.

WSP: Describe, as you can remember it, what was in each room, starting with the kitchen for example.

EYF: The kitchen had a big wood stove, a cabinet, a table in there, and a milk cooler—

WSP: What is a milk cooler?

EYF: Well, it's a metal container. It's got shelves in it, and in the top of it was a place where you put water in it. You put a cloth around that and then the water would go down in that cloth, and that would keep our milk and butter cool. And that was our refrigerator. And all of the people that lived on a farm in those days had milk coolers. That's what they were called. And we put our butter and milk in there and that wet cloth kept things cool. And we had the water in the top, and it would go down, and of course it had a drip pan at the bottom.

WSP: Would keep butter cool?

EYF: Butter and our milk cool.

WSP: The butter would not melt?

EYF: No, because it would keep it cool.

WSP: What kind of cloth was it?

EYF: It was just a cotton cloth material, white cloth, something like a sheet.

WSP: I don't recall Central Texas summers being very windy. If you kept it in indoors, was there enough breeze to keep it cool?

EYF: It was in the kitchen. We didn't have screens on our house. In the summertime we kept the doors wide open.

WSP: So there would be a bit of a breeze coming through?

EYF: There would be a little bit of breeze in there.

WSP: And that was all it took to keep the butter and—

EYF: And milk cool.

WSP: How long could you expect to keep butter and milk in a unit like that, before it would go bad?

EYF: We used it up pretty quick, and we had cows that we milked every day. Kept fresh milk all the time, if anything spoiled it was throwed out. Everything was fresh because we churned our own butter.

WSP: Was it kept cool for like a day or so?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: But not much more? But it wouldn't go bad during the day?

EYF: No.

WSP: And this is even during the summertime?

EYF: 'Course, now in the winter we didn't use it. But we did in the summer.

WSP: Were you getting milk in the wintertime?

EYF: Well, of course, our milk in the wintertime we kept it in the safe. If it ruined, it was throwed out.

WSP: What do you mean about keeping milk in a safe? I don't understand.

EYF: Well, 'course, as I said, it was a container that had shelves in it, and it had doors to it. If you have heard something about a pie safe?

WSP: No, I'm sorry.

EYF: Well, that's something like what it is, and it had a metal sections in it that had little holes in it that air could get in there.

WSP: And it was called a safe?

EYF: It was called a safe.

WSP: Now was the safe outdoors where it would be cool?

EYF: No, it was in the kitchen.

WSP: And of course, it was cool enough in the kitchen during winter to keep the milk, but during the summer?

EYF: It would take care of it. We had plenty that we didn't have to conserve it so long because we'd throw it out. We had fresh milk every day.

WSP: How much milk would you keep in the cooler? Some people use a quart or so.

EYF: Oh, a gallon or two.

WSP: Oh really?

EYF: Because we drank milk all the time. (laughs)

WSP: Your family would consume a gallon or two of milk a day?

EYF: (laughs) Well, not that much a day, but then of course we cooked with it. We done all of our cooking. We used milk, and then we drank milk. We drank milk twice to three times a day in a meal.

WSP: Wow.

EYF: My mother and daddy drank coffee for breakfast, but us kids, we drank milk, and we drank it for dinner and supper. So we consumed a lot of milk.

WSP: Yes, it seems so.

EYF: (laughs)

WSP: What else was in the kitchen besides the milk cooler?

EYF: We had a cabinet in there where my mother did all of her mixing and baking, where she kept flour and everything like that in there. And we had a pantry in our kitchen where we kept—when we killed hogs we put the lard in ten-gallon cans and they were stored in this pantry, stacked up in the pantry.

WSP: On the floor of the pantry?

EYF: Yes. And then doing the canning, during canning season in the summer. We had shelves in there, and

we put the jars and cans that we canned in the pantry.

WSP: This pantry was part of the kitchen?

EYF: Yes, it was in the kitchen.

WSP: Was it more like a cabinet, or was it a room or closet?

EYF: Well, it was a closet, but it was a pantry. It was built in there and had a door to it. And all of the canned goods and stuff like that was kept in that pantry. And all that was in the kitchen.

WSP: And describe the stove, if you would, please?

EYF: It was a cast iron cook stove—had to put wood in it—and it had four caps on the top where you cooked. And an oven and then, 'course, the pipe went out through the ceiling. That was the kind of a stove we had.

WSP: You put the wood down below?

EYF: No, you put the wood in a door at the side.

WSP: You're gesturing with your hand like it's in the side?

EYF: You put the wood in the side. It didn't go in at the top.

WSP: So the firebox was along the side of the stove?

EYF: Yes, along the side, and it would heat the oven and the tops, too.

WSP: Your oven was basically all-in-one, there was no separation from the top part and the oven.

EYF: No, the oven was under the top part.

WSP: Yes.

EYF: And then the burners was on top.

WSP: Would there be enough heat? If the firebox was on the side, then you couldn't put the heat directly under each burner cap, am I right.

EYF: No, the heat would circulate through the stove.

WSP: Just the hot air?

EYF: Yes, just the blaze or whatever went under there.

WSP: Now how did you know what temperature it was?

EYF: We didn't.

WSP: How do you know if your stove is too hot or getting cool or when you're done?

EYF: Well, you would know when it was hot—because you couldn't put your hand on it or anything like that. (laughs) But when you cooked, put anything in there to cook in the oven, we watched it, and checked it all the time because we didn't have any temperature to gauge the heat to how hot it was.

WSP: You couldn't put a pie into the oven and say, "I'll come back in thirty minutes," and know that you are close to being finished?

EYF: No, you had to watch it because we didn't have any gauge on the stove.

WSP: No way of knowing what the temperature was?

EYF: No.

WSP: What about keeping it at a constant temperature, as opposed to it getting really hot and then the coals burning down and cooling off? How do you do that?

EYF: Keep putting wood in the fuel box. (laughs)

WSP: Would it be heated in the morning and left on, or would you turn it on and off at different times of the day?

EYF: No, when we got through cooking, well, that was it. We didn't keep it going all the time.

WSP: Did you ever sprinkle water on the logs?

EYF: No, we just let them finally die down, let it cool down itself. That's the only way we did it. And then when we'd get ready to cook another meal, well, we'd fire up again.

WSP: Now does this mean you have to use matches and kindling to start it?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Was there any residual coals that you could—

EYF: No, because they were already died down, you know, and there wasn't any way that you could start anything on it. You had to start it all back with matches, and, and maybe put a little coal oil on the wood and start it that way, or something like that.

WSP: I see. You wouldn't use paper or little wood shavings, you'd just drop some coal oil?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: You had a oil can somewhere?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: How long would it take to cook a meal, given you're working with a wood stove? Could you assume a certain number of hours?

EYF: Oh, it would take—oh, maybe two, three hours.

WSP: For which meal?

EYF: Well, for a lunch.

WSP: A hot lunch?

EYF: Yes, because you would be cooking bread, you would be cooking meats, you would be cooking vegetables. But see, all of that would be going on at the same time because your stove would be hot all over and you could put your bread in, and—'course, you'd have to start your vegetables ahead of time, and your meat ahead of time. But your oven would be hot, if when you got ready to put your bread in and get it cooking. And then, by the time it was done, maybe the rest of your meal would be done.

WSP: So timing out a meal, which is half the art of cooking, is made even more complicated by not knowing the heat of your stove, without having any way of measuring the temperature?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Did you feel like you ever learned that trick? How would you rate yourself with your mother or others?

EYF: Well, I don't know, I—I just managed, you know.

WSP: Is this something you learned by watching?

EYF: It's just something that you learn that you know how to do, at that time. You know, in those days and times you had to learn to do things like that—and you would know how to do it.

WSP: For example, a hot lunch. You wanted to serve it at noon, straight up—what time would you start? In the morning or mid-morning? And what would be the sequence of events?

EYF: Oh, I don't know, I think, oh, that would probably be about 9:30 or ten o'clock that you'd start your meal.

WSP: For a noon meal?

EYF: For a noon meal—because you'd have to prepare your vegetables, you know, especially in the summertime, 'cause we had fresh vegetables. 'Course, now, in the wintertime it would be different because you'd just open up a jar, which was already cooked. You could warm it up. But in the summertime it would take longer because you would be cooking fresh vegetables.

WSP: You are including in this timeframe picking, washing, peeling and chopping of the vegetables?

EYF: Yes, peeling potatoes and everything, getting every—snapping beans, getting everything ready. And it takes time to cook those.

WSP: More time because they're raw vegetables?

EYF: Yes, sure.

WSP: What time, for instance, would you put them in the hot water? Would you pre-heat the water?

EYF: No, you start them in cold water.

WSP: Was it faster to boil water on a wood stove than now?

EYF: Well, it wouldn't take very long for it to get hot because the stove would be so hot, you see? I don't know, it's just one of those things that you know how to do.

WSP: Well, this is all new to me, so you'll just have to—

EYF: (laughs)

WSP: I have always been in awe of people who could cook on wood stoves because as a city boy all I do is turn on the dial, and I know how long to wait.

EYF: I know!

WSP: Everything is timed out precisely. I could leave and come back, and if I knew exactly what time, it would be ready, and I wouldn't have burned anything.

EYF: (laughs) Well, you can't do that with a wood stove. You had to watch it, so you wouldn't burn anything.

WSP: We've started around 10:30 to prepare this lunch. About an hour, would you say, is the time for preparing the vegetables, and they're on the stove.

EYF: Well, probably.

WSP: Can you continue the sequence for the rest of the meal?

EYF: Well, whether you have cornbread or whether you have biscuits, it takes time, a little bit of time to mix that up and put it in your oven, you know? But it could be while your vegetables and your, maybe your meats is cooking, well, by the time this is cooked, the other will be done, and then you'd have a hot meal by noontime.

WSP: What would be the usual lunchtime meat?

EYF: Well, we had our own meat, and it could be ham, or it could be sausage, or it could be chicken.

WSP: Any beef products?

EYF: No.

WSP: Why not?

EYF: Well, we just didn't have beef.

WSP: This was not a meat that you would normally eat in a meal?

EYF: Well, now sometimes there would be a guy come by peddling beef, and my daddy would buy some steak, and maybe we'd have that. But we didn't *kill* any beef. We killed hogs, chickens.

WSP: So although you had cows—

EYF: We had cows, *milk* cows.

WSP: As opposed to beef cows.

EYF: But we didn't have beef cows.

WSP: What about your neighbors? Would this be something you would exchange with your neighbors?

EYF: No, they didn't have beef cows either. They had milk cows, and they raised hogs, and they raised chickens, just like we did. And we killed hogs, and we killed chickens for our meats.

WSP: Was meat a regular part of a meal, or was this something that was considered special?

EYF: No, we had meat every meal. We had our meats, and we had it every meal. For breakfast we had bacon and sausage for breakfast.

WSP: What would you have for lunch?

EYF: We'd had, maybe have chicken and ham.

WSP: And dinner?

EYF: We didn't eat a big dinner. Maybe we'd eat a bowl of cereal or something like that, or milk and cornbread, something like that. We didn't have a big, big dinner.

WSP: What we call dinner, now?

EYF: We called it supper.

WSP: Dinner was lunchtime, and that was your big meal.

EYF: That was our big meal.

WSP: What time of the day would this normally be? You could assume a sit down for each meal about what time in the day?

EYF: Well, it was usually at noontime, around twelve o'clock.

WSP: That would be the lunch, the dinner?

EYF: Yes, it would be the dinner.

WSP: And breakfast would occur—

EYF: Around about six o'clock of a morning because we got up early, and we'd hit the work by daylight sometimes.

WSP: Six o'clock?

EYF: Or maybe five o'clock in the morning.

WSP: Breakfast at five o'clock?

EYF: Maybe, or six because we was out at work by daylight.

WSP: Which would be about what time?

EYF: Well, I don't know what time it would be, but it would be by the time the sun was coming up we'd hitting the field.

WSP: So your breakfast was eaten in the dark?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: What time would a person get up to fix breakfast?

EYF: Well, I'd say around, around five o'clock.

WSP: How long would breakfast take to prepare?

EYF: Well, it wouldn't take too long. My mother mixed up biscuits, and maybe she'd slice some bacon and scramble some eggs and make gravy. Yeah, and that would be our breakfast and—and make coffee. And then us kids, we had milk. So that would be our breakfast.

WSP: How long would that usually take her?

EYF: Oh, probably an hour.

WSP: And there was less preparation for supper, which would occur about what time?

EYF: Oh, well, it wouldn't take but a minute to do that because we didn't cook anything for supper. We'd maybe eat what was left over from our dinner or something like that.

WSP: What time in the day would supper be?

EYF: Oh, it would be somewhere—maybe eight o'clock at night or later because we worked so late, and then by the time we come in and did our chores, and then we had supper. And it was late, time we got that done, and, by the time that was over we was in bed.

WSP: How long does it take to clean up?

EYF: Well, not too long. (laughs) But we did clean up. Well, I guess it would take about thirty minutes to clean up.

WSP: What is that process like?

EYF: You mean cleaning up? Well, we'd have to heat some water and do the dishes and dry, put them up in the cabinet, the safe or whatever.

WSP: What would you heat the water in?

EYF: Well, we'd heat it on the stove.

WSP: In what kind of container?

EYF: In a dishpan.

WSP: So you would heat the water that you were going to wash the dishes in, in the same dishpan that you were going to use for washing?

EYF: Yes, set it on the stove and heat the water.

WSP: Would you move it to another location to put the dishes in, or would you put the dishes in while it was still on the stove?

EYF: Well, we'd probably set it over on the cabinet and do the dishes there, and then we'd have our draining pan.

WSP: I think of washing dishes as a wiping stage, a washing stage, a rinsing stage, and a drying stage. Was that true with back then?

EYF: We would put our dishes in the dishpan, and wash them, and then put them in another pan to rinse them off, and then we would dry them and put them up.

WSP: There'd be two pans of hot water?

EYF: Yes, and we'd rinse them off, take them out of that pan and dry them off and put them up where they belonged.

WSP: Hot water without the use of any rubber gloves?

EYF: Yes. We didn't even know what rubber gloves was in them days. (laughs)

(interruption in taping)

WSP: We have described the kitchen and the meals. For a moment, now, let us look at the other rooms in the house. Was there a living room?

EYF: No. We had a room that the family stayed in. We had a fireplace in this room. And my mother—Daddy's bed was in this room. But anyway, that's where we stayed in the wintertime, or even in the summertime. The family, that's where we gathered. I think there was a table in there, and we had chairs in there. And there's where we would gather after our meal at night, or any other time of day, maybe in the wintertime. 'Course, we were there 'cause that was the fireplace. That was the only heating system we had, other than the kitchen stove. But as far as what you call a living room, we didn't have—just a regular living room.

WSP: You didn't have any couches?

EYF: No, no couches.

WSP: If guests came over, would anyone be sitting on or using the bed as if it were a couch?

EYF: Not usually because we had plenty of chairs. We had rocking chairs in there, and then we had other kinds of chairs, straight chairs. And usually nobody sat on the bed.

WSP: The back two bedrooms would be quite cold during the wintertime?

EYF: Absolutely! Because my brother had a room, and my sister and I had a room back there, and they were *cold*! And we would heat bricks in the wintertime and wrap them and put them in the bed and put our feet to them and to keep warm.

WSP: Wrap them in what?

EYF: Wrap them in paper then wrap a cloth around them and put them in the bed. And we'd stick our feet to the, these bricks to warm our feet when we'd go to bed, and that would kind of warm up the bed.

WSP: You would carry these bricks wrapped up back to the bedroom?

EYF: To our beds in the back rooms.

WSP: Did you place them in the bed before you got into bed, so that they would start to warm the bed?

EYF: No. No, we'd just put them in when we got ready to go to bed.

WSP: That must have been a long trip down the hallway in the wintertime.

EYF: (laughs) Well, there wasn't any hall. (laughs) We went out of the kitchen and—well, I guess, I forgot about their dining room. We did have a dining room because we had a table in there and chairs and had a desk in there and a big wardrobe, had that in, uh, what we called the dining room. And there is where we ate in the summertime. But in the wintertime we ate on a table in the kitchen. And, but anyways, the other two bedrooms was below the dining room, so you had to go through the kitchen, dining room to the bedrooms.

WSP: So if you spent the evening in the family room, or your parents' bedroom, you'd have to walk all the way around the house to get there?

EYF: Out of their room into the kitchen, down to the dining room and then down to the two bedrooms because it was L-shaped like that.

WSP: I see. What was in the bedrooms, what would be considered bedroom furniture?

You were talking about the bedrooms—

EYF: In the first bedroom there were two beds in there and a dresser, I think that was all. And in the other bedroom there was a bed and a little settee chair, a cedar chest, and a dresser in there.

WSP: Where were your clothes stored? In these chests?

EYF: Well, we had a deal in the dining room that was just curtained off where we hung our clothes.

WSP: Is this the wardrobe you were describing earlier?

EYF: Well, the wardrobe we did have. It had shelves in it, and we stored like quilts and blankets and things like that in it. We had this curtained-off place that we hung clothes in. And then of course the dressers, things that could be folded up, they were put in the dressers. And 'course, my brother and my daddy's suits, they was hung up in, behind this curtain.

WSP: Most of the workday clothes would be folded up in the dressers?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Did you have a lot of windows in these houses?

EYF: Well, let's see, there was—in what we called the living room there was three windows in that room. In the kitchen there was one window, in the dining room there was one window. And in the other two bedrooms, there was two windows, on each side, and there was a door from each bedroom that went out on this porch. And there was a door that went out from the dining room on this porch.

WSP: In the summertime, then, you slept out on the porch?

EYF: Well, my brother usually moved his bed out on the porch in the summertime, and he slept out on the porch.

WSP: But the girls didn't?

EYF: But we didn't, my sister and I didn't.

WSP: Was there a particular reason for that?

EYF: Well, we just didn't want to. And we slept on the inside.

WSP: Did the windows have glass or screens?

EYF: We had screens over the windows, half screens. You could raise the window up, you know, so far and we had just half screens. But we finally did, later years, put screens on the doors, my daddy did.

WSP: But before then?

EYF: Before that we didn't have screens, but in later years he did put screens on all the doors.

WSP: Some farmhouses had an outside screen door and an inside solid door with windows in it? Is that what you're referring to?

EYF: Yes, that's right.

WSP: What was the floor covering?

EYF: Well, in the kitchen we had linoleum. And in the back bedroom, we had linoleum, but the other rooms was just wooden floors.

WSP: Were they finished in some fashion?

EYF: No, unh-uh, just regular wood floors.

WSP: Not even painted?

EYF: No. No they weren't painted.

WSP: What would cover the walls?

EYF: Wallpaper. All of the rooms was wallpapered.

WSP: Were they plaster underneath?

EYF: No, it was just wood walls, and you tacked canvas, real thin canvas on the wall, and then you put paper on it. The paper would stick to the canvas, you see, that was on the wall.

WSP: With glue?

EYF: You'd put glue. I helped paper part of that house. My mother and I did. We made our own paste out of flour and water, and we pasted the paper on the walls. And we put up the canvas on the walls because I helped do it.

WSP: You could buy rolls of canvas at the store?

EYF: Yes, just big rolls of canvas, and we would put it on with little tacks, use a tack hammer and put it on with tacks. And then we'd put the paper on. That's what we did.

WSP: Anything special about the ceiling?

EYF: Well, the ceiling was just a regular ceiling, wood that wasn't papered or anything.

WSP: Would the ceiling follow the line of the roof or would it be flat like modern houses?

EYF: It would be flat.

WSP: Was that wood as well?

EYF: It was just regular wood, just like a one-by-fours or something like that, you know, just regular wood up there. That's all—as well as I can remember that's what it was.

WSP: What about the modern amenities? Electricity? Water?

EYF: No electricity whatsoever.

WSP: Not the entire time you were there?

EYF: Not the whole time I was there. No water piped in. We carried our water from the well. We had a windmill and brought it to the house in a bucket and set it on the porch, on a table, and a dipper hung up there, that we had our drinking water. And we carried all the water from the well to the house. We didn't have it piped in, you know, or anything, or no electricity.
We had coal oil lamps. That's what we used.

WSP: How far was the windmill?

EYF: Oh, it was not very far, just—

WSP: Fifteen or twenty feet?

EYF: Oh, it was maybe just a little bit further than that. It wasn't very far.

WSP: Was there just the one water bucket outside, and people would draw from that for a variety of reasons? Or would you draw water for different uses?

EYF: Well, we just had one bucket out there, and we all used the same dipper and drink out of that. And 'course, when we got ready to do laundry, well, we had what they called a wash pot out in the yard. And we'd carry the water and put it in that wash pot and build a fire under it, and heat the water to start our washing. We had a tub and had the rub boards.

WSP: Was this a separate tub from the wash pot?

EYF: Yes, we had tubs on a bench on the porch, and we'd carry the water from the wash pot, put in the tub, hot water, and put our clothes in there to wash. But then we'd refill the wash pot to heat water, and after we'd washed these clothes, we'd put them in the wash pot to boil them. And then we'd take them out of there and put them in the rinse water, which would be cold—

WSP: In another pan?

EYF: In another tub. We would rinse them out, and then we'd hang them on the clothesline to dry.

WSP: The washtub was the main source of hot water.

EYF: Wash pot.

WSP: Wash *pot*.

EYF: Yes. It was—

WSP: You're indicating about two and a half, to three feet in diameter?

EYF: It was an iron, iron wash pot that's on little legs, and it set on the ground, and you built a fire under it.

WSP: The pot was high enough above the ground that you could put a fire under it?

EYF: Yes, put fire, and all under it and around it, and that would heat your water.

WSP: Did it have a round bottom, or a flat bottom?

EYF: It was oval.

WSP: How many gallons would this pot hold?

EYF: Oh, I guess it would hold about thirty gallons of water.

WSP: How long does that take to heat?

EYF: Oh, well, not too long. Oh, maybe an hour, you know because you'd have to get it hot. Probably an hour.

WSP: Would it be bubbling hot at that point?

EYF: Yes, it would. Eventually get that way.

WSP: And you'd pan out water?

EYF: We would dip it out in a bucket and carry it and pour it in the washtub.

WSP: How big is the washtub? It looks like it's bigger than the wash pot.

EYF: Well, they were about that big around, about—

WSP: A little bigger or about the same size as a wash pot?

EYF: Well, it's about the same wide and about that deep.

WSP: You're showing me about a foot and a half to two foot deep?

EYF: About that deep, yes.

WSP: What would that container be made of?

EYF: Galvanized—

WSP: Galvanized metal?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Where were the dirty clothes kept?

EYF: Well, we had—I think we had a container that we put our dirty clothes in. I don't remember about that, really I don't. But anyway—we would sort them out and wash the white clothes first, you know, and then go down to the colored clothes and the work clothes, you know, and wash them all on a rub board. And that was an all-day's job.

WSP: Starting at what time in the morning?

EYF: Well, just as early as we could get to it, maybe about nine or ten o'clock in the morning, or maybe sometimes earlier. But anyway, it was an all-day's job. Because time you get all that washing done, and that boiling and that rinsing and hanging it on the line, it was an all-day's job.

WSP: How often would laundry be done?

EYF: Once a week, every Monday morning! That was when our laundry day was if the weather was permissible.

WSP: If not, then you'd just move washing to—

EYF: To the next day that was permissible, that's when we'd do it. But every Monday if it was permissible, the weather was, that's when it was done.

WSP: Now did you wait a longer time before wash certain items of clothing. Perhaps you might say, Well, it's not that dirty, or wait for things like sheets and pillowcases?

EYF: Well, we'd wash it until it was clean, regardless of how long it taken. We'd wash it until it was clean.

WSP: But would you wash the sheets once a week or would you wash them once every other week?

EYF: No, we washed them every week.

WSP: Everything that was dirty—

EYF: Everything that was dirty was washed every week.

WSP: Did you have bath towels?

EYF: Yes, we had a few, but most of our towels we used was made out of our old cotton sacks. That's what we used. Now, Mama had some towels that she kept them back for when we had company, to use then, Turkish towels. But the towels that *we* used was made out of ducking, old cotton sacks, but they were just as soft as they could be after they were laundered. And that's what we used all the time for our own use. But she did have a few towels that she kept back for when we had company to use then.

(interruption in taping)

WSP: You helped your mother both in the kitchen for cooking, and during the wash day.

EYF: Uh-huh.

WSP: What would be your particular chores?

EYF: Well, the other chores was maybe feed chickens, milk the cows.

WSP: These were the chores you were responsible for?

EYF: Yes, every afternoon. Now the morning I didn't do the milking, my daddy did it in the morning. But in the afternoon my sister and I milked the cows. That was our job.

WSP: When you got home from school.

EYF: When we got home from school or got out of the field from working. And even when we were dating—our boyfriends stayed at the house, and my sister and I went to the cow pen and milked the cows.

WSP: Your boyfriend is sitting at the house waiting for you to get done with your chores?

EYF: Yes, till we get through milking the cows.

WSP: He wouldn't come and help you get done with the cows?

EYF: No. They wasn't allowed to. (laughs)

WSP: Now why would that be?

EYF: Well, I don't know. My daddy didn't allow it. Well, they stayed at the house while we milked the cows.

WSP: How did you learn to milk a cow?

EYF: Well, I really don't know, I just learned how to do it.

WSP: What age did you start milking?

EYF: Oh, I, I was in my teens, I know, but I don't know exactly what age. But I was in my teens before I started doing that.

WSP: Did you learn from watching your parents?

EYF: Yes. Of course, I'd seen them do it, you know? And then my sister and I, that was our job in the afternoons, at night, to do that.

WSP: Was there *any* chore that you did that required either one of your parents to act as a teacher to train you, to show you the ropes? Or were most of your chores something that they expected you to have already learned by watching them?

EYF: Not really.

WSP: Nothing that they trained you?

EYF: No, because I didn't—we just learned to do it, you know? Whenever we was growing up, we just growed up with it, we knew how to do it, whenever time come for us to start doing that kind of work.

WSP: Was there any particular chore you *didn't* like to do?

EYF: Well, I don't reckon, not really.

WSP: Not one that you dreaded more than the others?

EYF: I can't think of one that I dreaded more than the others.

WSP: You dreaded them all equally?

EYF: (laughs) Yeah, probably so. But anyway, I didn't—you know, I just really didn't dread any of them.

WSP: Was there one chore you particularly enjoyed doing?

EYF: Well, I don't guess I *really* enjoyed doing any of them, but I just knew I had to do it, and I did it.

WSP: Cooking?

EYF: Oh, I enjoyed the cooking part, I liked that, and uh—you know. And 'course, I was more of an outdoor girl than, than my sister was. And I used to follow my daddy up and down the field all the time. Whenever he was plowing, I walked behind him, up and down, up and down. I was an outdoor girl. I'd rather been outdoors than on the inside.

WSP: And your sister enjoyed being indoors?

EYF: She'd rather be inside, uh-huh, yeah.

WSP: Did this preference lead to a division of chores to some degree?

EYF: Not really, no.

WSP: Did your brother have certain chores that you didn't?

EYF: I really don't remember about him, whether he—what he did—he probably helped with the feeding of the stock or something like that—he probably did—I really don't remember. But I know he didn't milk any cows or anything like that because my sister and I did that. And I, I don't remember about him, what he did.

WSP: Were there particular chores regarding the chickens, besides gathering the eggs?

EYF: Oh, I gathered the eggs—because when I reached over in one hen's nest I touched a snake.

WSP: Oh!

EYF: A chicken snake was coiled up in the hen's nest. When I put my hand over there, I hit the snake.

WSP: No chicken?

EYF: No, the chicken was already gone, but it was up there to get the egg, you see. And whenever—and my daddy was there in the barn whenever I was gathering the eggs, and I hollered at him, told him there was a snake up there. He got it out and got it by the tail and give it a pop and popped its head off.

WSP: Was this a poisonous snake?

EYF: No, they're not poisonous.

WSP: Were you bit when you touched it?

EYF: No.

WSP: Have you *ever* been bitten by a snake?

EYF: No.

WSP: Did you know to expect a snake up there?

EYF: No, I didn't know that I expected one up there, but it was there whenever I touched it. (laughs) No, I wasn't expecting for one to be there.

WSP: Someone didn't say, "Now, watch out for snakes?"

EYF: No. Whenever we were out in the timber we always watched out for snakes, especially rattlesnakes.

WSP: But you didn't expect snakes in the chicken coop?

EYF: Well, a chicken snake, yes, we would expect to, but—did not normally we did. And anyway, this one was up there.

WSP: Once you touched it, you knew what it was—

EYF: I knew what it was. (laughs)

WSP: Was there any particular trick for getting eggs from underneath a roosting or setting chicken?

EYF: No, not really, they didn't bother you.

WSP: You just reached in?

EYF: Yeah, if they were setting, well, we would, uh, remove the hen and put her in another place, and then we'd put eggs under her for her to hatch little chickens. But if they, uh, if they were just laying and wasn't, hadn't started setting, they wouldn't be on the nest when I'd gather up the eggs.

WSP: That was the difference that you were looking for—

EYF: Yeah.

WSP: Would they peck at you when you reached for their eggs?

EYF: Sometimes. Sometimes they would and sometimes they wouldn't.

(interruption in taping)

WSP: Of the two sisters, you were the outdoor girl. What were the outdoor chores related to the crops that you would do? Let's start with cotton?

EYF: I picked cotton. I chopped cotton. Of course, my sister did, too. 'Course she didn't love it—I didn't mind it, you know? But I would chop cotton and pick cotton, too.

WSP: Did you help with planting?

EYF: No, I didn't do that because my daddy did that.

WSP: Is this where your brother would help out more?

EYF: Well, yeah, he helped with the fieldwork, you know? Yeah, he helped with the fieldwork. But I didn't do anything like that any of the planting or anything like that.

WSP: No plowing?

EYF: No, I didn't do anything like that.

WSP: And what exactly does it mean to chop cotton?

EYF: Well, we had to chop the weeds out of it, and if it was too thick, we thinned it out—you know, chopped some of the cotton down—you know, so it wouldn't be so thick, and then it would produce more cotton on the stalk. You see, if it was real thick, it wouldn't do that.

And we would thin it out if it was too thick, but we chopped the weeds out of it, the grass, whatever was in there. We had a clean cotton crop! Because my daddy didn't want any weeds in there.

WSP: When it was time to pick cotton, there was only cotton in the fields.

EYF: It would be just the cotton. It would be clean.

WSP: Is that a particular advantage?

EYF: Well, I don't whether it was, but anyway in those days the cleaner your cotton was when it went to the

gin, the better it was.

WSP: Little bits of weeds or weed stalks would not be something—

EYF: 'Course, in later years it got where we stripped it.

WSP: What does that mean?

EYF: Well, we'd pull burr and all and put it in our sack. We just stripped the stalk and put it in there, it got where we'd just strip it. We didn't pick it out of the burr.

WSP: Why would they be able to do that and not before?

EYF: Well, they just got where that they could do that, that the gins got where they could take care of it that way. And, uh, we would just—we'd wear gloves, and we would just strip the whole stalk and put, put it in our sack. I've pulled 575 pounds one day.

WSP: Is that the most you ever pulled? What was your average?

EYF: I was going for 600 and I got 575.

WSP: That was pulling the—

EYF: Pulling the burrs and all.

WSP: Pulling burrs and all. What was the most you pulled when you were just pulling the cotton out of the bolls?

EYF: Oh, if it was real good cotton and a lot of it, I could pick about three hundred pounds a day.

WSP: What is that considered? Average? Above average?

EYF: Well, I guess. Yes.

WSP: What would your brother or your father be able to pick?

EYF: Well, my father, he wouldn't let anybody beat him. And he would pull or pick more than I would, and, uh, my brother—sometimes I could beat him.

WSP: Oh really.

EYF: Yes. (laughs)

WSP: Pick more cotton than your older brother? (pause)

EYF: Yes.

WSP: After you picked the cotton, what did you do with it. What was that whole sequence of events?

EYF: Well, of course, after we picked it, well, of course my daddy—we could get so many pounds—I think it was, uh—I can't remember, seemed to me like it was fifteen hundred pounds that we had to have in there that would make a bale of cotton and to take it to the gin. Well, it would make a bale of cotton.

WSP: Could you be more specific about the exact steps involved once you pulled the cotton out of the boll?

EYF: Well, we weighed it. We had—you know, we put it in our cotton sacks and then we would weigh it, weigh the cotton and then dump it in the wagon.

WSP: (sneezes)

EYF: Bless you! (laughs) And then we would dump it in the wagon, and we'd get so much in there, and then my daddy would take it to the gin.

WSP: How did he know when he had fifteen hundred pounds?

EYF: Well, when we weighed our cotton we kept the weight of it, and kept tally of all of that, and we knew how many—how much we had in there.

WSP: Did it make a difference if the cotton was wet or other conditions?

EYF: Oh, yeah, if it was wet we didn't gather it, we waited until it was dry because you didn't want wet. You couldn't gin it if it was wet, you couldn't do it.

WSP: You would take a whole wagonload into town from where you lived? Where was the gin located?

EYF: Well, the first year, few years it was down on—oh, uh, well, I'd say out here close to Fort Gates there was a gin down there, just out in the country. But in later years, it played out or they quit, and my daddy had to come to Gatesville, here in Gatesville, bring it.

WSP: You took it to Fort Gates?

EYF: Yeah, Fort Gates is right out here.

WSP: As opposed to Gatesville? They were two different places?

EYF: Yes, uh-huh, it's just a suburb of Gatesville. (laughs) Just right out here.

WSP: Did they still have other businesses at the old Fort Gates, or was it just the gin?

EYF: Well, uh—I don't know what—the gin? I don't know whether it's still there or not—I don't know anything about that—but it was down on—down on a river, you know, a creek—because I went with my daddy several times when he'd take a bale of cotton. But they, they finally quit. They called it Evett's gin. And, uh, so anyway, after he quit ginning cotton, my daddy had to bring it up here to Gatesville and had the Powell's gin.

WSP: At the Powell's gin?

EYF: Yeah, Charles Powell's gin.

WSP: How long was that trip, in miles?

EYF: Twelve miles. It would take—it'd take my daddy all day long, you know, time you'd drive up here, get it ginned and drive back—it was an all-day's trip.

WSP: Would you ever go with your dad?

EYF: I did whenever he went down to the other place, down to Evett's gin, but I don't think I ever came up here to Gatesville.

WSP: Was the trip to Evett's gin shorter?

EYF: Well, yes, a little shorter because it wasn't as far. But, uh, here it would take him all day long, and we didn't live but twelve miles from here!

WSP: But just taking the wagon the twelve miles and having the cotton ginned and then back twelve miles would take all day long?

EYF: Yes, because where we lived was just about twelve miles from here, down at the Owl Creek.

WSP: Can you describe the gin? What did the building look like?

EYF: That I cannot tell you, because I have no idea, I just know that—only thing I can say is that they'd drive under this big thing, thing, and there was a big suction pipe—it looked like about that big around—

WSP: About nine inches in diameter?

EYF: Yeah, and it would—oh, bring down on top of, of a wagon, and it would suck that cotton out of the wagon up in, up where they, and where they separated the seed from the cotton—and the seed went one way, and the cotton went another, and it was baled up in a big bale.

WSP: What happened to the seed?

EYF: Well, the seed was blowed in a container, and then my daddy would bring the cottonseed back home 'cause that was what he fed the cows.

WSP: Would he get money for, uh—the cottonseed?

EYF: He'd got money for the bale of cotton.

WSP: What happened to the cotton immediately following the sale?

EYF: Well, the, the ginner would have, keep it and then he would sell it, you know—you know, a big truck come along and load it up, and, uh. It takes it off. 'Course, they would make clothing and things out of it, you know?

WSP: Was it up to the ginner at that point to decide what to do with the cotton. How and where to ship it?

EYF: Yeah.

WSP: I take it there were more bales sitting on some dock?

EYF: Oh, yes.

WSP: A lot of bales on the dock?

EYF: Well, yes, because there was a lot of people that had cotton. Because they was a ginning every day, and sometimes way in the night.

WSP: How many bales of cotton did your land produce?

EYF: Off our land? Well, it'd all depend, in what kind of a year you had, whether it was a good year or bad year. It all depends.

WSP: Can you give me an example?

EYF: I don't remember how many bales of cotton that we would get a year. It would depend on what kind of a year there, where we had enough rain or didn't have.

WSP: Are we talking five bales or fifty bales?

EYF: Oh, well, maybe about ten.

WSP: On an average year?

EYF: Well, maybe on an average year.

WSP: How many bales per acre would you get?

EYF: I have no idea.

WSP: Do you know how many acres were planted in cotton?

EYF: I have no idea of that.

WSP: What about how many acres were planted in corn or maize or hay?

EYF: I have no idea.

WSP: All right. How many total acres did you have on your farm?

EYF: I don't know. I have no idea of that, either. I have no idea of how many acres we had on the farm.

WSP: What would be your estimate, if you were to guess?

EYF: Oh, gee—(pause) it might be, might be two hundred, but I don't know—in all told.

WSP: Was all of it planted at one time? Or was part of it left—

EYF: Well, it was planted at different times. We had something going, some kind of a crop going all the time through from the spring until the fall, something like that.

WSP: Did you have any problems with rocky areas, areas of bad soil on your property?

EYF: We didn't have any bad soil.

WSP: All of it was good.

EYF: We had *good* soil.

WSP: Good bottomland?

EYF: No, it was up on the mountain, but it was good blackland.

WSP: Did you do any chores related to, for instance, the corn, the maize, or the hay, that you can recall?

EYF: Well, I helped bale hay. I cut maize heads. I gathered corn, and I picked cotton.

WSP: Gathering and baling hay, what does that involve? What tools are used in that?

EYF: Well, what I did, I sat on a bale of a hay and poked a wire through a deal that wrapped around the bales of hay.

WSP: Some mechanical device?

EYF: It was a hay baler drawn by horse. The horse would go around and around like in a circle.

WSP: A two-person job?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Was this device hauled along in the field, or would it set off to the side somewhere?

EYF: It would be out in the field.

WSP: This wire device was *not* the baler?

EYF: No, I was working at the baler.

WSP: You were working the baler?

EYF: I was working at the baler.

WSP: Some other device cut down the hay.

EYF: Well, the hay was already cut down, and it was in rows. And then the baler was there, and that hay was there, and somebody was putting the hay over in the container.

WSP: The hopper on the baler?

EYF: The hopper or whatever you want to call it, yes.

WSP: Someone was scooping and lifting it in—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: And then it would be processed and turn into a bale?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: And you were working with the wire?

EYF: Yes, and I was putting the wire through that wired the bale together.

WSP: Was this baling machine dragged along by horses, slowly, or—

EYF: No, it was just stationary, a horse was going in circles around the baler, to make it work.

WSP: A large pile in the field—

EYF: Yes, it was piled up there and then they would put it over in that deal that, where it would compact the bales.

WSP: How long does it take to do a field of hay?

EYF: Oh, sometimes, it would take us two days at least. It all depends on how much you had.

WSP: How much hay or how much land?

EYF: How much hay you had.

WSP: What time of year would you bale hay?

EYF: In the summertime, when it was hot weather.

WSP: All day long?

EYF: All day long.

WSP: And what was the season for picking cotton?

EYF: We usually started in—probably in the—about the latter part of August, September and October. That's when we'd be picking cotton.

WSP: Did this last just a couple of days, too?

EYF: Oh, goodnight, no! It would last *weeks*!

WSP: Weeks?

EYF: Yeah, weeks! 'Cause we would pick, and then maybe some, they would be some more open up and

you'd go back and pick again.

WSP: You're picking through the same fields, the same plants?

EYF: Yes, you'd go back and pick again, you know? Scrapping—it is what we called it. Well, it would just be a little bit, and we'd just go around and get the rest of it, you see?

WSP: Scraps?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: So you would say you were scrapping it?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Can you use that word in a sentence.

EYF: Do what?

WSP: Use the word scrapping in a sentence—like your dad would say.

EYF: Well, that's what he would say, we'd scrap it. Go in and pick it. We just called scrapping it.

WSP: Like, go out and scrap that field.

EYF: Yes, just get what was left out there.

WSP: How many trips would you make to the same field, on average?

EYF: Oh, just about two. You know, we'd get the first part, and it would go back and get the rest of it, perhaps, later, when it would open up again.

WSP: All the plants picked twice, maybe three times, depending on how—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Was the first picking the most difficult—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Or the most time consuming?

EYF: It was.

WSP: How long would that take, generally?

EYF: Well, it all depends on how much you have, how many acres you have, and how many were picking cotton. See, my family, there was five of us because my mother worked in the fields some, too. Maybe it would take several weeks or more, you know?

WSP: For the first picking?

EYF: Yes, to do it, you see?

WSP: A month's worth of picking?

EYF: Oh, yes! Every bit of it!

WSP: To pick through all your fields one time—

EYF: Yes, it would.

WSP: And then you would come back and scrap the same fields?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Would the scrapping take as long?

EYF: No, it wouldn't because there wouldn't be that much to do.

WSP: If, for example, a certain number of acres produced ten bales, how many of those bales would be due to the first run of picking, and how much would be due to scrapping?

EYF: Well, the scrapping would probably be just one bale, if that much, on the second—

WSP: Scrapping the entire set of fields would add one bale—

EYF: Probably.

WSP: And a third time would add? A bale or less?

EYF: Yes. It'd take you awhile to do it, but probably, you might get a bale, and you might not, on the scrapping. And if you didn't, well, Daddy would take it to the gin and have it ginned and bring the cotton back, and we would card the cotton and put it in quilts, and quilt quilts.

WSP: If you had less than the fifteen-hundred-pound bale, you would keep it instead of selling it at some fraction of a bale? The gin people wouldn't join half bales of cotton together to make one whole bale?

EYF: They would—well, yes, if you wanted to sell it to them, they could do that. But if you wanted the cotton yourself, well, you could have it ginned and then bring the cotton back.

WSP: I see. What does it mean to card cotton?

EYF: Well, you card batts. We had cards that we card cotton batts with and lay it in a lining and then put the quilt top on top and quilt it.

WSP: But I have no idea what carding means. You're using your hands, and I'm still not clear exactly—can you describe this instrument?

EYF: Well, the cards is about that long, about a foot long—and they're about four inches wide, and they've got, looks like little nails a-sticking up, but they're not real stiff like a, a nail or a pin, they're kind of flexible. But they're up there and they're on each. Well, there's two of these, and it's got a handle on it. And you hold one of them, the handle on this side, and then you use it, and you put your cotton on this, and then you card it just like you was combing your hair. You just comb, and it makes a flat batt of cotton, you know?

WSP: You would put a pile of cotton on—

EYF: Well you'd, you'd put some of them—

WSP: On this card—

EYF: Yeah, and then you would comb it.

WSP: You would comb one card through the other.

EYF: You'd comb it until there would be cotton on *both* sides because it's got those little deals on both cards. And it would make a batt, a cotton batt—I could still do it if I had them. And then we would

lay them along on the lining, and—

WSP: The cards would produce little flat pads of cotton—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: That you're calling batts?

EYF: Yes—

WSP: Why would you want to *card* cotton?

EYF: Well, it would be—

WSP: What is the advantage to the carding as opposed to just mashing it flat?

EYF: Well, it would be smooth! Because you couldn't put just the cotton in there, in a quilt, 'cause it would be lumpy. This would be smooth!

WSP: Carding combs all the lumps out, making it uniform.

EYF: Yes, and it would be smooth.

WSP: The cotton batt that's in the card, how would it come out? Wouldn't it tear or something when you pull it out?

EYF: Well, when you card this way and you could push the other one back this way and lift it up, and it'd just come out just as pretty as you please.

WSP: You're carding in just one direction, from top to bottom—

EYF: Yes, this way. (moves her hands)

WSP: When you want the cotton, you turn and—

EYF: You turn it back like that—(moves her hands)

WSP: Then you card in the opposite direction.

EYF: Yes, and it comes out just as—

WSP: The combs would lift the cotton batt right out of the card.

EYF: Yes, and it comes out just perfect!

WSP: Would you put the two pads together to create one batt?

EYF: You lay one here and then you lay the other one just right next to it, make it lap just a fraction so there wouldn't be any space in there between them, and then you just lay them along.

WSP: How wide is the batt? You're indicating about two or three inches?

EYF: The batt—it's about four inches wide.

WSP: You would overlap them like shingles?

EYF: Just a fraction!

WSP: Laid edge to edge with just a little overlap.

EYF: Yes.

WSP: You said they were about a foot long?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Like little flat cotton bricks.

EYF: Yes, but you have to do a jillion of 'em to do a quilt.

WSP: I bet! (laughs) Would you card during in the evening or during the day?

EYF: Do it at night, or in the daytime, especially in the wintertime. We'd sit by the fire and card batts.

WSP: Card batts. That's what you would say.

EYF: Yes, card this cotton and put up a quilt.

WSP: Do you have the quilt ready to lay the batts on, or do you store the carded batts somewhere until—

EYF: We'd have the quilt frames—and they're hung from the ceiling, or Mama's was—and then she'd put the lining in the frame.

WSP: The batts?

EYF: No, put the lining of the quilt in the frame, and then you'd lay the batting on this lining.

WSP: Was this the inner lining of the quilt?

EYF: The *inner* lining is the batts. You'd have the lining, then the batts and then the top.

WSP: The top is the colorful part of the quilt.

EYF: Yes.

WSP: They've already lowered the quilt frame down, and you're just sitting around carding—

EYF: Well—

WSP: And then you flop the batts down on the lining—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: And lift it up again when you're done?

EYF: Wind it back up again, 'cause it was hung with a string on the frames. And then you wind it back up. And then you could lower it down and we'd sit there and quilt.

WSP: How big would this frame be?

EYF: Well, it would be big enough for a quilt, you know, maybe—I don't know, I had some frames that was—I had one that was 120 inches long one way and the other was I think, 100 the other way. 'Cause I—

WSP: Ten feet on one side, by seven, eight feet on the other side? Eight-by-ten-foot frame?

EYF: Something like that.

WSP: Would you stretch a wider piece of cloth on your frame, than you would finally need?

EYF: Oh, maybe about that much wider.

WSP: A couple or three inches you're showing me.

EYF: Yes, because you'd have to have some left to turn over to bind your top with.

WSP: Something to connect the top of the quilt with the bottom.

EYF: Yes.

WSP: And you'd fill all inside the frame with these little batt squares?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Would you attach them somehow, or just lay them in there?

EYF: They'd just be laying in there, and then you lay the top on top, and then you quilt it.

WSP: Would you already have the top assembled?

EYF: Yes, you'd already have it done.

WSP: It's done and folded and set aside somewhere?

EYF: Yes, it's ready.

WSP: Carding the cotton batts is towards the end of the process.

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Was one thickness of cotton all you needed?

EYF: Yeah.

WSP: Did anyone ever put them two or three thick, for extra padding?

EYF: No, because that would be too much. 'Cause time you put all this in there that would be about three pounds of cotton.

WSP: One layer was about three pounds of cotton, spread out?

EYF: Yes. The quilt will weigh about, around three pounds, you know? (laughs) That would be too heavy for me now.

WSP: If you only use three pounds of cotton per quilt, out of the, you said, less than fifteen-hundred-pound bale, that would leave you, gosh, hundreds of pounds of cotton!

EYF: Yes, but you do a lot of quilts!

WSP: Still, three pounds per quilt, and hundreds of pounds of leftover cotton, that's ten or twenty quilts.

EYF: Well, my goodness, we did quilts all the time! I had ten quilts of my own when I married!

WSP: No kidding!

EYF: No kidding, I did!

WSP: In an average year, not doing anything special, the usual routine, how many quilts would a family produce?

EYF: Oh, we might do two or three a year.

WSP: Was this year-round?

EYF: We wouldn't do them in the summer.

WSP: Why not?

EYF: Because it was too hot. We'd do it in the winter.

WSP: Fall, maybe spring?

EYF: Yes. Yes.

WSP: But summer was just too hot to sew?

EYF: Yes. It's simply too hot to fool with it in the summertime. And then in other times we had other things to do in the summer, such as our canning and everything like that.

WSP: When would you make the quilt top? The squares?

EYF: Well, we'd probably do that most time in the wintertime because we'd sit by the fire, and we could piece our quilts, piece the tops. We didn't do much of that in the summertime because it was too hot because we didn't have air conditioning.

WSP: Would you make a top, or maybe two tops, and set them aside?

EYF: Oh, yes!

WSP: Ready for the fall—

EYF: Yes—

WSP: When your cotton batts would be ready to go.

EYF: Sure, sure.

WSP: I see.

EYF: (laughs)

(interruption in taping)

WSP: Would people outside your immediate family help you with quilting, like a quilting bee?

EYF: No. No, not in those days. My mother and I, and my sister and I, we did it. We didn't have anybody else helping us or anything like that.

WSP: Would you join a social group or Sunday group, and quilt at that time?

EYF: No, not at that time.

WSP: This is something you do now, but—

EYF: Yes, I do now, but not then.

WSP: Did you know of any church groups that had quilting bees?

EYF: No, no.

WSP: Well, speaking of church groups, let's talk about your church.

EYF: It was just a little one-room church.

WSP: What was the name of it?

EYF: Friendship.

WSP: Where was it located, roughly?

EYF: It was located right up on a little hill from Owl Creek, from the Owl Creek, because the Owl Creek was right down below where the church was.

WSP: Could you describe the church building for me?

EYF: Well, it was just one room and a good size. It had wooden benches in it. We had a piano, and 'course had the pulpit up there. 'Course, windows down each side. And that was about it, it was just a wooden building. It wasn't anything fancy or anything like that.

WSP: Stained-glass windows?

EYF: No, just the regular windows. No, it wasn't anything fancy or anything like that.

WSP: Was the pulpit in the middle of it, or off to one side?

EYF: It was up at one end, and 'course it was in the middle, but it was up at one end of the church.

WSP: Did your church have a choir?

EYF: No. We had a piano, and we had a lady that played the piano. My daddy led the singing. But we didn't have a choir. Just everybody sang that was in the church.

WSP: Did you tell me what denomination it was?

EYF: Friendship. Oh, Baptist.

WSP: Baptist?

EYF: Yes, Baptist.

WSP: The river was Owl Creek, right?

EYF: Yes, uh-huh, it was right there close, Owl Creek was right down below there.

WSP: Was that where you did baptisms?

EYF: No. Where we had baptisms usually would be in the Leon River because the creek wasn't deep enough. I was baptized down here in the Leon River, close to Straw's Mill because the Owl Creek, wasn't no place deep enough, the water wasn't deep enough because in a dry season sometimes it would run completely dry there where the church was. But down below there, there was some springs in the creek.

WSP: What were the activities, the routines of the church?

EYF: Well, we had—of course, we had a pastor, and I think we had church twice—first Sunday and third Sunday. We didn't have it every Sunday. But we had Sunday school every Sunday at the church. We had a BYPU—that's what they called it.

WSP: What was that an acronym for?

EYF: Well, that would be, you know, kind of like a training union, or something like that, you know, for the young people.

WSP: BYPU?

EYF: Baptist Young People's Union, that's what it was called. And then we had programs at the church—like we would have an Easter program, and we'd have, of course, a Christmas program. And then what we called, we made this one up ourselves, what we had a Children's Day program, you know?

WSP: When would this occur?

EYF: Well, we would just have it, maybe, in the summertime, and we'd fix up a program just for children, and the children would put on the program. You know, that's what it would be. And 'course, I was one of them at that time. But we just had things like that. And we'd have pie suppers.

WSP: What's a pie supper?

EYF: Or, we'd have, or, I say pie supper, was most, more or less box supper. And what we'd have, my sister and I, well, my mother would fix us up a box, and we'd put food in it. You know, she would maybe put some chicken and she would put maybe an apple, and maybe some cookies or whatever, you know, something like that in this box. And then we would have it at the church people would bid on the boxes. And whoever bid on the boxes, bought that box, then we would eat with that person at the box supper. And the money would go the church.

WSP: Is everybody bidding on boxes?

EYF: Anybody that wanted to bid on the boxes could bid on the boxes, and whoever—

WSP: Was this mostly for the young kids, or for the adults?

EYF: It was for anybody. And whoever bid the highest on a box, well, that's who we ate with. We had lots of fun!

WSP: Regarding the bidding process, would you know whose box it was?

EYF: Well, maybe somebody would find out whose box it was and bid more on it, to get that box, you see?

WSP: They were unmarked?

EYF: Yes. A lot of people didn't even know whose box they were bidding on.

WSP: Then part of the fun is discovering who you were going to eat with?

EYF: Yes, and whoever got your box.

WSP: Did you get to see what was inside, what you were bidding on?

EYF: No, not the person that was bidding didn't get to see what's on the inside. (laughs)

WSP: They don't know if they're getting a good meal or a bad one, or who they're going to eat with.

EYF: (laughs) Yes, that's right. They didn't know what they was getting. But anyway, we had lots of fun!

WSP: It sounds like it.

EYF: We did!

WSP: What were the main religious events of the church, and how were they done?

EYF: Well, we just had church service. We didn't really plan up for anything except what I call Easter—Christmas programs. We didn't have anything special any time, you know, because back in those days they just didn't have a lot of activities and things like they do now, you know?

WSP: And you said the preacher would be there every other week?

EYF: Yes, about first and third Sundays, you know, and 'cause that would be about the only time that we could afford a preacher—to pay him.

WSP: Oh, this wasn't because he was circuit riding?

EYF: No.

WSP: It depended on how much the church could afford to pay—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: How much would a preacher cost?

EYF: Oh, very little because sometimes he was paid in food like vegetables out of your garden or something like that. We paid him that way 'cause people didn't have money in those days. We didn't have any money!

WSP: Raw cash, you didn't have cash money.

EYF: No. No! And we lived off of our land, that's the way we had to do because we didn't have any surplus money.

WSP: This must have made it very difficult for the community to gather enough cash to pay a preacher, even if it was a very low price.

EYF: Yes. Yes, those days was, they were hard times.

WSP: Tell me what you mean by that.

EYF: Well, we just didn't have any money to spend! And I say, and as I say, we lived off of our land, 'cause we raised all of our food. There was very little food that we had to buy—like staples, like sugar and flour and, and stuff like that, you know, because we raised the rest of it. We had an orchard.

WSP: Really?

EYF: Yes!

WSP: What was in your orchard?

EYF: Peaches, plums, and we had blackberries.

WSP: Pears?

EYF: No, we didn't have any pears.

WSP: Apples?

EYF: No, we didn't have any apples.

WSP: Any particular reason?

EYF: Well, we just didn't, I don't know why but we just didn't. We, but we had peaches, plums, and blackberries. And we had one cherry tree.

WSP: How many trees, total, would you consider a well stocked orchard?

EYF: In our orchard? Oh, we had about, I'd say, forty or fifty. We had a big orchard. Uh-huh, we had a big orchard.

WSP: Did any become fruit for a truck farm?

EYF: No.

WSP: It sounds like those trees were producing a lot of peaches and plums?

EYF: They did, but we canned it. Because my mother would can, we'd make like canned peaches, peach preserves, peach jam, peach jelly. We had it all! Canned blackberries, and that, and can the plums, make plum jelly, plum jam. We didn't starve, we had plenty of food.

WSP: Sounds like it.

EYF: That's what I say, we lived off of our land.

WSP: Yes.

Would you call it the good old days?

EYF: That's what we used to call it, the good old days.

WSP: Even while you were in it you would call it the good old days?

EYF: Yes. We *still* call it the good old days because we had everything. We wasn't rich but we had, we had everything we needed, except we didn't have money.

WSP: What about the work that was involved?

EYF: Well, we just knew we had to do it, and we didn't mind doing it.

WSP: Was there any concerns regarding health? How did you and your family, and your community look on diseases or minor accidents?

EYF: We never did have anything like that happen.

WSP: Really?

EYF: Unh-uh.

WSP: What happened when people got sick?

EYF: Well, we got sick, maybe we'd take care of ourselves, you know, or something like that. But we never did have any really serious problems, you know, serious sickness or anything.

WSP: No one ever injured themselves farming?

EYF: No.

WSP: Broken bones?

EYF: No, not until we all left the farm. (laughs)

WSP: You had a very lucky life.

EYF: No, we never did have anything like that to happen.

WSP: Is that because you didn't have much farm equipment, or much dangerous equipment, as nowadays?

EYF: Well, not really, 'cause all, all the farm equipment my daddy had was pulled by horses, by a team, you see? We didn't have anything motorized or anything like that.

WSP: Do you know of any one who had serious accidents, been hurt or needed the hospital?

EYF: I can't think of any.

WSP: Not in the Friendship community?

EYF: No, I can't think of any that did.

WSP: Tell me about the community of Friendship? What buildings made up that community?

EYF: You mean how the population of it was, that kind of thing?

WSP: Yes. Was it a town, like we think of town today, or—

EYF: No, it wasn't no little town, it was just a little community—'cause we didn't have any kind of store or anything like that, nothing like that down there. It, all it had was the church and the school.

WSP: Two separate buildings.

EYF: Yes. The school was called Owl Creek, and there's where I went to school. It was a one-room building, one teacher. And later years they finally put a partition down the middle and hired two teachers.

EYF: How many kids were in the school?

EYF: And they'd teach, they didn't teach any higher than the seventh grade.

WSP: How many students total, would you say?

EYF: Oh, there might have been, oh, I believe fifteen. I, uh—

WSP: Do you remember the name of your teacher?

EYF: My first-grade teacher was named Katherine Neel.

WSP: Would the teachers change from time to time?

EYF: Yes, every year we'd change, you know, different teacher.

WSP: Wouldn't the same teacher return and teach the same class?

EYF: Well, they didn't. I don't know why, but they didn't. We had—I had Katherine Neel, and then I had Eula Bird.

WSP: B-y-r-d?

EYF: B-i-r-d, that's way they spelt it. And then I had, uh, uh, May Basheim.

WSP: What was the general age of these teachers?

EYF: Well, they were young, I know. Estelle Green, I think, she was twenty-one when she taught. I was a teenager at that time. And Katherine Neel—I don't know what age she was, 'cause that was my first teacher. But I don't remember what age she would be or anything. And May Basheim, she was probably in her thirties, I guess.

WSP: Would all your brothers and sisters be in the same schoolroom with you and two or three other families?

EYF: Oh, well, my sister and I was in the same room. My brother—he had started going to another school, at Turnover.

WSP: Turnover?

EYF: Yes. And he wasn't in the same school that my sister and I was in.

WSP: The church was Friendship Baptist Church and then the Owl Creek School—how far apart were these two buildings?

EYF: Oh, uh, I guess they was about a quarter of a mile.

WSP: How far was the school from your house?

EYF: From my house? Oh, three miles.

WSP: Did you walk this?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: You walked all three miles?

EYF: I walked all three miles there and back.

WSP: In wintertime?

EYF: In wintertime, rain, snow, whatever.

WSP: Did you walk by yourself, or did you go with your sister?

EYF: Well, my first year I started school my brother was in school then because I remember him going to school with me. And I walked that three miles when I was in the first grade—three miles there and three miles back, wading snow up, knee-deep to me when I was in the first grade. 'Course that wouldn't be very deep at my age, but it was.

And we had a potbellied stove in the schoolroom, right in the middle. The teacher would set me up close to that stove to dry my stockings whenever I got there. (laughs) 'Cause I would be wet clear to my knees from wading in, in that snow! And I didn't have any pneumonia or flu, or anything. (laughs)

WSP: Other than school and church activities, was there any other activity that would help define the Friendship community?

EYF: Well, we had a revival meeting, uh—and we had what they called a brush arbor.

WSP: What is that?

EYF: Well, it had posts all around it, had a wire on top of it, stretched out on top of it. And they would cut—either cedar limbs and put on top, or either haul oat straw, and put on top to cover it so we'd have shade to keep the sun from shining through—have a revival under this tabernacle. And we called it a brush arbor—

WSP: Was the wire on the roof some kind of wire netting or—?

EYF: Yes, that's what it is, just chicken-wire netting.

WSP: Laid on top. Would you have to tie it down?

EYF: Yes, it was tacked. They had a frame around there, and it was fastened down. The wire was

fastened down.

WSP: What about the tree limbs and branches?

EYF: Oh, it was just laid up there on top.

WSP: Would they just leave the limbs there, and let 'em dry out?

EYF: Well, when the revival would be over they'd take it all off to keep it from ruining the wire. And we'd move benches from the church under there.

WSP: So this tabernacle thing was—

EYF: It was on the school ground.

WSP: It wasn't on church ground?

EYF: No, it wasn't. Where the church was the ground wasn't level enough for it because it was rolling—because it was right up on the creek bank, you see?

WSP: Right outside the church, you'd immediately hit this rolling bank going down to the creek?

EYF: And so this was on level ground up there by the school building.

WSP: But you're telling me there's no stores, or other business activities whatsoever in Friendship?

EYF: No, nothing whatsoever.

WSP: Where would the people of Friendship community go for those sorts of services?

EYF: What?

WSP: Groceries, blacksmithing—

EYF: Come to Gatesville.

WSP: Come all the way to Gatesville?

EYF: Come here, that's where we came.

WSP: Did any other community nearby have any services or stores that you would go to?

EYF: No. We would come to Gatesville to get what groceries we need or whatever that we needed to buy. And 'course, my mother did a lot of ordering from catalogs, like Sears and Roebuck.

WSP: Where would that be delivered?

EYF: Well, it would be delivered at our mailbox.

WSP: Basically you'd order little things that would arrive by mail?

EYF: Yes, yes.

WSP: Not large things?

EYF: Not large things because if we bought anything large, we'd come to Gatesville.

WSP: How often would you come to Gatesville to shop for groceries, for staples you could not grow at home?

EYF: Well, not every week because we didn't need it every week. And it was just whenever we needed it,

that's when we came to Gatesville.

WSP: Would you shop on a particular day of the week?

EYF: Well, we'd try to make it, maybe, on a weekend, or something like that.

WSP: Sunday?

EYF: No, probably on a Friday or Saturday.

WSP: You'd do your in-town shopping on Friday or Saturday, and be home for Sunday.

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Then Monday was washing.

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Was there any other activity or chore that was done on a particular day of the week? Like shopping or washing?

EYF: No, no. And another thing about the school, at the end of the school we'd always put on a play, three-act play.

WSP: The students?

EYF: Yes, well, it would be maybe, ones that maybe was out of school—that we would put on a play, 'cause we'd be adults in it. We would put on a play, a three-act play. And I was in several of them.

WSP: How much fun was that?

EYF: Oh, it was a lot of fun!

WSP: I'll bet! Now, did you rehearse in the evening?

EYF: We would, at night.

WSP: After school?

EYF: Yes, after school or whenever we was putting it on, we'd rehearse after—at night—because my brother and my sister and I, all three of us would be in them, we would go for rehearsals.

WSP: How long would it take to prepare a three-act play?

EYF: Oh, I don't know. It would maybe take a month or two. We would start ahead of time, to be sure we could learn our parts, and know what we're supposed to do. And we would have people come from far and near to see our three-act plays!

WSP: People from other communities?

EYF: People from other communities would come! And we would really have a big crowd. And we didn't charge for the plays. But what we would do, we would just pass a hat and if anybody wanted to contribute, okay, and if they didn't, okay.

WSP: What was the money used for?

EYF: Well, it was used for our schools.

WSP: Plays were fundraising events—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Now did any other school have these plays?

EYF: Not that I can recall.

WSP: Did anyone from Friendship go to another community or join with other communities for any kind of social activities?

EYF: Well, not really social activities, but we would go, to the other communities at the end of school when they would have plays or anything. 'Course, we didn't compete in them but we would go *to* them. And maybe go to Hubbard for their all-day at the school, or Ewing School, you know, and we would go to their end of their school entertainments and things like that.

WSP: I assume these events were staggered in someway, so that everything didn't happen at the same time.

EYF: Not everyone, not at the same time. And Ewing School, they would have *five* nights of entertainment!

WSP: Five nights!

EYF: Five nights of entertainment at the end of their school!

WSP: What would that involve?

EYF: Plays.

WSP: All plays every night?

EYF: Yes. Different grades, different things.

WSP: Really!

EYF: They would really put it on big. And it was good.

WSP: Ewing people would come to *your* plays?

EYF: Yes, they did, and Hubbard people, and Spring Hill and different places around.

WSP: Was there any other social activity that would involve this large area, this many communities to the same degree as the end-of-school plays?

EYF: Not necessarily.

WSP: Would revivals?

EYF: Well, when we'd have a revival, people from other communities would come to the revival. 'Course, it would be just once a year. In the summertime we'd have a revival.

WSP: Did your family go to other communities for revivals?

EYF: Yes, we did.

WSP: Well, Friendship would have one revival in the summer, but you might go to four or five or six revivals throughout the summer—

EYF: Yes. If we'd choose to, we could.

WSP: Spring would be the time for end-of-school plays—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: And throughout the summer would be summer revivals?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: I'm seeing some larger social interaction during spring and summer—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: What would happen in the fall and winter? Anything of a similar nature?

EYF: Well, not really, because I guess at that time people didn't have good transportation, and you know, and it would be kind of bad to get out in the wintertime, to do anything. Now I know our community, we would have what we called weenie roast or marshmallow roast. Young people would get together and go somewhere and build a bonfire and have that, you know?

WSP: During the winter or fall?

EYF: In the winter or fall, we would do that.

WSP: But not anything that would involve other communities?

EYF: No, no.

WSP: Was there some event that signaled the end of harvest?

EYF: No. No, not that I can think of.

WSP: So basically it's the spring and summer were the times for the larger community events?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Did you know people from other communities?

EYF: Oh, yes! I knew people from the other communities.

WSP: Was this because of the end-of-schools, or was it just by chance?

EYF: No! I just, just knew them because I had friends there. I just knew people there, and I had kinfolks that lived in those other communities. And we just associated together in other communities.

WSP: It sounds like you had a group of activities that focused around Friendship, and the shopping in Gatesville, of course, but only occasionally interact with communities outside of Friendship. Am I right?

EYF: Well, it was kind of hard because, as I say, we didn't have good transportation. We would go in wagons that was the only way we had to go. Of course, we had a surrey that we went in. But later years, there would be a bunch of us young folks get in a wagon—well, we called it a trailer—it was a wagon bed, but it had tires like a car on it. And we would fill it full of young people, and we would go to other communities for a party, or if it's a church going-on, we would go to church, just a whole wagonload of us.

WSP: Parties? What parties did you have?

EYF: Oh, listen! In our community we would start up at—Brown's Creek community joined Friendship community. Two families—that lived over there that we associated with a lot. They were real good people. We would start over there in the summertimes, especially when it was—the moon was shining at night, and one of them would have a party. The next night it'd come to the next house, the next time it'd come to our house, and on down the line.

WSP: The next *night*, or the next *time*?

EYF: At night, at night. And, and we would have them—

WSP: One party *every* night?

EYF: We would have them outside.

WSP: But you'd have a party every night in the summertime?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: You work all day planting or fieldwork, or plowing and—

EYF: Yes. And then we would have a party.

WSP: What kind of a party would you have?

EYF: Well, we would be outside, 'cause it was a moonlight night—and we would play Tag or whatever, or just think up something to play. We would just have a good time.

WSP: Music?

EYF: No, we never did have any music.

WSP: Dancing?

EYF: No.

WSP: No dancing?

EYF: No dancing. No, my daddy wouldn't allow that!

WSP: What about ring dancing or ring parties?

EYF: I had gone to some ring parties, if I could keep my daddy from knowing about it.

WSP: (laughs) Well, I understood that ring parties were completely on the up-and-up and everyone agreed they were okay because they were not regular dances.

EYF: No, but you couldn't make my daddy believe that. (laughs)

WSP: Were these mostly outdoor games?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: We're not talking cards, are we?

EYF: No.

WSP: Refreshments, what kind of refreshments?

EYF: Well, sometimes we would and sometimes we wouldn't. We'd have maybe lemonade or something like that, and maybe some cookies. And we had what we called candy-breaking.

WSP: What is that?

EYF: Well, we would, I don't know whether I could explain it or not—but we'd have these peppermint sticks of candy, is what we have, and we would have them in a box. And I don't know exactly how we did it, but anyway I know a person would go through and get a stick of the candy. And then another

would come along and break it, you know—I don't, I don't know exactly how it'd happen, but we just called it candy-breaking. But there was some routine there afterwards but I can't remember what it was.

WSP: A guy or a girl would pick out a candy stick and the others would—

EYF: Would get it or something. And then they would maybe take a walk together or something. I don't know *exactly* how it was, but, anyway we had lots of fun anyway. We just did things that—we had a lot of fun—there wasn't any money involved or expense, or anything like that.

WSP: Was this at somebody's house?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: So you would just open your house—

EP: Yes.

WSP: And they would be wandering in and out of the house, playing out of the front yard?

EYF: Yes. And we just had a community that we just had a good time.

WSP: It sounds like it.

EYF: We did!

WSP: What time would they start, and when would they end, generally?

EYF: Oh, it'd start by sundown, I guess, and maybe end by nine or ten o'clock, something like that.

WSP: In the wintertime—

EYF: No, in the wintertime we didn't have them.

WSP: Sundown was around eight o'clock in the summertime—

EYF: Well, I don't know, but anyway, whatever. You know. But we would have—a couple of hours or something like that. But we had lots of fun.

WSP: These parties would connect more than one community through—

EYF: Yes. Yes, we'd just go down the line. (laughs)

WSP: Did the adults have similar parties?

EYF: No, they just chaperoned. (laughs)

WSP: Would the parents from other communities stay with their kids, so there'd be two or three sets of parents at the—

EYF: No, no, they didn't do that.

WSP: Just the one set of parents and then a mix of kids?

EYF: Yes, yes.

WSP: The community was bound together at this level by the kids—

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Adults would be more related to Sunday events?

EYF: Yes.

WSP: Were there any political activities, or rallies that the community would get involved in?

EYF: No, nothing like that.

WSP: Campaigning, stump speeches?

EYF: No, no, nothing like that.

WSP: Well, you have been very helpful, and I'm very grateful to you for taking the time to meet with me. I have a million more questions, but if I get back up here maybe we can schedule another interview. I'm glad we spent this time. I know you're headed out to do some quilting.

EYF: Yes, that's where I was, going, the quilting club.

WSP: We'll cut this a little short but thank you very much for your time. When I get this typed up I'll send you a copy to look at.

EYF: Okay, I appreciate that. (laughs)

WSP: You're certainly welcome. Good-bye.

Robert E. Gault

Date of birth: 1925
Communities affiliated with: Antelope, Eliga
Interviewed by Thad Sitton

TS: This is Thad Sitton. Today is October 18, 2001. I'm interviewing for the first time Robert E. Gault at Mr. Gault's home near Burnet. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University. [Dorothy Gault also took part in this interview.]

REG: I was raised there eleven miles from Killeen in Coryell County, so, I had to ride the bus twenty-eight miles to high school in Gatesville. Walked a mile and a half and caught the bus.

TS: Where exactly did you grow up?

REG: I grew up on the Cowhouse, about six miles from Antelope and about three and a half miles up from Eliga.

TS: So, it was closest to Eliga.

REG: Yeah, yeah, but the only school was Antelope. Our place out there, my granddad gave land for a school back in ninety-something, and that was the Latham Prairie School, they called it. Actually, it's supposed to have been Salem, but the county has it as Latham Prairie School, also Ross School. And then, in 1920 and '21, Salem School, or Latham Prairie School, and House Creek School and Rock—yeah, Rock Creek something or another—Creek School went together, and they made Antelope School, and it opened in '22, I believe. They had a two-teacher and then three-teacher school. Then, when I was there, they cut it back, too, and just consolidated pretty well down to Gatesville. Gatesville took the high school and the elementary, and we bussed their students that way. And I went to Antelope through the freshman year, then I went to Gatesville last three years. They had real good school at Gatesville, it was rated second to Waco, at that time, in the state. But, 'course, everything's kind of crowded. We had a big school, we graduated I think 184 students. That was big for those days. Yeah. We moved out of Fort Hood when I moved. I went to Gatesville twenty-one miles to Turnersville to that rock pile up there. But that's all we could buy with the money we got. We had a place there that Dad was offered more during the Depression than what he got for it. And then we had to sell all of our cattle off in the spring. We had forty-nine head of Hereford cattle we sold for $35 per head, and they'd of brought $250 or better by the fall. And so you see, he had a big loss there.

TS: So, he was forced to sell 'em in the wrong season of the year?

REG: That's right. Yeah, they'd just come through the winter, it was a bad time to sell cattle. The army was going to move us, gonna give us thirty days, and they go fifteen days, and we paid outside truckers to move us at $125 a load. And things like that just eat you up, you know. And they wouldn't let us have our fences, and they took those things and just run right down and ground 'em into the ground.

TS: Just ground down the fence line.

REG: That's right. And then they wouldn't let us have our house, and then they fired into 'em and burned 'em. Yeah, that's the way they did it. And we had four hundred grafted pecans, and they said that wasn't an improvement, that's just part of the place. Didn't allow any pay for it, and it'd cost us lots of money grafting all of those pecans. And they were bearing, we was making one thousand to fifteen hundred dollars a year on pecans. And that was no improvement, you see. Just stuff like that. And they'd take one on ten. If you had ten places, they would take this tenth place, here, and they'd give him a good price. They had that kangaroo hearing, those ten, those corner people, is the ones they called in. We had a place down on where the House Creek runs into Cowhouse, a place water went across it ever' year, and it's washed down nearly bedrock, they gave them sixty-four dollars an acre, and we was up there on prime property, we got twenty dollars an acre. That's just how it—(unintelligible) out.

TS: So, why did they do that?

REG: I can't figure it out, but the way they handled it.

TS: There's no sense to it that you've ever figured out?

REG: No. There's no system that the government used at that time that was much sense to it. That's just like farmers plowing their crops out there, and paying 'em for it. What's the sense of that?

TS: I thought they might give a few people a good price to encourage everybody else.

REG: Well, they just give those—when they had the hearings, that was the ones they called in. J. C. Jurney had that one down there, and then Leslie Thompson's up there on the hill, he had one, and first one and another that way. Old man Jim Ganoway had a place, and he wouldn't take their price. He died and never had gotten any money out of it. I guess his son probably settled with 'em later, but—just things like that.

TS: So, he used—he went through the appeal process?

REG: Yeah, and they just kept putting him off to where he never did get anything. You know how the federal courts and things are.

TS: You better have a lot of years left in your life.

REG: That's right. Well, that camp was originally surveyed between Valley Mills, up in there, and Congressman Bob Poage said that was too close to Waco, he didn't want it up there. You know, Poage was the congressman, and he was a real power. He was a big buddy of FDR and everything, and he got 'em to put it out at Fort Hood, said that wouldn't hurt nobody out there. And our land was worth twice what that was up there. But that's just the way they do things.

TS: Well, they were in a big hurry, right?

REG: Yeah, they claimed they was. Everybody moved out quicker, anyway. I was going to school at Gatesville when the first troops came in from Fort Meade, Maryland. And we got out of school to go up and see those troops come in, and then we couldn't understand them! (laughs) We never heard any Yankees talk. It tickled us. But we found out them old boys was mostly Pennsylvania Dutch in that outfit that came in there, and they's the best old boys you ever saw. They invited us to come back out there, 'course, the army'd raised heck if they had known that, we'd go out there, and they'd take us out on those half-tracks and everything riding, it'd just be us kids. And they were a nice bunch of boys—after we got to where we could talk to 'em. (laughs) But far as the personnel of the army, we never did have no complaints about the army, they treated us good and everything.

TS: The problem was the government, not the—

REG: That's right. The in-betweens is always what get you, you know. That money was appropriated by Congress, but it didn't get to the people, you see. And where did it go? I imagine Uncle Bob Poage's got his share of it.

TS: Were there rumors going around before it actually happened? Do you remember when did your people get the first wind of it?

REG: Well, the first thing we got, they went in there a couple of years before that and surveyed for Lake Belton, for the dam, and we thought that was going in there. See, they surveyed the water line clear up 'bout in our lines, where it affected and everything. And first thing we know, it came out in the paper, I believe, is first we noticed of it, that Fort Hood was a possibility, you know. The first estimate was 40,000 to 50,000 acres, and it just kept growing. And we had a neighbor that had, oh, he had—we had 360 acres, he had 17,000 to 18,000 acres, goat fence on it, good houses and everything, and they gave him seventeen dollars to eighteen an acre. But he went up this side of Gatesville up there in that old cedar brakes up there and bought a bunch of land at seven dollars an acre. The next year they took that in when they took in North Fort Hood. And they paid him off, then, they'd been so much heck raised, and he got rich off of it. And then he went up to Rising Star and bought him a ranch. He was smarter than some of us was. (laughs) But that's the way it went.

TS: So, it was—it wasn't even, it wasn't fair, it wasn't worked out, and some people got—

REG: Yeah, yeah. There was a few that got good money, and that was all, just a few. Our appraiser was from Chicago, Illinois, so you know he knew Texas land prices real well. They never do use a Texas man to do anything like that. See, we had a mile of the Cowhouse Creek and then a half mile back the other way. That's a quarter section or a half section—well, a half section, 320 acres. And that's what we had there, and Dad went there when he was six years old. His dad bought the place then. And then Dad had sisters, and when my granddad died, he just bought them out, you see, and he kept the place. So, he lived there from the time he was six till the government moved him out when he's sixty-six. And he was just like a fish out of water for the rest of his life, he lived till '47 and died then.

TS: Well, when you're sixty-six—I'm sixty—you're not ready to get rooted out and—

REG: That's right. Well, he figured on hunting and fishing there on the river. Actually, he'd gotten all of his federal loan off about the year before, paid off. You know how they got them old land loans—you know, federal deal? And he'd paid off the year before. And so he was ready to enjoy himself, and he had about sixty head of cattle on there, we had ninety acres of good bottom cultivating land and real good pasture. And he was setting good, there. And, shoot, they took it and just took everything away from him. And he was restless, he'd go to see one of the kids one day and the next day somewhere else. He never did settle down after that. He bought a little place up there at Turnersville, north of Gatesville twenty miles. We's the other side of Turnersville, between Mosheim and Turnersville, there. And we lived there four years, but I came to Killeen and worked the first year. I was sixteen when we all moved to Turnersville—seventeen. I worked on a farm down there for my uncle. And then my brother, my oldest brother, my old bachelor brother, was taken in the army, and I went home and worked the farm.

TS: What did your father have on his farm when you were growing up there? Could you sort of describe his operation? He's running cows, and he's farming too, right?

REG: Yeah, we had real good land, we raised half, three-quarter bale of cotton to the acre, you see. We had real good cotton land, and on the upper land that was lightest we raised oats on it. And we rotated oats, maize, and corn, you see, and then cotton—diversified farming. And we run about a third in

cotton, third in corn, and the rest of it for bale hay and things like that.

TS: So, it was on the Cowhouse, your father's place was on the Cowhouse.

REG: Yeah. Our field went up and down the Cowhouse, you see, in that bottom, there, and then our pasture was on up above there.

TS: Was it close to your grandfather's place?

REG: Well, it was Granddad's old place, you see. Dad took it over after Granddad died. Granddad died in 1906, and then Dad bought out his sisters and kept it. He got a federal loan and just paid them off, that's what he done. Now, he had one brother, but he was at Pidcoke. He was a doctor and he was a half brother, and he was a different story.

TS: Wasn't interested in the land.

REG: Well, no, he was educated, he got an education and made a doctor. He went to Electra after that, and he was a doctor in Electra for about forty years, he died in 1950. See, my dad's folks had twelve thousand acres of land in the Austin-Round Rock area. They came there in the '40s or '50s and bought that. They came from up in Tennessee, they came from Williamson County, Tennessee, to Williamson County, Texas. And they bought that down there, and it used to be known as the Gault place. They came in there with a bunch of Gaults and a bunch of slaves. And they said that the family up in Tennessee split up, said some of 'em went north, and some came south. Said some of 'em was anti-slave and some was slave. And Dad's dad, then, had I believe five boys—I'm not sure—but, anyway, Granddad went in the army, he was just an overgrown kid, he went in the Civil War, went in at San Antonio, and he served in the army. He came out and got married and had two kids born to her, and she died. Well, he went in the Rangers then for a while, and then he married my dad's mother. They stayed there in the Williamson County area several years, and then he bought up here on the Cowhouse. Came up here and bought that. And that was the story of that. Now, we go to Austin, there's still Gaults all around there, and they're kin to us, but I don't know any of them. But all the Gaults are kin to us, that was from that original bunch. And they say there's a street out there that's a Gault Avenue or something or another. My nephew was telling me that he was out there and said that there were several old houses out there somewhere, I don't know where it's at, I'm gonna go down there and find out. I've got a daughter that lives in Round Rock, and I'd like to see about it. But that would be something if you had twelve thousand acres in there, now wouldn't it?

TS: Yeah, twelve thousand acres in the Austin area would—

REG: This Nixon-Clay, one of the partners there married a Gault that's a cousin of mine. I met her down there at a wedding one time, and she come up and asked me if I was Jim Gault's boy, and I said, "Yes, I am." And she said, "He's my cousin." And she got to telling me who her dad was, but I couldn't keep up with it, you know. Wasn't too much interested, then. (laughs) I wish now I'd listened to all of 'em. My dad used to lay out on the porch at night and tell stories about the country and everything, and I didn't pay no attention to 'em. But, it would of been interesting, now. But, going back to the way we was raised there, that old school in our pasture was where my older brothers went to school there. And then after it was done away with, I started school in '31, you see, so Antelope'd been going about ten years when I went there.

TS: So, they were going to which school?

REG: They went to Salem or Latham Prairie, you see, early, and then the older ones transferred there. That oldest brother never did go to Antelope. In 1931 I started to school, and I had a sister still in there.

TS: What was the Antelope School like in the '30s?

REG: Well, in the '30—it started out in '21 as a two-teacher school, and then in the '30s it went to three-teacher school. And it got as high as—well, when I was going there, we had 157 students, which is pretty good for a rural school, and we had four teachers. A principal, a part-time teacher, and then three regular teachers. And it was pretty strong little school there. And the county superintendent was over all of them in those days, all the rural schools, you know. And, finally, well they—Gatesville was running busses down that way, and they got a deal with 'em that they'd run the high school—run all the kids by there and then pick up the high school kids and take 'em up to Gatesville. Which was good for us, we got a chance for a little better education that way, and more diversified.

TS: How did you get to Antelope School? Did you walk or ride?

REG: First four or five years I rode a horse behind my sister, she was six years older than me. We rode an old bald-faced horse that six miles in every kind of weather.

TS: Six miles is kind of the outer limits.

REG: Well, we were raised down there on the creek, you see, about, about halfway to Antelope you went up on the prairie. And when that cold wind hit up there! And we were tickled like heck when we hit that brush on the way home. And you'd leave your horse up there, and your saddle'd be wet and everything, you know. Now, people who had lots of money went up there and built some stalls, but we didn't have that kind of thing. (laughs)

TS: That's interesting. So some of the families had built stalls.

REG: Yeah, they had three or four stalls there, and we had a hitching rail where we tied ours. And we had an old horse you had to put a halter on him, or he'd rub his bridle off and go home. You know how they do. Had a great big old horse, I had to get it up to a gate and crawl up on it to get on him. But he was as tame as he could be. We was going to school one day, when I must have been about eight or nine, and my sister got in a race with an old boy on another horse. I's behind the saddle, and she jumped a ditch with that horse, and I landed right across here and knocked me out, you know. And schoolteachers come along in a buggy, two lady teachers come along in a buggy, and they picked me up and took me up to the school. And it busted me up in there, I had nosebleeds from that for years and everything. My sister didn't miss me till she got up to the stall. She told me says, "Now, you tell Daddy that you fell playing Running Base or something, or I'll whip you." She was mean to me, you know. And I got home, and I told my daddy, "I was playing Running Base, and I fell and hit the base across there." And they took it like that, but he was on the school board, and he went to school board meeting that night, and he found out the truth. And came home and whipped me for lying! (both laugh)

That's the way sisters do, you know.

TS: So, it was a pure threat?

REG: I guarantee you it was. Ever' time I got in a fight with her, I got a whipping. I tripped her one morning, and she fell and hit the dresser across there and broke her nose. And Dad like to beat me up, and I told him it's worth it that time. My sister's still alive, she's eighty-two years old, she lives over here at Lampasas. She's not doing good, but she's still going. She says I'm not telling the truth about her being so mean, but I know—she's the only girl, there were four boys and one girl.

TS: I guess she had to be mean.

REG: Oh, she was, she could ride a horse and shoot a gun with anybody, and anything like that. Played softball, she was pitcher. She was tough, I'll guarantee you. And she used to pick 500 pounds of cotton a day. I'm telling you, I had one brother that could do that, but 450 was the most I could get.

TS: My goodness. I always ask people about picking cotton. How many acres would y'all have on your place, on the average?

REG: About forty, I imagine, of cotton.

TS: That's a lot of cotton. I haven't asked you, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

REG: Well, I had four brothers, four boys and one girl. But we were scattered out so much in age, my oldest brother was fifteen years older than me, and the next one was fourteen years older than me, and the next one was twelve years older than me. And then my sister was six years older than me. And there wasn't many of 'em left. The oldest brother was a bachelor, and he stayed home until the army took him. He was always there, but he was slow and deliberate, you know, when I was twelve years old, I could out pick him in cotton and hoe two rows to his one. But he's just that way.

I thought one of the highlights of my life when I was eleven years old—Dad, after we got our cotton chopped, we could help the neighbors, you know. And they'd pay us for it, and we'd get to keep that money, and that's about the only money to get ahold of. And we's chopping cotton for Fleming, which is the next place above us, and his rows were nearly a mile long. And boy, it's lots of land there, you know. And we's chopping cotton there one time, and I was working out there. One of my older brothers and a sister was chopping, me and two of their boys. And Dad went up there and told Mr. Fleming, says, well, you owe me for he told me how many days at full wages and a half pay for R. E. He said, "Half pay, hell. He hoed a row ever' time they did. He's gonna get a man's pay." And, oh, I was tickled to death I got that! Dollar and a quarter a day. (laughs)

TS: So, he was gonna play fair with it.

REG: Yeah, he said, "He hoed a row ever' times the others did, he's gonna get the same pay." But those things, you always remember something like that.

TS: You know, some people were real good at picking, and there were people that were just very bad.

REG: Uh-huh. My oldest brother, like I say, he'd pull a boll of cotton and stand up and pick it out and look around, and get another'ne. And if he got two hundred pounds, he's all right, he didn't care. Now, my dad was a good cotton picker, he was a four-hundred- or five-hundred-pound man. And my sister and my next to oldest brother was real good pickers. Now, they got in West Texas, my brother used to pick one thousand pounds a day. The way they picked, 'course, it's rough picking. But I never could. Four-fifty, I think, is the best I ever did, and I thought I was working real hard to do that 'cause I worked hard to do that.

TS: And you're talking about pulling the lint out, right? It wasn't pulling bolls, that came later.

REG: Right, you picked the lint out. Pulling bolls came after I left the farm. The only time I ever enjoyed picking cotton—after I went back home, I worked the farm on halves with Dad. He furnished everything, and I furnished all the labor. We split down the middle. And I enjoyed picking that cotton when I was taking it home and getting a good bit of money out of each bale. I didn't mind that, I worked hard at that. The only ones we didn't split, we put the feed corn and the things we's gonna use for feed in the barn. And then, my mother and I raised chickens on the halves. And I ground the chicken feed, we had a hammer mill, you see, and we ground by the agricultural department's specifications, and we sold lots of eggs.

TS: Tell me about that. See, what I'm doing is talking to people about all the sides of the farm. You've got the main field crops, you got the forage crops, you got all the, uh—and this is the sort of side-money business.

REG: Well, we had to do that. Now, that was after we left Fort Hood. We went up there to Turnersville, see, and that little old place wouldn't support you just farming. So, we went to raising chickens and everything else we could.

TS: I'm still interested. How many chickens would y'all—?

REG: We run about four hundred laying hens, usually. And we'd run 'em about three years and dispose of 'em, you know, for baking hens or something, and then we'd get a new batch. We got some little chickens every year, we got 'em from hatcheries, and we raised 'em like that. And we didn't raise anything but barred rocks, Plymouth Rocks, they called 'em. You know, you go into a shed where you got some leghorns, and they just fly everywhere and everything, go crazy. Them old barred rocks was tame, you'd go in there and work with 'em, you know. And Mother liked 'em better, they laid a brown egg instead of a white egg, but they sold just as good. And when you went to sell 'em when they's roasting hen, they'd bring twice what leghorn would. And she stuck with 'em, and that's what we raised all the time.

TS: A barred rock, is that sort of a checkerboard-looking chicken?

REG: Well, they're kind of a grey and white. And they were a bigger chicken, then and Rhode Island Reds were your big chickens, you see. Rhode Island Red was a good chicken, too, they were big red chickens.

TS: Did you keep 'em in a house, or were they yard chickens?

REG: We had a shed that they roosted in. And while they's little we kept a pen about fifty by one hundred that they run in during daytime, and we'd run 'em in the fence. But, when they got older, they usually roosted in the house. Now, when we were down on the farm, then roosted in a tree out there. And when we were in Fort Hood, we raised turkeys all the time.

TS: Yeah, because you were down in the woods, and I've learned that people that were down in the woods usually raised—you sort of needed the woods for the turkeys.

REG: That's right.

TS: How did the turkey operation work?

REG: Well, it was something else. I'd have to get out and follow an old hen. You'd know they're laying somewhere, but they'd hide out. And you'd follow an old hen, and she'd go in an old pile of brush or something. You go around there directly, she's gone, she went out the other side and went somewhere else. So, you really had to be on your toes to check those things. Because, if you didn't get those eggs, foxes and things'd eat 'em, you see. And we'd bring 'em in and set 'em. But they would give you fits, I'll tell you for sure. They were smart old things. They got to where, when I got big enough, they let me ride a horse and watch 'em, and of course a kid likes to ride a horse and fool around. But I used to have to follow 'em around by foot, and 'course they're lots rattlesnakes in that country, and they're always worried about that, but I never did get snake bit. I had an old dog that stayed with me all the time, and he'd circle all the time. Now, he killed several rattlesnakes.

TS: People, people, kept dogs because of the snakes in snake country, right?

REG: That's right. We, uh, my dad hunted rattlesnakes all the time. I've gone out many a time on a snake hunt. We'd go out there where they're under these caves in the wintertime, and he'd make a hook out of the outside rail of a bedspring. They'd straighten that and then put a hook on it like that. You run that back in there and you hit something, you'd twist it. You bring an old rattlesnake out it's rattling to raise heck, you know. And then he'd take a shotgun and shoot 'em. Some people'd just take a

sharpshooter and cut their head off, but he wouldn't get that close. And we were out hunting on House Creek one time up there, and my next-to-oldest brother was a big snake hunter, and he'd go in there after 'em. And we had dynamited getting this one, where it'd get big enough to get in there, and my brother went in there. He had a brand new coat, and he hung it up in a tree out there, Frank dynamited the rock and put it right through that coat. (both laugh) It just tore it to pieces! But that time we drug out thirty-four rattlesnakes there, thirty-four of 'em. But, they was lots of 'em back in that country. But we'd never get bit because we knew they's there, and we watched for 'em. My mother had a garden down from the house about halfway to the creek. There's a flat in there, kind of a slough-like through there. And she put her garden there, she raised a quarter-, half-acre garden every year, and she hand-cultivated it. We plowed it with a tractor, or, a team, rather, it was before we got a tractor, and she'd hoe it, and ever' year she'd kill one or two rattlesnakes in there with her hoe. Run into 'em, you know, 'cause they'd wash down there, you know. And usually the small snakes would wash down there. But she'd take her hoe down there, and she'd just cut 'em up. But, boy, you talk about garden, you could really raise it in there, where that ground was kind of made-ground, you know.

TS: Down there close to Cow Creek, I mean Cowhouse?

REG: Not too far from it. About halfway down it caught the water coming down off the hill, and that water washed that sand and sediment in there, you know. And that made a real good garden in there. We raised potatoes and everything in there.

TS: I was going to ask about gardens.

REG: Boy, we raised anything you wanted there just real profusely. And then we had a peach orchard up there by our house, and we kept bees, we always kept ten to twelve hives of bees there. You know, they were self-preserving people in those days.

TS: That's what so—you know, I'm personally interested in how they tried to get as much of what they needed off of the places as they absolutely could.

REG: My dad came home one year, in 1936, the crops all in and everything. He said, "Well, I've got a hundred dollars in the bank." Says, "That's the first time since '28 I've had any money in the bank." And it'd gone through and came out that well. But he made it through the Depression that way, he got by. And lots of 'em didn't—we had people all around us that went under. And he said, when Herbert Hoover run for re-election, his neighbor had to borrow a car from him to run it, and he voted for Hoover. Dad says he's a damn fool! (both laugh) Those were some times. 'Course, I started to school during the Depression in '31, you see. I was born in '25, so I lived through a good bit of it. And you know, it was '39 or '40 before things really picked up. The threat of war in Europe, probably, was the only thing that picked us up as good as it did. Although Roosevelt did a pretty good job of managing things. He got a lots of people off the—he got 'em to work, anyway, and that helped a whole lot.

TS: What did y'all sell off your place besides cotton? Now, your money crops is cotton.

REG: Cotton and corn. We sold lots of corn, oh, yeah, we sold a lot of corn. And we sold oats. That was back in the days of the thrasher. Did you ever run an old thrasher, see an old thrasher?

TS: I've never. One man has tried to describe—how did the old-time thresher work?

REG: Well, they were—you fed, you had a belt, a conveyor belt, that come down here. And you'd bring your wagon up aside that, and you'd throw your bundles of oats on that. And it comes into that thrasher, and it cuts that stuff up and separates the oats out of there.

TS: Did somebody have to feed the bundles in by hand?

REG: No, you didn't feed 'em by hand. That conveyor belt went there, and they went in just like this, lined up. You'd throw 'em right in line to where they go right on in like that. The conveyor belt takes 'em in there and drops 'em right down in that old thrasher. And it goes around like this and like this, you see, and that stuff's tore up and thrashed out, and the oats drop down, go out the end into a sacker.

TS: But that kind of a thrasher is just sat there stationary in the field, and you bring the bundles to it in the wagon and run 'em through.

REG: Yeah, yeah. You run two men. One on each side in wagons be dropping that in there at a time, you see. And you'd run lot of bushels of oats. After I moved out of Fort Hood, I lived up at Turnersville, well I worked for a fellow at Mosheim, a farmer and had a filling station and everything. And he had an independent thrasher he run ever' year, and he hired his hands to work, and I worked for him three summers, there. And I think I got seventy-five cents an hour. But it was pretty good work, because we worked from daylight to dark. He had a wagon out there, a chuck wagon, and we ate five meals a day, 'cause that's in a German community out there. And I learned a lot there. But I worked for him, so I'd have to drive the tractor pulling the thrasher from place to place, or just about anything. And when we broke down, and them other boys got to lay around and shoot craps, or something, I had to be up on that thrasher trying to work on it. And then if you got a granary—like, those old Germans had them old big tin granaries, you know—and you had to get oats pulled back from where he's putting it in, I'd have to get in there and pull that stuff back. So, I caught all the rough work. But I enjoyed it, and I worked for him three summers there, and we worked six days a week.

TS: Would he go around from place to place?

REG: Yeah, at ever' farm he'd set up once on the farm and make a big straw stack where that blowed out, you see. And that's the way you worked it. And those old farmers down there, see—

'Course, when we were in Fort Hood, we hired a thrasher to come in. 'Course, I was a kid, then. Best I could do, there, I had to take the old horse and carry jugs of water around to everybody, you know. I wasn't old enough to get out there and make a field hand, they didn't think, yet. I was fifteen the last year we raised a crop there. And they'd make me get out there and two of those crock jugs with a quilt around 'em, you know. Wet 'em down and fill 'em with water and go around to all the hands in the field.

TS: Well, you know, the chickens were fed feed whether down on the Cowhouse or up on the new place, but what did the turkeys eat?

REG: You didn't feed them much, they made their own way. They'd go out and eat grasshoppers and everything out in the pasture. Turkeys was easy that way, but you had to watch 'em to keep from losing 'em. They'd roost out there, you had to get 'em to roosting at home, you know. If you didn't, well, you'd lose all of 'em. Fox and things prey on 'em real bad. Now, we didn't have any wolves at that time, Dad had killed out the last wolves in that country. He used to hunt them, too. But, now, them wolves, they really cleaned up on stuff—cows too, young yearlings and things, you know. But we had a real peaceful environment, there.

TS: You were down, you were down in the wooded valley.

REG: What we had, the ninety acres of bottomland was cleared, and then at the border of that up there, you had timber started. And we had a lot of live oak timber, and then we had one pasture that was post oak timber. And it had red sand in it, you know how that post oak grows in sand. But we had lots of timber, we had lots of grass, we had buffalo grass. Real good grass.

TS: Well, the turkeys ate wild stuff, they ate grasshoppers, right? They ate acorns.

REG: Oh, they'd eat anything, just about, and they were good survivors, and they put weight on that way,

you'd get some good heavy turkeys. We used to sell them, too. We sold 'em down to a little bit of laying hens ever' year, you know. We used to keep thirty to forty turkeys, and they brought good money. And like I say, we sold some chickens, we sold lots of eggs. And when we was at Turnersville, I'd take two or three cases of thirty dozen cases of eggs a week off. Oh, they come in there.

TS: Wow. Where were you taking 'em into?

REG: Well, that Vicker at Mosheim that I worked for, the thrasher and everything, he's the one that handled my eggs and everything for me. He was a great guy to work for.

TS: So, he was kind of a middleman, he's buying eggs from all of the farms around, and he—

REG: Yeah, and he had gas, wholesale gas, and a gasoline station, a little grocery store. And I'd go down there and get gas, whether I had stamps or not I'd get gas from him.

TS: How was his name spelled?

REG: V-i-c-k-e-r, I believe. He was at Mosheim, he was there for years and years, I guess he's dead and gone, now. Mosheim is between Valley Mills and—let's see—Valley Mills is the closest town to it. We were actually on a star route out of—Mosheim's star route was out of Valley Mills, really, that's where the mail came from. Had a carrier that came through Turnersville, there, came through Mosheim, Turnersville from Valley Mills and into Gatesville. A star route, there, and it supplied the post offices.

TS: How did the star route work? Did they take out and drop it at a point and people come into get it? Or, was it being delivered to boxes?

REG: Well, some of 'em, and then they had somewhere they delivered both ways. Now, I was substitute on that star route out there, the Turnersville area, for a year or two. You'd do out there, and you had your boxes, and you run that. And I think he got [paid] by miles, what I think he got, out there. And then, when he went on to Gatesville, you could ride with him for fifty cents to Gatesville, you know, or you could send a package up there, and he'd deliver it for you. Things like that. He picked up a lot of money just on freight line, too. 'Course, he's on his own, he's not working for the government, he's just bonded, that's the thing.

TS: It's just amazing all the little things somebody like that was doing—like fifty little things to make a little money.

REG: Well, I'll you tell you what, this is star route, here. It don't say so, but there's a woman—this is old Route 5 and old Route 4, both, she has both of 'em. And we don't get good service, but we can't do anything about it. I didn't even know they had star routes anymore until we moved up here. Used to be a lot of star routes, all your little rural areas had 'em. Down there at Killeen we was lucky, we had routes out of the Killeen post office, you know. Out that far they made the route every day. And we had an old friend, the mail carrier, Dad's old friend, if he needed a book to read or something like that he'd call in and tell 'em to send it out by John DeWare, and John'd bring it out. He never did charge us, but he's supposed to, you know. And he'd bring medicine from the drugstore out there, and he's on a regular route, you see.

TS: What about? More about your grandfather, what was he like, and what was his operation like, there?

REG: Well, I never knew him. See, he died in 1906, and my mother's—the last grandparent I had died in 1919. I was born in '25, so I never had any grandparents. I missed that. That's why I try to be a good grandparent. (laughs)

TS: So, by your time, it had long been your father's place.

REG: Well, my dad was forty-nine, my mother was forty, when I was born. So, you can figure it. I was unexpected, I imagine. I was always my mother's pet, though.

TS: Yeah. I interviewed this black lady in Houston County, it had nothing to do with this project, and she was telling how her father had come to Houston County before Emancipation. I said, Now wait a minute! Her father was seventy-nine years old when she was born to his third wife. Or, that's the story, anyway.

REG: Well, I'll tell you one better than that. This schoolteacher at Killeen that was a good friend of mine, he came in there from up at Bangs or somewhere up close to Brownwood, and I was talking to him one day about his dad, and he said, "Well, I never did know my dad, very well." I said, "How's that?" He said, "He's eighty-four when me and my twin brother was born." And his mother was about forty, you see. It just amazed the heck out of me, you know. They were smart, good people.

(looks at the Antelope School drawing on the inside cover of *Antelope Community, Coryell County, Texas*)

Here's this old school ground at Antelope.

TS: Yeah, I have seen that.

REG: Now, this right here, the old Salem School was used to build this shop, here. This was a carpenter shop.

TS: Tape recorder, we're looking at the inside the cover drawing, map, of Antelope School, and the thing that's marked on it as the workshop, right behind the main school building, you're saying was the old Salem School.

REG: The old Salem or the Latham Prairie School.

TS: That was moved in.

REG: Yeah. And they used the House Creek and Table Rock Schools was put into this, I believe.

TS: The teacher's house was rebuilt from the House Creek School.

REG: Yeah, they moved it in there, I believe, really—most of it.

TS: So, the two main out-structures to the Antelope School, which was a new-built school, I'm sure, were from other schools which had consolidated in.

REG: That's right, that's right.

TS: That's interesting, I'm not sure they know that.

REG: Now, this is the restrooms, you see, the women's and the men's here, you see. And then here was those stalls they built right here. This was our basketball court, and we had tennis courts out here. They're not shown on this. And then this was the playground. Now, there was a big slide right here, too, that they don't show, and this is the old pump right here that furnished the water. And this is the baseball field. Now, this right here, if I'm right that's the post they used when they was using this ring, you know, using a lance on a horse and running to take a ring off the hook, you know. I think that's where they did that.

TS: Did they do that?

REG: Yeah, they did that. They had a picnic every year at the end of school, and we had a big barbecue and everything, played baseball and everything, and I got sick every year at eating. And these were

hackberry trees, and this is our church where I joined, where I was a member, right here. Antelope Baptist Church, the called it Missionary Baptist, then, it's all the same, now.

TS: How did they do that ring thing?

REG: They have a ring about like this (makes circle with thumb and finger) put up there on a clip, and they had this pole with a prod on the end of it, you see, and you ride full speed on a horse and catch that ring. And some of 'em'd do it and some wouldn't, and the winner would get it, you know.

TS: So, it'd be tied with a real light string, so you'd just carry it on away.

REG: Yeah, just carry it on away. And then they used to tie goats up there, rope goats and tie 'em down there. That was something to watch.

TS: How did that—? I don't understand the goat roping.

REG: Well, it's just like calf roping, only they're harder to handle.

TS: So, the goats are running around an enclosure?

REG: Yeah. And then they played baseball up there. Usually they'd get—Gatesville used to have a big boys' reformatory school, and usually their baseball team'd come down there and play the Antelope Outsiders. We'd get in there and play a big baseball game that morning. And then at noon we'd have dinner. If it was a political year, we'd have politicians, of course. And then we'd have plays at night, that's the last three nights of school, you know, and it was really something.

TS: This is the end of school, the school closing, every year?

REG: Yeah. And we'd barbecue, they'd take a big steer and barbecue that thing out there in an open pit, with vat on there. And lots of people from Killeen would come out there every year, and from Copperas Cove—some from Gatesville. And we'd have that old grounds, that three or four acres out there, just full of people. And 'course they sold cold drinks and stuff like that, and I'd always eat enough stuff I's sick for a day or two after it. You know how a kid is. But we sure did have a big time at it.

TS: You weren't used to getting all the sweets that you could eat.

REG: Yeah, that's right. But it was fun, it was a thing to look forward to. Something else we had at Antelope School I enjoyed, the Easter Friday the kids would come to school, and they might have a few classes in the morning, but about ten o'clock in the morning they'd go down to Leslie Thompson's place. He had a spring and a beautiful valley, there, where we played games and everything, and we'd have an Easter egg hunt and play baseball out there. And after I got to going to school at Gatesville, I'd get off there on that morning, I'd always just get off there at Antelope, and stay. (laughs) I never did get in trouble over it, don't know why I didn't. The bus driver wouldn't report me, though, he was a friend. And I'd stay there and play and enjoyed that. Boy, we had a big time out there. Things like that. You always remember those good times, you know. And then at our place there on Cowhouse, just above our place there was a crossing—what we called a gravel bar, you know. And that gravel bar had a lot of sand and everything, and we had a Fourth of July picnic there every year. And you'd have 100, 150 people come in there. The day before, we'd go in there and seine fish, and we'd have a big fish fry out of it, you see. And they's always a bunch of people there, and I got a kick out of that, we had a good swimming hole right there close and everything. And that was always a big thing.

TS: Well, Cowhouse Creek was pretty. We've gone around to some of these reunions and copied people's photographs. You know, just make the copy right there, they're just doing us the favor, and this'll go

into the collection at Baylor, and I have never seen so many snapshots of Cowhouse Creek. They're probably two hundred or three hundred.

REG: It was. The army has ruined it in Fort Hood, of course, they've caved those banks off and everything. My brother used to go under the bank. Right back of our field down there, I saw him pull a forty-seven-pound cat out from under there one day.

TS: My goodness.

REG: I didn't have the guts to go under there myself. He'd go under there and grab those fish and bring 'em out.

TS: What did they call that?

REG: Grappling, that's illegal. I got in trouble one time, I was blocking a hole. Frank went under a bank after one, and that dang fish hit my leg, I jumped, it went on down. He come out, and boy he give me heck for that. But I couldn't stay there.

TS: So, he had you down blocking this other way out?

REG: Yeah, the other way out. And he drove it back there, and I couldn't keep there. I was about eleven, twelve years old, and, shoot, that fish hit me, I jumped!

TS: Would he go completely under the water to do that?

REG: Oh, yeah, he'd scare me to death under there. Seem like he'd be gone five minutes before he'd come out. And usually what he'd tell me was that there's usually, back under the bank, there's an air space, you see, and he'd raise up there and breathe a little bit and then go on under, you see. But I didn't know that, and I wasn't going under there to see. But he caught a lot of fish that way, and then he caught a lot of 'em out in the holes where's they're a lot of rocks out there. You can get blue cat under them, you know. They did a lot of fishing like that. Now, my dad wouldn't let anybody seine on our place. He said they got too many game fish when they went to seining, you know. Said it'd be fine if they just got suckers and carp and stuff like that, but they didn't do it. And he wouldn't let anybody hunt quail on our place. He said quail eat insects, and they were beneficial. Now, doves, they ate grain, and so you want them gone. (laughs) That's the way he felt about it, and boy he was strict on it. He'd run anybody out in a minute if he caught 'em doing that.

TS: Well, how would your brother get—? I'm still intrigued, how would he get ahold of 'em?

REG: Uh, in the gills, most of 'em. The people nowadays, I knew a boy at Killeen that got 'em, he run his hand down in their mouth. And I've seen his old arm just skinned up all in here. I've seen Frank pretty skinned up from 'em, though. But I just, I don't know, I just couldn't get under there and do it.

TS: That is something, I know it's illegal, but it's a wonder that anybody was willing to do it when it was legal.

REG: And my brother used to like to, in cold weather, gig fish. You know, they're sluggish in cold weather, and you could catch 'em with a gig. What they call a frog gig, you know, and he'd put a handle in there about ten foot long, put a cord on it case you had to throw it. But he'd get out there in real cold weather, get in that boat, and go along there, and you'd see them, and he'd get just right up over 'em and come down on 'em and get 'em. He got a lot of fish that way. 'Course, that's illegal, too. And then, did you ever seen any grabbing done, what they called grabbing? That's where you put a big treble hook on your line, and you let your line lay down like this on the bottom, and when the fish go across there, you jerk your pole. And those grab hooks will catch fish, you see.

TS: Oh, one of those treble—

REG: Yeah, big treble hooks. And that's the way they used to catch suckers in the wintertime. Real cold weather, that water gets real clear, you know, and Dad used to go over in House Creek and do a lot of that. It was clearer than Cowhouse was. And he'd catch a lot of 'em, there.

TS: That's a new one on me.

REG: Well, that was a possible fishing in the old days.

TS: And it's based on having water clear enough to be able to see.

REG: Yeah, it's got to be clear, that's right. And the water in those days was a lot clearer than it is now. You didn't have septic systems running in 'em, things like that, you know. And it was really something to do that. I used to get to go up there and scare the fish back when he got set down there, I'd go up above him and scare 'em back—make a racket or something where they'd move.

TS: This is kind of big creek or small river fishing, is what you're describing. It's not like what you do in the Brazos.

REG: No, I wouldn't want to do that in the Brazos. Up in the mountains of Arkansas, they fished up there still a different way. They gigged, but they used a short-handled gig, and used a headlight, and they'd go in there at night and fish. And they's on a river up there, I went with this old boy out there that night, I didn't know what we's doing, and I went with him and watched him. And they had a fish in there that looked about half like an eel and a catfish, about halfway between. I don't know what they call it, now, it had a name. And they gigged those things all the time. That spotlight he'd pick it up and hit that thing in that water. Now, that was in the summertime, but that mountain water was clear, you see. And it was something else.

TS: Well, I have heard of. And that goes back into the time when they're using fat pine torches, you can gig on rivers at night. You know, you can see down in the water, even if the water is a little muddy, to fish.

REG: With a spotlight you can, 'course, they're illegal, too. But I'll tell you something else, did you ever hear of people hunting robins?

TS: Yeah, but tell me about it. How'd they do it?

REG: Well, they roosted in cedar trees by the hundreds. And you go out there and take you a torch and just take you a switch or a paddle or something like that, and when they flew up, just knock 'em down and pick 'em up. They were good eating, you made robin pies out of 'em, you know. Kind of like chicken and dumplings.

TS: People would make a face at that, and yet they'll eat doves.

REG: Oh, robin was a clean meat, good-looking meat. 'Course, quail's the best meat in birds.

TS: What did they call—? Did they have a name for that kind of thing with the robins?

Did they call it something?

REG: No, somebody's just always saying, let's go out to the robin roost and get some robins tonight. That's what I'd always say.

TS: And this would be like in the winter.

REG: Yeah, in the wintertime, when those things'd be in the cedars, you see. And they'd take jugs, put kerosene in 'em and put a wick in there, you see, and take 'em out there and get 'em.

TS: And thrash 'em.

REG: Yeah, and just thrash 'em out of there.

TS: Just like pecans out of a tree.

REG: And then they'd hit 'em with a paddle or something and get 'em, you know.

TS: And they were reluctant to fly in the dark.

REG: Yeah, and they were slow, too, sluggish, in the wintertime. And you know how anything when it goes to roost or goes to sleep, your blood circulation flows and you're sluggish anyway. And you'd get 'em that way. But it was lots of fun, stuff like that. We made our own entertainment in those days, you know that. We never did go to town in the summertime. From time school was out till it started again, I didn't go till we went to get me some school clothes. That's the first time I went back to town. (laughs) And I didn't mind it a bit. If we had to work too hard, about Saturday evening we go talking to Dad about fishing, we'd go set out the trotlines.

TS: I was gonna ask you about trotlines.

REG: Oh, we used to catch 'em. We went down there one time, and we couldn't get bait. I mean, you couldn't get minnows anywhere, and we finally—we had a little old creek or branch running through our pasture, it had a hole of water that was still water there, but it was running. And we finally took a minnow seine and went up there, and we got crawfish, I guess we got five gallon of crawfish. We went down there and set those lines out with crawfish, and back in the west you could see a little light left. Dad says it'll be a good night to fish, 'cause there's clouds threatening. Went out there and set those trotlines out, and the next morning we had catfish on twenty-something hooks out of fifty. I'm telling you, it was the best I ever saw. And Dad says, "There's a cloud coming up." Says, "It's an instinct with fish, they're afraid that water's gonna get muddy, and they won't feed." And it worked that way. 'Course, we have lost trotlines when clouds come up, too. Those old creeks like Cowhouse there, it was swift. Boy, it come down swift when you got a rise, it would come down.

TS: So, logs of stuff would carry your lines away.

REG: Oh, yeah, just carry 'em right on out. I don't know, I used to love to wade, and I fished Lampasas River after I moved back to Killeen. I used to fish Lampasas River, you know, had friends over there that had land, and we used to go there and trotline at night. I enjoyed it. I was trotlining over there one night, and an old boy had moved in by us from Saint Louis, and he wanted to go trotline fishing. He had a carbide light he put on his cap, you know. We went over there and set our trotlines out. We noticed a big old black inner tube laying up there on the bank, you know. Coming back up, I noticed that it was gone. Looked over there about that time, and we saw eyes coming towards us, a big old water moccasin coming right at us. He said, "What'll we do?" I said, "You turn that darn light out, and let's go!" 'Cause it's coming right to that light, you see. (laughs) That snake scared the heck out of him, and it didn't make me feel real good. That's the biggest water moccasin I ever saw.

TS: I always think about those things when I ever hear about people that grapple. Because, they're other things down there besides the catfish, and the big turtles are another thing that's down there.

REG: Wouldn't you hate to get your hand in a turtle? Do you know where Sulfur Creek is? Comes in close to Lampasas. I used to go up there when I was younger and fish. After I moved to Turnersville, we'd come back up there and spend the night and fish, you know. And they always

had a good midnight movie at Lampasas. We'd go up there and go to the movie and go back and run our lines. And that water was like ice, it's sulfur water—a spring at Lampasas, you see—it's always cold. We didn't have but one night to run trotlines, and I got in there, going good. Felt something on my leg and looked down, it was a water moccasin wrapped around my leg, it's on a hook, and I got out and they didn't get me back in till daylight. I wouldn't go back in there. (laughs) I never could stand a snake of any kind.

TS: Well, you know, I've talked to a lot of people, but the people of Coryell County talk more about snakes. You know, I've talked to people that farmed in the countryside, different areas, East Texas, Central Texas, but there's more mention of snakes in Coryell County than anywhere else.

REG: Well, you've been to Killeen, haven't you?

TS: Yeah.

REG: Well, out in Fort Hood just straight from Killeen, there, you look at those mountains back in there, that north range, that was in there where the Yancys used to live, and, boy, that really had the snakes in it. Now, that's the funny thing, up here, the mountains we got up here, you never see any snakes. I think I've seen one since I've been up here, one rattlesnake. Now, we got water moccasins, of course. But it's something else. The Thompsons had a spring up there at their place. We used to go up there a lot. It had this mint around it, you know, and it smelled so good, and that water was so pretty and clear. And Anice was looking for the old place, and they found it, but said that they couldn't find that spring. Said that her and Murrel, her cousin, was walking along, and they heard her sister Lucille holler, and looked back, and she'd found the spring. She'd run into the dirt over it, and she'd sank down way to here! (laughs) That's what they'd done, they'd filled dirt in over that, you know. But it was a beautiful spring, I mean it was the best you ever saw.

TS: Well, people, once upon a time, were very well aware of where all the springs were, because they depended on them and they—they weren't into filling 'em in.

REG: We had 'em down there on the creek, you know, where they run out. And when we's hoeing or anything, that's much better water than what we could keep, we'd go down and get a drink if we's down close to the creek. Drink out of 'em, good water. But, see, our water at home, I couldn't drink it, now. We had artesian water. Dad said that when he was a kid they drilled there and four-inch pipe just solid water, just flowing out of it. And then all the well went in around there, and it got sunk down, and when I knew it, it was about twelve foot down. Well, we had to get us a water system, we were with Roy Thompson, and after he died we fenced between there, you know. His stock ran on ours, and ours on his. We fenced that, so we had to fix up our water. So, Dad went and got half-inch pipe, run 'em down to that well, run 'em down to our tank. We had a stock tank down below there, you know, on the hill. He run that down there, and he put a plug in that pipe, and he had a T up here. Went up there and filled that pipe with water, pulled that plug out, and that thing ran seven or eight years before it even stopped. And we had that tank there with a fence in the middle of it where the two pastures watered out of it, and then the overflow went down, and we had about a five-acre hog pasture, and it run right down through that, you see. So, that was a perfect layout. And we ran that, oh, about ten years in my lifetime, and we had it stop about one or two times, and that'd be when moss would get in that pipe. But it was the simplest thing in the world. And it wasn't expense, you know, half-inch pipe was cheap in those days.

TS: What about—? You mentioned before, while we were still talking about hunting and hunting—hunting, what kind of hunting and/or trapping did y'all do?

REG: Well, the main hunting I did, when I was about nine, ten years old, I got me a .22, and this old dog I had, I'd go out and get fifteen or twenty squirrels in a little while, shoot 'em out of those big trees.

And if I didn't shoot one through the head, I didn't take it home, 'cause Dad would whip me. He didn't want 'em shot anywhere except through the head. I had an old .22 Winchester single shot, and that was the most accurate gun you ever saw. And I'd take that old dog, and, boy, he'd tree 'em just right up and down there. We'd be home couple of hours, always. And, then we did a lot of—my brother that I was telling about grappling fish, he trapped when he's home all the time. He got lots of raccoons down there, got fox, got skunks, possums. And then when I got up older, after we moved out of Fort Hood, I trapped up at Turnersville. I trapped at Killeen the year I was there, after I got out of high school, I trapped with my brother. I learned a lot down there. He had a cave he went down in, and it went back about forty foot. And you could get a skunk in there all the time, but there's rattlesnakes in it. And those rattlesnakes'd throw our traps, but you couldn't hardly catch one in one, you know. But those old skunks and rattlesnakes lived right there together. We'd get them skunks in there, and then you stunk for week after you killed one in there, you know.

TS: But they were worth pretty good money, right?

REG: Yeah, skunks was a good pelt. The blacker the pelt was, the better it was. White damaged 'em. But you get a good narrow-striped skunk, they used to bring four dollars or five dollars back when that was a lot of money. And a raccoon brought good money. Now, a possum never was worth skinning, 'cause they had them old rotten bellies. I hated possum worse than anything. A skunk, you can take and cut that musk bag out, and it didn't get on you, you see. And they were a clean animal, a beautiful animal.

TS: But a possum is kind of nasty.

REG: Yeah, and they've got one. See, they carry the little ones in a pouch, and that's always ugly. And they've got them old wolves, the call 'em, them old worms in the belly and everything. They stunk like everything, I hated them. But I never did mind skinning a skunk. I was up at Purmela, I lived at Purmela one year, and I had a cousin over there, second or third cousin, and he invited me over one day. Well, I went in, and I stepped inside the door, two little old skunks run in there. And I was ready to leave, and he laughed at me. And he'd got them when they were little and removed those musk bags. And he said them is the best ratters and best pets he'd ever had. They's beautiful things like that, you know.

TS: Well, people keep ferrets.

REG: Well, he had those things—he hunted all the time, and he'd got them when they's little and raised them on a bottle at first and everything, and then, when they's old enough, you know, he took care of the musk bags. And he said they were worth ten or twelve cats, the way they'd catch things. And they're clean, just as clean as a cat, you know. But it did scare me.

My wife and I got married, we lived up there at Purmela. You know where Purmela is, don't you? West of Gatesville about eleven miles. I lived there one year. We got married and lived up there, and instead of throwing a shower, they threw a party at one of the deacon's houses. And we went up there, and every family in the community was there except two, and that was two families that I had gone with the girls. (laughs) I don't know what the deal was, but that's what happened! But I'm telling you, I think there's 105 people showed up at that, a little old rural community like that, you know. But they had a real good community up there. That's the first time I taught junior boys, I taught twelve-year-old boys up there in Sunday school. I had taught young people at Turnersville. I was seventeen, and I taught that class long as I was up there, I left there when I's twenty, I believe. And I really enjoyed it, but everybody in there nearly was older than I was.

TS: I was going to ask you about the church at Eliga because I've had two or three people talk about going to the revivals, and it seemed to be some of the biggest revivals I've ever heard of were there at

Eliga. Maybe because it was pretty there?

REG: It was Church of Christ. It was Enon, they called it at Eliga, had a big camp out there. Just after you cross the Cowhouse, there's kind of a bend there, and they had a big place there. And they had 168 to 170 members there, it was a big church. It is. And, now, they had another church down below right above Eliga on a hill, it was the Free Will Baptist church, and they used to have brush arbor revivals up there that was good. I used to go there to some of the revivals. 'Course, your Free Will Baptists, they're Baptists, but they'll take membership from any Baptist church and whatever, you know. But they were a good group, and they sure could sing. And we used to go down there when they had a revival to that old brush arbor down there. And they had a pretty strong church there, Uncle Johnny Graham was head of it. He had a place there. But this Church of Christ—

TS: They had a campground, right?

REG: Yeah, and then they had another one at Nolanville. Now, you know where Nolanville is. There's a campground down there the Church of Christ has got, on the south side of the road down in there below that school, back in on the creek there. I don't know whether it's still used or not. It was the last time I heard. They're still using it in the summertimes.

TS: Well, they would take Baptists and whatever at their camp meetings, right?

REG: Oh, if you wanted to go in there and listen, that was fine. Now, that was just some radicals around, you always have that sort of thing. They were that way. They claimed that you were saved by baptism, you know, and the Bible says you're not saved by works. It's faith, that's all.

TS: Saved by faith alone.

REG: That's right, and you do the works to show the world that you're proud to be a Christian. That's the reason you're baptized and the reason you have your ordinances. And you just got to go at it that way. 'Course, I'm kind of hardheaded Baptist, I guess. (laughs) And I've got friends in every denomination and level, and they've got the same right I have. An old boy that's bought down here, second house down here, he came out the other day and told me he's a Methodist, says, "We gonna make a Methodist out of you." I said, "I doubt it." (both laugh) But he's a real good guy. It don't make any difference, we're all trying to get to the same place, just doing it in different ways.

TS: Were people still having the home services, or the home laying out of the body, when you were growing up?

REG: A lot of 'em would, a lot of 'em would.

TS: What would they—? Somebody would die, and you couldn't wait forever, they were being buried without embalming, right?

REG: Naw, yeah, they wasn't. I never heard of embalming until about forty-something.

Usually, if a man died that night you had that funeral the next day if you could. And they would lay 'em out one night, you know, and people'd set up with 'em all night. 'Course, I've set up with lots of people in funeral homes. Used to do that at Killeen. Somebody in our class, we'd take turns about sitting up that night, two of us at a time.

DG: They brought my mother and laid her casket out on sawhorses across the corner of the room. That's all I remember about her.

REG: On sawhorses. Her mother died when she three, and Dorothy is seventy, now. That's a good while ago.

TS: I've heard of people taking down a wooden door. You know, it's easy to get the door down, and you can lay the body on the—

REG: Yeah, I've heard of that, too. Yeah, the used to have a lot of that, I'll tell you. Used to we dug all the graves and everything, the people in the community always dug the graves. I was living at Turnersville, we went out to the Schley Cemetery, which was in Fort Hood, but it was at the edge, so they got to keep it. Went out there, and we dug, and we hit water. Old yellow clay, and the water'd rise up, and we put the casket in there, and then we had to stand on it till we buried him—get the thing held down, there's so much water. We dipped water and we'd dig, and we'd dip water, and we was just wet mud, yellow mud, all over us, you know. And we had to stay there, 'cause we had to cover it and everything, too. That's the awfullest thing I ever got into, I'd hate to think about burying anybody in a seep.

TS: Well, you know, now, that's literally what you were doing. It was the ground water coming in, and there was no way, there was nothing to be done but—so, you were standing on the coffin to hold it down to the bottom because it's even worse to have the coffin floating.

REG: That's right, it'd float till we got enough dirt on there to hold it. You know, at San Saba in that flood in 1957, they was lots of coffins floated out of their cemetery up there. Washed clear out there. I had a cousin up there. 'Course, that water in the main channel of that river San Saba River, was coming right down that slough between the town and the creek, there, you see. Oh, that's bad when it does that. I know I don't want anybody buried on a creek. I don't guess it'd make any difference, but it's just the thought of it.

TS: It's just the thought of it, it's the living that're bothered by it.

REG: Uh-huh. We had a big cemetery on our place there where that school was, too. It was sixty-four or sixty-eight bodies moved out of there to Killeen Cemetery and Copperas Cove Cemetery and Gatesville Cemetery, and my dad had to go over there and identify people. He had an uncle, old Uncle John Gault, was buried there, and he said when they dug him up, after all those years, said you could recognize him. Had his bow tie on, leather bow tie on and everything, like he always wore, and everything. 'Course, after he's exposed to that air, he collapsed pretty quick.

TS: Well, sometimes you get in there, and it's just all—they just recover a little dirt or something.

REG: He said most of 'em you could put in a kitchen bag. Most of 'em.

TS: Didn't that really bother people a whole lot?

REG: Well, sure it did. We don't know whether the right people got in the right place, or not. He said they're awful careless with their tagging, you know. Contract deal, that's part of what the government did. It's a pretty good-sized cemetery, Latham Prairie-Salem Cemetery.

Granddad give 'em the land for the cemetery and for the school. I believe he give two acres for the school and one for the cemetery—something like that. And when the federal government bought that, they give money for those to the state. And the state didn't have anything to do with that. It was given to the community for a school. You see, that was before the state ever messed with it. That's what got me.

TS: Yeah, I see. So, they moved everybody at that cemetery, or everybody they could.

REG: Yeah, well, supposed to have been everybody. I don't know what they did. They's some nice wrought iron fences in there and everything, and 'course they just did away with them. Yeah, they moved my grandparents and my brother and my brother's boy over to Killeen. And then, we's supposed to have

space there by 'em for the rest of the family, and they did finally give Mother and Dad a lot down there, but it wasn't with the others. I've got brothers, one on the east side of the cemetery and one buried clear on the west side, now. And then they had that one that was there where they buried them, the one that died as a baby, was buried there with my grandparents, near them.

TS: But this moving the dead around, the family dead around, would have bothered me as much as anything, personally.

REG: I'd have hated to have gone up there and identified them, but Dad said, well, somebody had to do it, and he knew more about it than anybody else did, because he'd been there all the time, you know. So, that's the way it was.

TS: You don't expect to have to do that.

REG: No, you don't. I just don't like that. See, his dad and mother was in the bunch. And he had several cousins and such in there. But it just amazed me the number of people that was in it, I didn't realize there was that many tombstones there. This is the area that was Antelope area here, you see. (refers to document) Have you seen that map of Fort Hood?

TS: I've seen the big map.

REG: Mine is in four or five maps but different parts of it, you know, put together.

TS: You mentioned your father wolf hunted?

REG: Yeah, he killed out the last wolfs over there on Yancy Mountain there, close to Killeen. Back there probably in the '30s, the early '30s, he said he found an old wolf and her cubs there, and killed 'em all. And that's the last wolf seen in that country. But now, since Fort Hood's gone in, they've gone back in there.

TS: Do, you think it's the same thing?

REG: Well, I imagine so. I don't know. Here was a picture of that old Antelope Baptist Church down there. That was the old church that I sent to when I was a kid.

TS: (looks at a photograph in *Antelope Community, Coryell County, Texas*) It's got a little bell tower.

REG: Yeah, it was a nice little church there.

TS: What kind of—? Now, I'm starting to look at this (refers to interview notes), and I'm going to jump around a little bit. What kind of livestock did your father have on the place, when you were growing up? You mentioned a hog pasture.

REG: Yeah, we kept hogs. We butchered five or six a year, usually, because we salt cured, you know, smoke and salt. And we kept—we didn't keep milk cows as such. Dad started out with Red Poll cattle, and we still had enough Red Poll in 'em to still milk good, you see. And we had some that were pure Hereford. We kept a Hereford bull, registered bull, for the last fifteen years we were there, I guess. And so, nearly all the stock was more Hereford than anything else. But we had good, big-boned stock, we didn't have no scrub stuff at all. He wouldn't have a Jersey on the place, 'cause he said they ruined your stock line. A Jersey will butcher out about 40 percent, and a Hereford about 58 percent. And you just can't use that kind of stock when you're raising for beef, and that's what he sold his for. He sold yearlings every year. And then he scrubbed out. When his old cows got too old, the ones that was unproductive, he got rid of 'em—if they ever quit bearing calves.

TS: Uh-huh. But y'all didn't have milk cows, you weren't milking?

REG: Well, we milked, we kept cows, we milked cows, but it was some of those out of the pasture.

TS: I see.

REG: We had three or four. Usually, we had three or four cows milked all the time.

TS: Yeah, you're saying you didn't have special milk cows. You just used your regular beef stock.

REG: Yeah, well, there's some of those Herefords we wouldn't have tried to milk, but we knew what we's doing. And I used to hate that. When the boys was working in the field, I had to go in and milk even after school, you know. It'd be after dark, lots of times, and our old cow lot was always—it'd get muddy, you know, and everything, and the old cow'd kick you about the time you got in the mud. But it was good, and them old hog pens, they used to have to drain them, they'd get so nasty.

TS: Hogs do get nasty.

REG: Oh, they do! I hated those things, but I sure did like the pork. Did you ever eat tenderloin from a hog? That's what the pork chops are made out of. See, you cut through the bone? But that tenderloin's a strip up and down the backbone, and it's white meat, and, boy, it is delicious. And that's what, when we butchered a hog, that's the first meat we ate. Ate it fresh. And then the hams and bacon we cured with salt, you know, and used smoke. And then the sausage we ground up—the shoulders, usually, and some more lean meat, and made sausage out of it. We'd put that in. Usually, we used sacks made out of flour sacks sewed about that big around, and stuffed them with that sausage. And then we'd take 'em out there and hang 'em in the smokehouse, and they'd cure. They had a different flavor. Now, the last several years, Mother got to where she was canning her sausage, most of it, in number two cans. And you open 'em, they's still good, and you just take 'em out of that can and slice 'em and fry 'em, which was good. And we killed a beef one time, I remember, and she canned a lot of that meat. Put a lot of it up. And she canned—every year we'd have a community—

(DG enters room; interruption in tape)

REG: (looks at *Antelope Community, Coryell County, Texas*) See, I'm pictured in about four or five of these pictures, in a little school group back there. I was looking through this thing last night, I'd forgotten some of it. (looks at a drawing of Antelope School grounds) See, there was the old school building, and the two classrooms right here had a folding door between them. And then this was a primary classroom. And then later they put the classroom here, it was the older class, so we had four rooms, then. There's three when I first went up there, and then they built that on there.

TS: So, it was a three-room school when you first started, and then they—

REG: And then it made a four-room. It went through grade—well, when my brother went there, it went through grade ten out of eleven. But when I went there, it went through grade eight. Then, the next year, it didn't have freshmen there. I was freshman, then. But next year they did. It's just working into an elementary school for Gatesville is what it really amounted too, then, you know.

TS: What about the bussing into town? Who was running the school bus?

REG: Uh, well, the first years while I's in elementary school before they got tied up with Gatesville, Antelope bought an old school bus, an old '34 Chevy, I believe, something like that, and we rode that for two or three years, there. And then Gatesville went to running down there. And they'd haul kids far as Antelope did, and they just hauled them there and dropped 'em off. That was happened there. No, my dad was on the school board, there, for years and years. He got his vote for school board from the Germans, Antelope was a German settlement up there. And those Germans came to our place to fish and everything, Dad was always friends with 'em. And I loved it, 'cause I loved their cooking.

And they'd come down there, we'd have to go down there with 'em, they'd always stop and, "Y'all got to go down there with us." And I loved that German cooking.

TS: The one lady that I interviewed from Antelope, her maiden name was Florence Haedge.

REG: Oh heck, Fuzzy Bill! No, old Florence, she was a mess, I'll tell you what. She was an adopted child. Yeah, I know her real well. A Czech and adopted by a German family. (laughs) Yeah, you bet I know her. Back when they made girls' basketball—half-court, you remember they had it half-court for a while, and the guards couldn't go across? In the first game she played, she went clear down under the goal on the other end with the—(unintelligible) she was a dandy, I'll tell you. She was lots of fun. Last time I saw her was a reunion several years ago up here at Lampasas.

TS: She lived at Austin, and she's out here some place. I don't remember, it's not close to you. It's down around the dam, is where she is.

REG: What's her name, now, Haedge?

TS: Yeah, Florence Haedge.

REG: Well, I'll look her up. Doggone it, I'd like to talk to her. Yeah, I knew her real well. She was a ball of fire when she was kid, I'll tell you, she was something else.

TS: She said that she and her mother continued going—after Fort Hood came in—continued going to the church. Was the Antelope church moved?

REG: No, they were Lutherans. We had lots of friends went to that Lutheran church.

TS: And they would go back over to the home site and sit on the steps and eat their lunch after church, just visiting the home site. And after a while it got kind of depressing. There were goats in the old house. After a while there was nothing left but the concrete steps, and they would still sit on the steps there at their old house site and eat their lunch.

REG: See, we couldn't do anything like that. Ours was at an impact area in there. I've been out there. I had a sergeant lived by me, and he got permission to go in there one time, and we went to our place and got some pecans. And it made me so disgusted to see that they'd messed it up, I didn't want to go back. The old pecan trees we had out there, they'd run into them with tanks and things, just stripped 'em down, you know. And they'd run through those fields, and 'course where those tanks run, it made a gully. That sandy land washed like that, you know. They just ruined it.

TS: And you said they'd sort of knocked down the banks on the creek by running back and forth?

REG: Well, they run those tanks and things in there and cave those hollow banks in, you see. The creek's not as deep as it was and don't run as nice as it did.

TS: Well, the photos that I remember—Cowhouse Creek, it was clearly—there were really pretty places along it.

REG: It would run all year three out of four years when I was there. Sometimes it would get down in the holes, but it always had lots of water in it. And now it don't run all the time, nearly every summer it dries up now.

TS: I meant to ask you, in the trotline fishing, would you put your trotlines across the deep holes, or would you put them up or below the deep holes?

REG: Usually, in water about this deep above there. You could go at the lower end or upper end of the hole, either one was pretty good. Upper end was supposed to be the best, 'cause they go to the

shoals, you know.

TS: Would you be working from a boat, or—?

REG: We waded. I've never fished a trotline from a boat until I got up here on the lake. I loved that getting out and wading in that river.

TS: You know, I have interviewed people about trotline fishing in East Texas, but only when I got out here in the Hill Country did people start talking about working a trotline walking on the bottom. Now, you don't do that on the Neches or the Sabine.

REG: Yeah, but out here on the Cowhouse and the Lampasas River, that's the way to fish. I have trotlined in the Colorado here, back when I was younger. Me and my brother used to come up here to the bend, and we'd set trotlines there. I liked to drowned there one day, I got in there and got a hook in the back of my foot. In the heel tendon, you know? And I had to just hold on until he got up there and got it a-loose. Wasn't nothing I could do, that water's swift, you know, there. And it was about this deep and swift as heck. We were running a trotline down the far side, you know, where's there a bow in there, and we caught some catfish on it there. But we caught lot of good catfish on just the lower part of a shoal, there, channel cat, with a rod and reel. Lots of fun to catch 'em in that swift water.

TS: Well, you got to run the trotline from the downstream side, right?

REG: Well, it's the best.

TS: Well, the swifter it is, the more—and that gets you in the business of the hooks or hanging out—

REG: Well, it was so swift there we sure got in 'em. But on the Cowhouse down there, you could run just about any way you wanted to. But now sometimes people, where there was lot of hollow bank, they'd run up and down out there right close to them, you see.

TS: Uh-huh, go up and down the bank is what you're saying.

REG: Yeah, get out from a bank apiece and go up and down there. But we anchored, we used to anchor the ends of our lines up, you know, even to the ground. Up here you rock everything down, you see, on the bottom. And those big cat are on the bottom. Now, Belton Lake, you been on it, haven't you? I had a nephew that learned to scuba dive down there. Well, actually, my boy learned to scuba dive, my nephew taught him. And after he got to where he could go on there, you know, he told my son one day, "I want you to go with me down there." He used bow and arrow and shot fish, scaly fish. And they went down in that deep part of Belton Lake—you see, that thing's 110 foot in some places. And Robert said it's plumb scary. Said it looked like logs down there, them big old catfish all on the bottom down in there. And I had a friend that caught a ninety-nine pounder in there. But that old Leon, you see, was famous for big fish, it had hollow banks all up and down it, and it's sluggish. And that's where them old catfish come from, you see. And boy I'm telling you! He said it's plumb scary to him to see them things.

TS: Yeah, some of those things are probably older than the lake—started their lives in the Leon.

REG: Oh, yeah! Well, the San Saba and the Lampasas and the Cowhouse all had those hollow banks, and they had lots of catfish in them. And it was a haven for 'em, there. And 'course an old catfish can feed on anything. I guess they'll take anything. You know, they like this old stinking cheese and stuff like that—chicken entrails, anything like that.

TS: Those old blue cats will eat anything.

REG: I'll tell you, blue cat, those are the prettiest fish they are. I love those things. I like to catch 'em, they

give you a fight.

TS: What was the biggest that your brother ever caught by hand?

REG: I think forty-seven—maybe fifty pounds. That's a lot of fish. That old forty-seven pounder was bigger than I was. (laughs) We have some friends over here, a man eighty-three and one eighty-six, that trotline in a boat up here in Buchanan Lake. It's up at Bonanza Beach up here. And they called Dorothy and I over there one day last year, wanted us to come over and see the fish. And they'd caught 'em—what'd they have, Dorothy, fifteen fish, wasn't it? And the biggest one was twenty-eight, and there's four of 'em over twenty pounds. And then they had several fifteen, the least they had there was seven to eight pounds. Beatingest bunch of fish you ever saw! And they caught 'em one night on trotlines out there. But then, every time they set 'em out they catch 'em, but the eighty-six-year-old man, the oldest man, is getting real feeble. He can hardly walk and everything, so the other one has to. The eighty-three-year-old man over here don't even take aspirin. Raises a garden over there four or five acres, furnishes everybody around here, we get a lot of his food. And he's a picture of health. He's got a sister that's ninety-eight, got another sister that's ninety that moved down to Galveston. She's afraid she's going blind. He's got a sister in Atlanta that's ninety-four. And that's something, out of fifteen kids those four surviving. And they buried one since I been up here that was in his nineties.

TS: It's genetics.

REG: That's right. And they're smart, boy, they're smart. That ninety-year-old that moved to Galveston, she was the fastest thing with figures and everything I ever saw. And she could remember anything. She made the brag that when they send her money, she'd go. And she had a grandson in Africa, and she went over there last summer. And she come back, and we had the Ageless Wonders Group, which is the meeting we have once a month, you know, for just a social get-together. And we had her speak to us, and she spent thirty minutes there, and she remembered everybody's name she run into over there, and she had slides to show us and everything. It was really something. She was eighty-nine years old and going all over Africa. Her grandson took her everywhere.

TS: So, if you would pay her way to Antarctica, or Africa, or anywhere else she was ready to go.

REG: Well, she goes to California once or twice a year, and just first one place and another. But when she was fifteen she was married and was widowed at an early age with several children, and she's got a daughter near Galveston, so she sold her house and moved to an assisted living place near her daughter. But she's not stopped going.

TS: What else was in the Antelope community besides the school and the churches? Was there a gin there? Was there a store there? What—?

REG: They was a store down there about—well, the road come in from the east and then turned back north, and where that road turned there was a store, the Antelope Grocery Store. They had a picture of it there in that book there awhile ago. And it stayed there, I guess, as long as Fort Hood did. I mean, as long as the area did. Now, Mr. Middick here gave the land to the school, and then the store was on his land. I don't know whether he owned the building or any of that or what, I'm not sure about that. But it was just a regular rural store. I think they sold gas there. I didn't get to go down there much.

TS: Where did y'all grind your corn? You got to have some place to grind corn.

REG: Well, the last several years, we ground at home. We had a hammer mill, and you had a screen to put in there for corn, you see. And it did good for that, but before that we went to Killeen. See, Killeen had five gins and mills and everything there.

TS: You were close enough to Killeen.

REG: We were eleven miles from Killeen, that's where we traded, mostly. We did our ginning there and everything. Killeen had five gins there and eleven hundred [in] population in 1940. And now they've got eighty-seven something thousand there. But eleven hundred was a pretty nice little town. The streets weren't all paved then, they used to bring the old hose out and water 'em down every day, you know. (both laugh) That was something, wasn't it? You don't remember that, when they did that?

TS: Oh, sort of. I'm from Lufkin in East Texas, which is a courthouse town, a pretty good-sized courthouse town.

REG: Yeah. My dad was in Lufkin way back there when they had the oil boom there. He went down there for a while, I've heard him talk about it. I never was down in that section. I don't guess I've ever been close to Lufkin, I've been down in the other way, you know, Tyler, down in there. I've been to Jefferson two or three times. You ever been to Jefferson?

TS: Yeah.

REG: That's a historic place, isn't it?

TS: Yes, it is.

REG: I love that place.

TS: That's the only place like that in Texas.

REG: They had twenty-something population there in 1900.

REG: We went down there years ago, first time, kind of went by there by accident. We was eating dinner, and a big old café was there on what used to be the waterfront, and they told us that used to be an old cotton warehouse there. And they's telling us all about it there and everything. I think that café burned after that, but—we went over there then, and there was that old federal courthouse that's a museum, you know, a three-story building. We got in that and got enthused and shoot, that was worthwhile there. And then Jay Gould's old railroad car there, we went through it, you know. And we've been planning on going back down there one of these days again.

TS: That's a neat place. The only other places like that are like Natchez, Mississippi, or something like that, but in Texas there's nothing like Jefferson.

REG: I don't think so. We've been down there twice—well, three times. We came by there with a church bunch one time, but we just stopped there a little while, then. And it was raining that day, so we didn't see nothing then, but I'm gonna go back down there. We've been wanting to. Seems like every time we think we're going some place like that we get tied up someway. Dorothy's church treasurer over here, and that's a thankless job. You have to do a lot of work. And I'm Sunday school director and on the board of deacons over here, and you get tied up. I don't know how most places are, our deacons have so many families. Each deacon does it and is responsible. When we have a death or a bad sickness or something, we call our people and everything, call 'em to prayer. We have some responsibilities like that, you know. And then I have to keep Sunday school teachers. Little Sunday school, we've about 75 in Sunday school. And I imagine 150 in preaching, when we're going good. We're out of a pastor, now, and that makes it worse right now.

TS: I know you told me this. When your family was still there, which church did you attend?

REG: Antelope Baptist Church. I was baptized there when I was fourteen. I was baptized in Cowhouse Creek down at Eliga, though.

TS: But that is—you're a fair way from Antelope—in the horse days.

REG: Yeah, it was six miles. Well, we had a Model T.

TS: What about the Model T? When did you get the Model T? Tell me about the Model T?

REG: Dad had a '25 Model T that I think he bought in '28 or somewhere along in there. And he kept that thing until—after it was out of date, he got a '28 Model A, then. Funny thing about that old '28 Model A, that's what I courted in. I bought it off him, I was gonna go buy me a car, and he sold me that for $75. I was down at Killeen the next day or two, and a soldier came up and said, "I'll give you $250 cash for this Model A right now." I said, "No, I can't afford that." And I fixed it up and everything. I went to California and back in that thing in 1947. That's right. Just clicked right along. Out at Gila Bend, Arizona, you know how it is out there, out about forty miles from there, I knocked the front wheel bearing out. I didn't have no hubcaps on. And the boy that was with me caught a ride back to Gila Bend, got me a wheel bearing and got some hubcaps. (laughs)

TS: What were the roads like down around Antelope? Say, the road from Cowhouse to Antelope?

REG: We had a road that run from Eliga clear to Antelope, you know. Wound around the property lines, you know how they did. And it was pretty good gravel road most of the way. Now, up there, about a mile from Antelope, they had what we called Thompson Lane. They was about a mile straight stretch, there, and it stayed muddy most of the time. One morning we were going to school on that, that's when we went to school at Gatesville, and it was real muddy, and we were having to push, so, we just pushed it over in the ditch. Bus driver got out and grinned, said, "Well, I'll get my horses and pull it out, directly, y'all go on home." And we walked home from there, it was about five miles from home. (laughs) If he'd been like most bus drivers he'd have raised heck, that was that Doersam (??) I was talking about, he just laughed about it. He knew how kids were, you know. It took us half a day to get home, we got out there and got cow chips and fighting and everything, out there in the cedar brakes. We had a big time out of it. But we had a lot of mud holes in those days and everything, you know. But it was good, and we'd—

TS: Well, the Model Ts were sort of high off the ground and they did pretty good—

REG: Well, the Model A did pretty good in it. The Model A was the first one with a gearshift, had a transmission that you could really use. The Model T used that old push your clutch in and keep running.

TS: You couldn't really make one of those things—they wouldn't drive very fast, right, or you would start burning?

REG: No, they wouldn't, but they were pretty dependable. That one we had, I don't remember too much about it. But the old Model A, boy, it give me lots of service. I had a transmission put in it once, and I had a wreck in it once and had to put a front end under it. Me and another boy was there at Turnersville circling the store, he was in a Chevy, and we met right in front of the store, head on. Kids, you know how they'll do. We was going on to Gatesville, so, crawled out, and his car was all right, so we went in it. I went back the next day and got mine and pulled it into an old boy's shop there, and he put me a new front end in it off of another Model A. (laughs)

TS: What about, what about, doctors? Would a doctor come out, did you go to town, what?

REG: Dr. D. L. Woods was at Killeen, he delivered several thousand babies. He lived until 1944. He delivered all of us. He come out there on the farm, did a real good job. I think it's ten dollars they charged for a maternity case in those days. And my sister had typhoid fever, once, we had her out there, and he come out there and took care of her, and then he give me five typhoid shots during that time. And, boy, I run and I hid under the bed one time, and they drug me out by my feet. Those things

hurt in those days, you know, those old unrefined shots. But he come out there and took care of. I think it's ten dollars. And going to the drugstore, Dad would always take me into have a check up once a year. I guess it was in the spring of the year, sometime, take me in there and old Dr. Woods would examine me, and if I needed anything he'd fix me up a tonic, it's twenty-five cents. Then he'd go in and buy me an ice-cream cone, that wasn't no charge. Big old gruff guy, you know.

TS: Bringing you into Killeen to be checked out once a year.

REG: Yeah, once a year. Heck, we's out in the weather all the time, we were healthy. You know, we didn't have no reason not to be. My feet would get cold, and my ears would get cold, and that was all that ever hurt me.

TS: Well, you had to go that far to school, and people say it used to get colder in those days, or it used to snow more, and I believe it did.

REG: I'll tell you what, in 1939 I was at high school at Gatesville, and we's taking midterms. In January we had twelve inches of snow, stayed on the ground for a week, and the temperature got down below zero. And that snow stayed on the ground for a week, and you could ride a horse across the Cowhouse, all the water was frozen so hard. That's 1939, in January. Now, it was cold! Now, when I lived at Turnersville, in 1944, we had two [degrees] below zero, once. But now, you know, it don't get close to that. When it gets twenty, we think it's something. Which suits me, except it don't kill the insects. If it'd been as warm in those days, we'd have been eaten up, 'cause we didn't have anything to kill 'em with. Now, in 1944, it got cold, but it was late. Christmas Eve day in '44 when I plowed cotton under, and it was green. Never had been frost bit. And then our winter started in.

TS: Yeah. 1925 was before my time, I understand there was a terrible drought, all over Central Texas in '25, right?

REG: Yeah, Dad made a good crop that year.

TS: Did he?

REG: That creek bottom, he made a good—he failed in one year, 1917, I believe, is the only year he ever failed to make a good crop. In 1919 he had problems because it rained so much, he had cotton rotted in the field—just the other way. Yeah, 1925 he said was the driest year we ever had in this country, and he had a me come along in that year, you see.

TS: Well, he sounds like he was a pretty good farmer.

REG: Oh, he was a good farmer.

TS: You know, it was your father's generation who did the full nine yards of it.

REG: That's right. Yeah, my dad had a lot of hardships. He was born over at Austin—Round Rock—and he was born clubfooted. Now, he didn't tell me this, but his sister did. That they took him into Austin to a surgeon, and I believe it's twenty-one operations on his feet and everything, so he was lucky to have parents like he did because in those days most of 'em was let go. Now, he walked more than anybody you ever saw. He walked up and down that creek and everything, he hunted and fished, and he did good. And I just thought, boy, if he hadn't have had that, he would've been really in the doghouse.

TS: But he had it corrected.

REG: Yeah, his grandparents took him into Austin and got it corrected. And you know, most people, back in those days, you just never would do that. Back then in those days, they just didn't do it. And he loved baseball better than anybody you ever saw. When I was a kid, he'd get out there and bat flies to me

hours at a time. He just loved baseball.

TS: Well, baseball was big in the countryside.

REG: Well, we got our first radio in 1937, and we got those aerials up in the air, you know, and those battery radios. And it was such a novelty that the first Saturday night we had it, we had people all over our porch and everything listening to "Grand Ole Opry" with us. You know, it used to go nearly all night in those days. And then, Joe Lewis and Max Schmelling fight, one of Joe Lewis's fights, came on right after that, and we had a big crowd for that. We had a fifty-foot aerial up in the air, you know, about high as you could get it, running in there, and we got good radio pickup. You get addicted to that, we used to lay on the porch at noon, come in for lunch, you know, we lay on the porch at noon and listened to the Beulah's Chuck Wagon Gang and W. Lee O'Daniel's Hillbilly Band, things like that, you know. Really enjoyed it.

TS: So, come in from working—

REG: Yeah, and set and lay there and rest and listen to those shows, then we'd go back to work. But now my mother, she used to listen to those soap operas on the radio when she was home, you know. She thought they was great—Ma Perkins and some of those like that.

TS: Well that was when—the countryside wasn't quite what it had been, when you got radio in it, right?

REG: Yeah, that was the first change we had, right there.

TS: What about telephone system?

REG: (laughs) It was five, six, or seven people on a line, you know, and always somebody eavesdropping on you. But we had a storm one year when I's a kid that ice broke all the lines down, and we were nearly a year without a telephone system. And when they put it back, we had to pay our share to get the lines put back up, you see—that's a rural telephone company there at Killeen.

TS: It was run out of Killeen?

REG: Yeah, Rural Telephone Company out of Killeen put it in. Had them old Kellogg phones. I had an aunt that was on the line, and we had another woman on there, and they were on the line half the time. It got to where if you had an emergency you just said, "This is an emergency, can I have the line?" and go on. They didn't say anything about it, you know. I'm telling you, these women got to gossip somewhere. Now, when we lived at Turnersville, we had a telephone like that, too. I think it's four parties on the line, and I got to where I wouldn't call a girl to ask for a date 'cause everybody in the country knew it as soon as I did. They'd always eavesdrop on you.

TS: Somebody has told me that you could sometimes tell, they thought they could tell, if everybody got—because, if the audio fell, if it got weaker, that meant that everybody was listening in.

REG: Usually, you could hear 'em when they flip that, when they open it, too. You could hear a little ding, you know. They wouldn't never admit they was on there. (laughs) Oh, we didn't know what we were missing. I never lived where we had electricity until I was married. We never had it out there, you see. I moved to Turnersville, they hadn't gotten it in. And then we moved to Purmela, they had it. But out there at Turnersville, they'd paid the deposit just before we left there, and they were gonna bring one in, but they hadn't got it there when we left there. Everybody doesn't realize it hasn't been that long since electricity went in this country.

TS: It was late getting out in the Hill Country, really.

REG: That's right, yeah. Well, up there at Turnersville, they finally brought it in there. But we had a road up

there, now—now, we had a road up there that you had to fight to get out on, even on an A Model. It was muddy, real muddy.

TS: Did y'all have any cedar? Did you cut any cedar?

REG: No, we kept 'em cut, pretty well. We had a few we left but not many.

TS: Did you have enough to sell?

REG: Uh, Dad used to make posts, but he never did sell 'em, he used his own posts. If he had a cedar big enough, he always trimmed it and made a post.

TS: Some of the people I've talked to that were over here in the hills, they said, We'd have starved if we hadn't cedar. That, you know, some of the flour and the coffee money came from—

REG: Well, you take Cedar Valley back in there, that used to be cedar country, and they used to sell 'em there all the time. I contracted there in Killeen, did concrete contracting, and I worked some old boys that their dad and them had been cedar choppers, you know. But they didn't eat all the time, they was starving part of the year. And they worked for me pouring concrete, and, boy, they was working old boys. They were good hands, and honest, but they just never had known any better, you know. It was the first time they ever had made any money. I'd pay 'em back in those days, I think I was paying 'em a couple of dollars an hour, well, about '50 around there. I don't know, two dollars or three dollars an hour, and they was happy to get it.

TS: Well, some of the people that lived in close to Austin in that Spicewoods Springs area, you got in the hills, and they had come from Tennessee—you know, they were hill people, and they had moved from those hills to these hills, and they were cedar choppers, and they made charcoal, and they made whiskey. And they were just kind of Appalachian.

REG: Oh yeah. I walked up on a vat out in the pasture over on House Creek one day, me and another boy was out there fooling around, you know how kids do. We smelled something, and we come up on a big old metal vat out there, like you'd water horses out of, and flies swarming over it, and it's a bunch of corn stuff in that. I went in and told Dad about that and he said, "Oh, somebody's making a brew over there, that's all that is, he's souring that mash." I didn't know what it was. I said, "Boy, I'd hate to drink anything made out of that stuff!"

TS: Yeah, he probably had his still some place else.

REG: Yeah, somewhere else in the brush somewhere.

TS: The mash, you know, it's kind of a big—you've got a bunch of barrels, or you've got a big vat—it's kind of obvious.

REG: Yeah, they said—well, there used to be, they's always people out in areas like that drinking that stuff. Now, those Germans there at Antelope, they brewed beer, black beer like they had in Germany, but they never—they kept it at home in the storm houses. You never did see it. This Carl Lee Deorsam I was talking about a while go, my brother run around with him when they's getting grown, and Frank would go up there and said they'd they go down in the storm house and drink one of those beers, and said, boy, they'd knock you on your ear. They're that old black beer, they called it, dark beer, and I think Germans still brew that stuff. But he said they kept it in the storm house where it's cooler, you know. But I never did drink any beer in my life, the smell of it always turned my stomach.

TS: Yeah, it's—but back during Prohibition, I was interviewing people down in Fayette County, those Germans really didn't stop. I mean, they continued to—

REG: The Germans are gonna have their beer. They drank beer like we do a cold drink, though. They use it as a beverage. You very seldom see one that over-drinks it. But I just don't care for it, I don't care for anything alcoholic. I can't see it. I was fifteen years old when me and a friend of mine thought we was gonna celebrate Christmas. Went down to Killeen, I was living up at—well, at sixteen, I was at Turnersville. Had a friend down there at Killeen and had a brother's wife there, and we went down to her house, and we decided we wanted to celebrate. So, we got another fellow to pick us up a half pint of whiskey. We tried that, and it was too hot for us. We mixed that with grape juice and drank it, and last I remembered that night I wasn't feeling good. The next morning, I was sick as a horse. I told 'em, if that's what drinking did to anybody, they was just damn fools. And that's the last I drank, right there. I tell you what, that made me so sick. I missed out. I had a pretty little girl lined up and everything for a date, and I don't know what went with her, or anything!

TS: The whole day was ruined. Well, what did y'all do on Saturday nights? Did people give house parties and things?

REG: Not much, sometimes Forty-two, something like that. It was pretty dull. Mainly the older kids when I was growing up, they had those, what do you call 'em? Not dancing but where they'd play music.

TS: Yeah, you can have a house party with dancing or a house party with ring plays—

REG: Had some kind of games, ring games, stuff like that. They did a lot of that. And then, some of 'em—my brother, after he married, I've been over there, he'd give big dances, you know. And I'd stay out and watch 'em, I like to hear the music, but I never did dance. I was too bashful to, I think. Look back on it now, you know, when I was a kid, I never went with a girl until I was seventeen. I was too bashful to. And I don't know, they's just as scared as I was. (laughs)

TS: Well, y'all would go into town, you say, not often, right?

REG: Naw, in the summertime I didn't get to go until fall when we went to get school clothes. We'd go fishing on Saturday evening, usually, and Sunday we'd go to church. And somebody would come to our house to eat Sunday dinner, we'd go with somebody else nearly every time. My mother had a German lady, a Mrs. Albert Kindler, she was a Lutheran, lived up there close to Antelope, and we ate dinner with them one Sunday a month and they ate with us one Sunday a month. They had a half-time church, and we had a half-time church, and they'd go to our church when theirs wasn't going on. But they were the finest people I ever knew. We'd go to their house, and some Germans come in there and go to talking German, and Mr. Kindler would get on them, say, "No, I've got friends here that don't understand that, you just hush that." Says, "You're insulting 'em." He wouldn't let 'em talk it around there. And I sure appreciate a man like that.

TS: 'Cause that makes you feel funny, if everybody starts—

REG: Well, you do, think you think they're talking about you. And he wouldn't let 'em do it at all. But they were real fine people, my mother was closer to her than just about anybody. They didn't persecute us, and we didn't persecute them, and I've gotten to admire Lutherans. I really admire them.

TS: So, that's the Sunday visit for dinner after church. Family visit.

REG: Yeah, we did that a lot. It was a consensus thing, 'cause Dad liked him and Mother liked her. They had kids a little older than me, but we got along good. And we visited our neighbors around us, some. We had Church of Christ neighbors we visited below us—Mannings down there. They were good friends of ours. They had two girls just younger than me, they were like sisters to me. I walked to school with 'em and everything. And they were real nice kids. They had two big mulberry trees in the back yard, and we used to get out there and eat them mulberries, get purple all over us, you know.

TS: Well, you must have started doing chores and doing work pretty young, like most people do, right?

REG: You bet I did. I used to hate that, want to do something, and mom and Dad had a different idea about it.

TS: Well, you already talked about having to milk the cows at the end of the day.

REG: I learned to milk cows pretty young, and I learned to hoe real young. I was always good with a hoe, I liked it. It was something I could make a showing on, you know. I'm kind of an impatient kind of a person, and I liked that. I didn't like it when we had a team, I was about thirteen when we got our first tractor, but I didn't like it following an old team, that was too slow for me. I never did like that, but when we got a tractor I liked that.

TS: What kind of plow rig did your father have before the tractor? Was it a middle-buster, or—?

REG: Well, he had a middle-buster for that, and he had a cultivator, and then he had a planter. He had a cultivator the type that you guide with your feet—a riding cultivator but your feet fit in the stirrups there, and you can move that thing around to miss your stalks. A little play in there helps you a little bit. They were nice stuff, I think they was John Deere stuff. And then we got a little one-row Allis-Chalmers [tractor] first, you know, with wheels out wide. And that, we didn't like it too well, it was slow, the single row, so we got a little B Farmall, little two-row rig, and that's what we had when we moved out of Fort Hood.

TS: B Farmall?

REG: Yeah, that was a little one that had the seat offset to the side.

TS: Did that still have steel, iron, wheels?

REG: No, it had air. I never did have an iron-leg one. And that little Farmall, I kept it, I used it clear through Turnersville. And Purmela, when we's up there, I used it. It was a good rig. It wouldn't pull a triple disk but it'd pull a double disk real good. It was good on bedding two-row and cultivating two-row, it was real good at that.

TS: So, it'd cultivate down two rows at once, getting four middles—no, three middles, I guess.

REG: Yeah. It was good, it was rubber-tired and it had plenty of speed. I took my cotton off with it. We's just four miles from Turnersville, from where I farmed out there, to the gin, and I'd just hook on that old big trailer with that tractor. It'd go about twelve miles an hour, and that's fast enough, you know. I'd take my cotton off with that instead of a car because I could pull it right out of the field and just go on, you know, with it. I run it a lot.

TS: When you were chopping the cotton, after you'd gone through the first time, when it's a weed chop, only. Did you chop, then run with the cultivator to throw the dirt back?

REG: Usually, usually—'course, the first time, when you're chopping it, you're riding it up with the cultivator first, that gets a lot of the grass out of the way. And then, when you chop—now, the way we did, the width of the hoe between stalks of cotton, you see. We took everything out but that one stalk every time. And then, the last hoeing, usually, when the grass got coming back, we'd come in there and hoe everything, and then plow it. Plow it last, then, and lay it by. Now, we didn't have any Johnson grass, Dad wouldn't have that. No cockleburs and no Johnson grass, if you saw one and you didn't pull it, you was out of luck.

TS: So, the rule was, everything stops until you deal with it, right?

REG: That's right, no matter what you're doing. He'd get so aggravated at the neighbors. You know, let that stuff grow up and take over their place. He said, "It's just darn laziness." And we never did have that.

TS: That's horrible stuff.

REG: Aw, yeah, it is. Cockleburs are bad, too. But we raised good crops. The funny thing was, his corn. We raised white native corn. It's a big ear of white corn, he wouldn't have yellow corn. And this Edwin Thompson, who lived on the prairie, the dad to these girls that wrote this book (looks at *Antelope Community, Coryell County, Texas*), he raised the same thing, and they swapped seed. In other words, the seed grown on the prairie went to the creek, and the creek seed went to the prairie, and they claimed they got better production like that. And they did that, picked the ears, you know, and shelled that, and they swapped out seed every year. And it worked out good for us.

TS: Well, people were particular about their corn.

REG: You bet. Well, we raised that old big white corn, and, boy, you talk about good roasting ears. It made good roasting ears and everything. And he said that little old yellow dent, said that's too little. He just never would go with it. You know, the other's got bigger grain and everything. And, boy, if you'd got yellow meal around that place, he'd run you off.

TS: But the corn is used for everything, right? You eat it, you start eating it when it reaches the roasting ear stage. And it's your corn—what is the hammer mill? Talk about the hammer mill.

REG: The hammer mill is the mill that you use ordinarily for grinding feed, and it's got screens in there that the stuff goes through, different sizes. Grinding feed, you use a big-hole [screen], and you can grind cornmeal in it, you've got little bitty holes in it, you see. And that stuff comes out just as pretty, and really it's probably better than gristmill. And when we did meal, we'd get a pretty good bunch of it at a time, you know, and put it up. And then we'd go back on the feed. And I mixed my own chicken feed and ground it in that. I got an agricultural department recipe, you have so much cottonseed meal in there and everything and grind it there, we had our maize and our corn.

TS: That's when you and your mother were running—

REG: Yeah, and I ground our own feed. We saved a lot of money that way, 'cause we had the corn there, had the feed there, all we had to do was add the cottonseed meal and stuff like that—and bone meal, put some bone meal in.

TS: But you can get the hammer mill to run the stuff fine enough that you can make cornbread.

REG: That's right, you can put different-sized screens in it. And I pulled that with a tractor, just a pulley on the tractor run to it, you see—use a belt.

TS: Okay. Put the belt on the hammer mill and—

REG: And on the tractor about, twenty foot apart, I guess. And boy, it'd just pull the heck out of it, you see. 'Course, you could pull it probably with about a four- or five-horse motor but that tractor just idling and pulling that. And did a good job.

TS: And it's a grinding mill?

REG: It's got hammers that are anchored here, and they flop like this.

TS: So, it's a percussion, it's a pounding mill.

REG: They go like this, you see, round and round, though, and that stuff, it cuts it up, and it gets the right size—goes right through them screens, you see. It really cuts the heck out of it. And that's what they

used to use on farms all the time. First, used to be people come by and grind your stuff for you. They had them hammer mills on a truck. And we decided wasn't no use in that. Up at Turnersville we had it fixed up, it was out in an open shed, and we had a pipe going into the barn, and then on the bottom of that pipe we put sacking where that wouldn't blow through so fast. That'd slow it up to where it'd drop in there without blowing everywhere, that stopped the dust.

TS: But people, earlier, would come around offering that as a service?

REG: Yeah, they used to, yeah. They used to have 'em on trucks or trailers and come around and do 'em for you.

TS: We're just about to the end of this, but I'm sort of interested in the kind of people that would come around peddling stuff and selling goods and services. Who would show up?

REG: Rawleigh! Rawleigh and Watkins and such as that. The Rawleighs, we had a man in Killeen, he was a deacon in the church there when I was there. He's dead now. But he made it through the Depression peddling Rawleigh products in that area and came out of it with money in the bank. Now, it takes a salesman to do that through a depression. But you couldn't hurt his feelings, he's one of those kinds that laugh about everything and go on. And he'd take chickens in trade, or anything. And he came through it and did well.

TS: So, he'd probably take eggs.

REG: Anything, yeah. And he come out of it, and he raised a big family. His girls are still there in Killeen, I see 'em every time I go down there. But he was—actually, he was a service to the community. And then we had the ice trucks that carried ice—most places, we was too far off the route out there. We didn't get it, we just had to haul ours. We got ice about once a month, you see. And when we carried a bale of cotton to the gin, we'd bring a block of ice back in our cottonseed when we come in, you see. And then we'd have homemade ice cream! (laughs)

TS: Insulated down in the cottonseed.

REG: Yeah, yeah. It'd keep, that's good insulation. And Dad would use to—we had beef and pork out there on the farm, and when he went to the gin, he'd get one of these big old baloney deals about that big around and about that long. And, boy, we thought that was a delicacy. I can remember when it went to twelve cents a pound, he griped about it being so expensive. (laughs)

TS: Well, going to the gin, especially if you ginned your cotton and sold you cotton—

REG: We'd always sell ours.

TS: You'd always sell it. You wouldn't try to take it home and sit on it.

REG: Oh, no, no. Dad sold it, and I'd sit out there and listen when they'd give the market when I's with him. And that's the price they paid you, what was on the market that day—over the radio. So, they kept you as good as they could with it.

TS: So, you could hear on the radio that this is the price of this day, and nobody is telling me a story.

REG: That's right. It'd be out of Fort Worth or wherever the broadcast was coming from, they'd tell what it was, the stock market there, and tell the price of beef and the price of cotton and corn and everything, you know, at that day.

TS: Well, you know, cotton had these grades, there were sort of the rating—

REG: Yeah, the long-staple and short-staple, and all that stuff. All the cotton around here was pretty well

long-staple stuff.

TS: What was broomcorn?

REG: That's what you make brooms out of. It grows up there like cane or something, and that head is up there high. And when you pull it down, you've got straw about this long on it, you see, with seeds on it. And you pull that down, and you bundle it and dry it. And then you take it and thrash the seeds off of it. Now, the funny thing was, my brother had thirty-five acres one year of that stuff, rented land, and he had a pretty broomcorn crop, and it came a rain, and 'course it stained it. But he took a—he had Model T car, and he took the tube tire off the back wheel and put a tire with nail on there, and that's what he thrashed that broomcorn on—hold it up to that, and that'd thrash that stuff out. And that's the way he thrashed it. And then he took it to market at Keene, Texas. You know where Keene is, that was the broomcorn capital of Texas, took it up there and sold it.

TS: So, the broomcorn is kind of like a maize or something, kind of like a highgear, and it's got a bunch of seeds in this top. And what you want to do is strip those seeds out of there—

REG: Yeah, yeah, and you got clean broomcorn, and, see, you got just about that much stem on it, then they take it to the broomcorn factory, and they work it out. They sold lot of it. But I didn't help my brother, then, I was too young. I moved up to Turnersville, and I had a friend that had broomcorn. He come over one day and wanted me to help him pull broomcorn. And I went over there and pulled broomcorn that day, and you pull that down and that old black soot was all over you, you know, and everything, and it'd sting you. And I went home and took a bath, and I really started stinging. I called him, I said, "You're a good friend of mine, but I haven't got a friend in the world I'd pull broomcorn for again." That was the end of it, for me. (laughs)

TS: So, how do you—? You bend it, and—

REG: Yeah, it's so high you had to bend it down to pull it, you know, and everything in it just comes down on you.

TS: You bend it down, and by pulling it what you're doing is breaking off the seed heads, and it's got pollen and dirt and dust in it.

REG: Oh, everything in there, and soot. Usually had some old black soot in it, you know. Boy, I'm telling you what, that's the awfullest stuff. That and sheep shearing's the worst things I ever got in. I had a neighbor up there that had sheep, and he wanted me to sack wool for him—at shearing. And I sacked wool, boy, I mean I sacked it. You know, them old sacks they have 'em on a rack, great big old sacks, you put that wool in there and stomp it down. And I sacked there and went into eat dinner, and everything in there tasted like them sheep smelled. And that job, one day is all I did that, too. I never saw anything like that stuff.

TS: How did y'all gather the field corn? Did you pull it and throw it in the wagon?

REG: Yeah, we always did that. After you had one row down, then you worked the sides. Now, some people would skip over, and they'd have a down row about every other time. A down row is heck to pick, 'cause that was all on the ground, you see. And when I was a kid, that's what I got, the down row all the time.

But you know, I went to school all through school, though, and my dad never would let me stay out and work. And when I was a senior in high school, we had corn in the field that needed to be out, look like it was going to rain, and I took off school that day. He finally let me do it. That's the only day I ever took out to school to work. Now, he was a stickler for education. I'll tell you how bad it was, he was raised out there at Antelope, no schools around there, and he finished high school at

Killeen, went and stayed with an uncle out there and finished high school. And in those days, that was unheard of.

TS: Yeah. Well, a lot of people would hold their kids out.

REG: Yeah. I had a lots of friends got held out every year. Now, I've had school to be out two weeks, or something like that, for people to gather their crops, or something. And 'course we had to do that, but that was the only way I was out, if the whole school was.

TS: Well, they would sort of arrange the whole school year around—

REG: Yeah, yeah. Our school used to start, I believe, October the twelfth ours started sometimes, about that late, for cotton. And sometimes in the spring you'd get out a little early if you was needing to hoe, but usually you'd go on through in the spring. I would get out of school and go to chopping cotton. (laughs) But I was sure glad to go back to school in that cotton picking.

TS: Well, how many bales would he make in an average year? Sixteen or twenty?

REG: Well, on forty acres, you'd have from ten to twenty, ten to fifteen, twenty. Probably fifteen, average. Round a third of a bale to the acre, probably. Usually. We had good yield, most of the time.

TS: Did y'all ever hire pickers to help? Or, did he figure he had enough pickers?

REG: We did it ourselves, I'm telling you. I didn't like it, but I did. Now, when I was doing it for myself it was all right, I didn't mind it, then. The year I went to California, I come back in time for picking cotton. I was down at Oenaville, you know where that is, down below Temple. East of Temple.

TS: Oenaville?

REG: Oenaville, on some of that blackland. Bell Falls, Oenaville? My mother and dad was living down there, so we went down there and stayed and picked cotton that fall. And they had a black crew from Welder out there and had an old boy that sang all day and picked eleven hundred pounds of cotton a day. He was out there at daylight and didn't go in till dark, and they'd bring him an orange at noon, and he'd eat that orange and just keep going. Sing all day long. And he told me he got the most pleasure out of that than anything in the world, doing that. But he was so dang good!

TS: This one lady, they were rent farmers around Sparta. The family was really poor, the father had died, and they really had it bad. She had it bad, growing up. And she said when Lake Belton came over their cotton field, she wasn't sorry.

REG: I'll tell you what I hated to see Lake Belton cover was that Wilson's Orchards down there. Boy, that was a beautiful orchard. He had apples, peaches, and everything in there, acres and acres of it, in that sandy bottomland. We went down there to Wilson's, and the Winklers had pecan orchards down in there. I hated to see things like that covered up. That was a real good valley they covered with that lake.

TS: Well, you said that you had a peach orchard, your parents had a peach orchard.

REG: Yeah, well, it really wasn't a formal orchard. We had three or four varieties out there, peach trees. It wasn't organized, but we had beehives setting under those peach trees.

TS: Would your mother dry, would y'all dry peaches?

REG: Yeah, you bet, she dried fruit all the time. We had a storm house out there, and she put them in a tray and then she'd put screen wire over 'em, you know. Boy, they made good pies.

TS: I haven't asked you—what was the house like, that you grew up in?

REG: Well, it was a little bit airy. It was about a seven- or eight-room house, built back around 1905, somewhere along there. What I loved about it was the porches. We had a porch on the east clear across the house, had one on the south halfway across, and then on the south by the kitchen and dining room we had another porch there. So, we had three big porches. And 'course we had big windows. In those days you had to use windows for your air conditioning, you know. That's all you had was just wind coming in. It was a real comfortable house. It was ten-foot ceilings, of course. Had a big old fireplace. I used to tell 'em, I had to take a bath in a tub in front of that fireplace, and I'd burn on one side and freeze on the other. Baths in the winter were rough. In the summertime, I didn't worry about it—go to the creek. (laughs) But it was something else, I'll tell you.

TS: How far was the house from the creek?

REG: It was about half a mile.

TS: Oh, it was a good ways, then.

REG: Just a nice walk when I's a kid, I didn't mind. I didn't like those bull nettles down through there sometimes. You ever get in bull nettles?

TS: Once or twice.

REG: You can hold your breath and catch one of 'em anyway you want to, it won't sting. But you let your breath out, that thing will sting. I don't know why that is.

TS: When I got in 'em, I hadn't seen it coming, and it was too late.

REG: I like to got a whipping. I had a brother who lived over at Clear Creek, and he had a brother-in-law that lived with him, he was my age. He liked to eat those kernels off those bull nettles, they're good to eat. That boy liked 'em so well that he took some little bull nettles and set 'em out there on that place. Bill didn't catch him, and one day he came out there and them bull nettles was up there like that. "Where in the hell did them come from?" Pat said, "Me and R. E. set 'em out." And boy, he got mad at us about that, said he didn't want them things started out there.

TS: It's like cultivating Johnson grass or something.

REG: Oh, I've been on bull nettles, plowing and hoeing, you know. And I've hoed in the summertime barefooted, you know, and you have to get over in the other row in the shade of those stalks. That's the only way you could stand it.

TS: I've heard people talk about picking when it was so hot that they kept, particularly on the blackland, that they kept trying to keep their bare feet under the cotton plants when they picked.

REG: I was picking cotton one day and I was twelve years old, and you know how a kid daydreams. And I reached down and I felt something soft. And I looked down, and a big old rattlesnake was coiled around under that stalk in the shade. I guess it was asleep, but it sure scared the heck out of me. I backed up and got out of my sack and hollered, "Pa!" He come up and took a club and killed that rattlesnake. Had twelve rattlers, it was a big old thing, about like my arm there, you know. But that just felt so soft, you know, I knew something's wrong. I looked down there, and it's that old rattlesnake. If it'd been awake, it would've bit the heck out of me there.

TS: There was this family down in Washington County, they owned land along the Yegua, Yegua Creek. And there were so many snakes on their land that one of their things was, they had a couple of dogs that when they were going to pick in a field or chop in a field, the dogs would go out all through the

field. And every time they saw the dog jump up over the top of the corn or the top of the cotton, it had found a snake. They would go kill the snake. So, the dogs wouldn't kill it, they would sort of tree it. This was like getting most of the snakes out of the field before they began to work.

REG: Did you ever see a dog kill a rattlesnake? I had an old dog, that dog I was talking about used to go with me hunting, he'd catch one and shake it to death, but he'd usually get bit. Now, a dog gets bit on the head, they're all right, they can get over it. But if they're bit on the leg, the swelling will kill 'em. And that old dog got bit on the head several times, and he lived through it. And we had an old bulldog, he'd kill one and then wallow on it. But he finally died from snake bite. He got one in his leg, and it swelled up and killed him.

TS: Well, your father didn't like snakes, right?

REG: Well, he hunted them, but he was careful. None of us got bit. He wanted to get rid of 'em. He hunted 'em all around that country, he liked to kill 'em. He brought one in back when he had that T Model one time, I was a kid, I remember him bringing one in that was six foot long and as big around as your leg, nearly. And he said that thing's bound to have twenty-one or twenty-two rattlers, had sixteen on it and some of 'em been broke off. He got it up the creek somewhere there, he's out hunting with somebody else. Yeah, that was the biggest one I ever saw. Boy, it was heavy. But those things are scary anyway, I've been out running a trap line and walk right up on 'em. Up there at Turnersville, a bunch of rock back in there where I hunted, and where you find skunks you'll find rattlesnakes, usually. And I was running my trap line one morning. It was in the winter, it was a cold day, but the sun was shining. I walked up there, and there was a snake coiled up right out on a rock in front of me. I backed up far enough to use the .22 on it, and I got rid of it. But it scared heck out of you to walk up on one that way.

TS: Well, that Turnersville property wasn't nearly as good as the farm y'all had had, right?

REG: Oh, no, not even in the class. Only thing we had up there good, we had a shallow well that was spring fed. And we got up there, Dad said it needs cleaning out. So, I went down in it, it wasn't but about this deep, the water was, but it was just like ice in that thing. There wasn't even any sand in the bottom of it.

TS: What about water at your daddy's place, where you grew up?

REG: It was all artesian—that artesian well I was telling you about. We had two artesian wells there on the hill. One of 'em had a pitcher pump on it we used for the house. Carried it about seventy-five or eighty foot to the house. They never did have water pipes in the house. Didn't have nothing that nice in those days. We had—our barns was all up on the hill away from the house. The house was down the slope on the edge of the field, was what it really amounted to, you see. And even the car shed was up on the hill, there.

TS: Yeah. You had a smokehouse, you had a car shed—

REG: Well, the smokehouse was right behind the house. You needed to have that close.

TS: And she probably stored some other kind of food—where'd she put her canned goods and stuff?

REG: Well, she put them in the pantry in the house. And then we had a storm house that she put things like sauerkraut. She made sauerkraut, she'd take those old crocks, you know, and have a lid on there that's loose and sauerkraut down there. Got it ready, and then she'd can it.

TS: So, the storm house was sort of a root house, right?

REG: That's right. And then we made hominy, too. Did you ever see hominy made? They use an acid, now,

but what she did, you soak it for a long time, and then you take ashes and use them, and they'll take that end off that corn. That end, where it growed on there? And take the hide, the peeling off of it. And then I don't know what all she did to it, but it took about seven days to make it, I think.

TS: I know that white corn is supposed to make the best hominy.

REG: Oh, boy! The way she canned that corn, that hominy, I loved hominy, I always did. I still eat it all the time. But she made that, and she made kraut, and she made preserves, and preserves in those days was preserves—half sugar and half fruit, you know. They'd turn black, but they was good. Just about anything that way. Like I say, she dried any fruit she had there.

TS: Uh-huh. Get any wild grapes?

REG: Oh yeah, we kept grape juice all the time. We used Mustang and those little winter grapes, too, both of 'em. Yeah, she had old whiskey bottles that somebody'd got somewhere. She'd fill them with that grape juice and then put a cork on there and pour hot paraffin over it, you know, and seal 'em. She always had a bunch of that on hand.

TS: My grandmother would make that up real thick, and then when you made yourself some grape juice in the summer, you'd mix it about fifty-fifty. It was concentrated, like Welch's out of the can.

REG: I'll tell you, the old Mustang grapes made awful good grape juice. Sure did. And they made good grape jam. You know, you can make jam out of what you have left, when you run that through the colander. You can make jam out of that, it made good jam. They didn't waste anything. Your pears, I mean your plums, they made jam and jelly, both, out of them. Now, plum jelly, you can't hardly beat that. Them old wild plums, hog plums, we used to call 'em. You ever see them? Little bushes, you know. That was the best jelly you ever saw. And then they had a plum that grew wild out there, a tree plum that grew out in the pasture. It was an awful good plum, I don't know what they called it. Some kind of Indian name or something, they call it. Choctaw or something. And she always picked them off the trees out there.

TS: There's a Hill Country plum that gets ripe in the dead summer or late summer that I've picked before, never knowing really what it was. Not a small bush. Mexican plum I've heard it called.

REG: I imagine it's the same thing. But I'll tell you what, just about everything that grew out there was useful someway. And them old-timers knew how to do it.

TS: Did y'all ever pick up pecans?

REG: Oh, yes, we sold lots of pecans. We had four hundred grafted trees, you see. The government said that wasn't an improvement—wouldn't give us a penny for 'em. Sold 'em in stores by the pound. And we had some native trees that you'd get, five hundred or six hundred pounds off of a tree. Great old big trees down at the edge of the field, you know. And they were about halfway between the size of a normal native pecan and a paper shell. They were pretty hard shelled, but everybody wanted those things because they had the better flavor.

TS: There was this big rent farm on the Colorado up there where the LCRA [Lower Colorado River Authority] calls Horseshoe Bend Park now. It was called Turner Farm. And there some huge native pecan trees along the river, and the foreman of this rent farm—they were all whites, all these were white families—he got thirds on all the pecans that he picked up from the big trees. And they'd be thousands of pounds, some years.

REG: My brother Frank I was telling you about, the one that did the grappling and everything, he was a tree climber, too. He did pecans for everybody in the country down there. Thrash 'em for a percentage. He

did that every year, and he sold them his percentage, you see, and that was his wages. Frank would take an old cane pole and thrash 'em, get up in that tree and thrash 'em. He's the only one had the nerve to do it. And he'd thrash those things, I've picked up for him lots of times. Now, they shake the trees, but they damage trees with these tractors with the shakers on 'em, you know. They damage trees a lots of times with them, but that's the way about all of 'em do 'em, now. In a big hurry.

Well, did you every gather pinto beans dry? And black-eyed peas dry, that was an experience, too. You pick 'em and take 'em and lay 'em on a tarp and beat 'em. Throw the hulls away and you got your beans or peas there. You just pick 'em like any other beans, pick 'em by hand and by bucket and just take 'em over there and just pile 'em up, put 'em on that tarp, and they'll be dry enough you can just shell 'em right out.

TS: I have—people have told me that they would put field peas, black-eyed peas, in a cotton sack and beat and beat the cotton sack, beat it, beat it, beat it, and then somehow get 'em out of there.

REG: Yeah, that's the same way, that's the same principle, you see. See, that old tarp, you'd get on there and beat on there, you see. And then you just pull your hulls back and beat the rest of 'em. We used to put up I guess a barrel of brown beans a year. We loved 'em, and it's cheap. My dad had to have white lima beans, we had to grow them, too. He loved them. But it was all good. Aw, farm life is the best life in the world, if you can make a living.

TS: In a way it was a lot more complicated. There're still farmers, these machine farmers that are terribly in debt with the bank, but that's not very complicated compared to the kind of farming that we're talking about, where you have all these subsistence crops at the same time. You know, some of these blackland farmers, they've got cotton, they've got corn, or they've got maize. That's what they raise, and that's all they raise, and it's kind of simple in a way.

REG: Yeah, like we was, we didn't buy much at the store when I was growing up but sugar, things like that, maybe a box of prunes. We raised our potatoes and put 'em in the barn and kept 'em, and we had our beans and peas put up dry. And then the things that we couldn't dry, we canned. And you just didn't buy much, we had our meat right there. And that's what carried us through the Depression years, you see, people raised their own food. And Dad had to buy coffee. He had to have coffee, my dad was the biggest coffee hound I ever saw. He'd come in and take that old cold pot and turn it up and drink out of it. How anybody can drink cold coffee, I don't know, but he did it.

TS: I drink a little beer, I don't care anything about it, I can forget about it, but coffee! I'm more like your dad, is what I'm saying. I got to have that.

REG: I had a sister-in-law, she drank seven or eight cups a day. I'm telling you, she just had to have her coffee. This man over here we play dominoes with all the time, he drinks all the coffee his wife will let him drink.

TS: Uh-huh. So, she's the control.

REG: Yeah. Well, he ushers at church, piddles around, he goes down to the kitchen every Sunday morning and makes a big pot of coffee and drinks it. After he drinks it at home, he comes up there and drinks it. But I drink one cup a day, but I don't care anything about it. I have migraine headaches real bad, and coffee helps that a little bit.

TS: People used to have to roast coffee at home, right?

REG: Buy the beans and roast 'em.

TS: One thing I haven't asked, and it's appropriate to the season. What was Christmas like on Cowhouse

Creek? Your brothers were much older. I'm forgetting, did you have a sister?

REG: Had a sister six years older than me, and my oldest brother was twelve years older.

TS: So, what was it like for you? What would the family usually do on Christmas?

REG: Well, we really didn't do too much. We just all got together and had Christmas lunch. And 'course you know in those days there wasn't much Christmas presents. We'd get one or two little toys if we were real good, you know. See, that was during the Depression when I was growing up. We owned our own farm, so we made a living, that's about the only way you could. 'Course, my brothers was all gone from home, they'd all come with their families back for Christmas, you know. We had a pretty good time out of it, and the big thing was, we was out of school for a week or two. That was always great. We always did a lot of hunting and things like that in the wintertime, too.

TS: Yeah. So, I guess the brothers had started their own families and were away from home, so it was a little like—we would always go to my grandparents', but in this case, with them so much older—

REG: Well, my last grandparent died six years before I was born, so I never did know any of my grandparents. That's something I've really missed, too.

TS: Well, would people, when they came back—? Would they stay a day or so?

REG: Oh, we used to, we had family, especially in the summer months, that'd come stay a week or two, you know. We were on that creek there, you know. And it was good fishing down there and everything, and in the summertime they loved to come there and stay. 'Course, people in those days, they took longer to get anywhere, so they'd come and stay longer. I've seen people there to where, we had four or five bedrooms and three big porches, and there'd be people sleeping out on those porches on pallets. We never thought anything about that.

It was, I don't know, people really enjoyed what they had then. We didn't have much, but we enjoyed every bit of it.

TS: Well, you know, when it was such an expedition to get some place, you didn't just eat dinner and jump in your car and drive off.

REG: The amazing thing, though, families were closer, then, I guess because they did stay when they came. And then we'd have the outside entertainments, you know. I got out of school in the fall, and I didn't go to town till time to buy my school clothes the next year. But when we wanted recreation, one get off work early on a Saturday evening, Dad would let us go set out the trotlines, or something. And that was our main recreation, there.

TS: But when the brothers and their families would come back, would you fish even in December?

REG: Yeah, if the weather was anything like decent, we did. Uh, I don't know if you're familiar with grab-hook fishing?

TS: Yeah, you described that, and you said you did that in the winter. That was something—

REG: Yeah, we did a different kind of fishing, you know. But you could always fish, pretty well, if the weather's not real bad. 'Course, in the wintertime, the water gets real clear, and that's why you fish where you can see the fish, using grab hooks or a gig or something like that. 'Course, that's all illegal now, it wasn't then.

TS: Well, all the old-time fishing methods—grappling's illegal, grab hooking's illegal, uh—

REG: Grappling under the banks is illegal, and a fellow's got the nerve to do that ought to have 'em.

TS: Did you ever use—? I've talked to people in East Texas about fishing, and it was like totally no holds barred. Like, along the Neches, some of 'em used dynamite, and they also used—they tried anything in the water that would turn a fish. Did you ever use, or hear of using, uh, black walnuts? Pound them up and use them to stupefy fish in the creek holes?

REG: No, but there're some more things. I think poke salad berries I think would do that. But Dad wouldn't let us do anything like that on our place. He didn't let anybody seine fish on our place. And he wouldn't let anybody hunt quail on there because they eat insects, you know. Now doves, he didn't like them because they eat the grain. He was a real stickler on that. He run people off the place if he caught 'em fishing illegally.

TS: Well, I gather that there was a lot of seining. That a lot of times when people needed a lot of fish for a fish fry or something like that, they'd just seine.

REG: Yeah, well Dad wouldn't let 'em seine, he didn't believe in it. He thought sports fishing was the way. He didn't object to people seining below there, if they seined somewhere else, but they picked the scaly fish, non-game fish, you know. Like suckers and things like that and carp and things.

TS: Somebody in this group of people I've interviewed talked about making homemade chicken-wire seines.

REG: That was actually a fish trap, when you do that. They used to trap 'em, lots of people did, and that was always illegal. But you can take an old net-wire trap, with a funnel-time entrance into it, and you can take some cottonseed cake in a sack and put in there, and them old catfish would come to it. And they couldn't get out then, you see, couldn't find a way out. And there's lots of people trapped that way. Now, we didn't do that, I knew people that did.

TS: So, they'd make a big wire trap with a conical—the mouth looked kind of like a megaphone.

REG: Yeah, well, you've seen these little minnow traps, they're like a miniature trap, you see. And that's what it amounted to. But lots of people kept 'em set out nearly all the time. But we always figured if it's worth eating, it's worth getting out and hustling for. 'Course, Dad kept us burned out on fish, he caught so many with pole and line. He never used a rod and reel, he used an old pole, a long pole, a bamboo pole. And he'd rig that up, and he caught twelve- or fifteen-pound catfish on that thing. And that was a lot of fun, you got 'em like that, you know. He used to fish year-round, pretty well, he fished if the weather's decent. He just loved to fish. And those days the creeks had lots of fish in 'em. You didn't have you're dynamiting and things like that down there at all, and we had hollow banks, which was a harbor for catfish. My first memories of fishing, I'd get to go with him and I'd get to fish for perch for his bait, you know. And I thought that was great. But now people don't know how to appreciate things like that.

TS: Yeah. I interviewed Ralph Yarborough years ago, and that was his first memory of going fishing with his father on the upper Neches. His father would rig him up, and his job was to catch perch to bait the lines.

REG: And then I used to get the—do you know what a hellgrammite is?

TS: Yeah, that's kind of a big old salamander-looking thing.

REG: Well, they actually look more like a centipede. They've got pinchers on the front of 'em, they'll pinch the blood out. But they're the best catfish bait you can get. You can get down in the edge of the flowing water at a shoal, and you turn flat rocks over, and they're under them. Dad used to take an old Prince Albert can, and we'd put those things in there, you know, and use 'em for bait. And boy, they was good catfish bait, and they stayed on the hook good.

TS: How big did they get?

REG: Oh, they'd get up to about an inch and a half long, I guess. Just thread it on the hook just right for a bait. And they were tough, and they stayed that way, you know. Now, in this country, we used to have 'em up here, but we've got a lot of wild ducks around here, and they turn those rocks over and pick 'em up. But they're real good bait. And then we used to use a lot of crawfish in dry weather. Little streams up in our field would dry up, you know, just down to holes. You take you a minnow seine, you'd get you a bucket full of crawfish in a little while. And they're awful good catfish bait.

TS: Were there freshwater drum in the Cowhouse? You know, some people call 'em gasper ghouls.

REG: Well, a gasper ghoul is not the same. A gasper ghoul is a mud fish. They've got a hump in their back and live down in the mud. They're not decent for anything because they stink and everything. But now, a true drum is a big perch, is what they are. Up here where we're at now, we catch those big perch, and they claim they're drum, but far as I'm concerned they're just perch. I don't know. (laughs)

TS: Well, some of what we called white perch, which are crappie, would get awful big.

REG: Those crappie get up to a couple of pounds, and your big perch, your big sun perch, will get up to half, three-quarter a pound. You know, them old pumpkinseed perch? And we had a lot of them in this country.

TS: What about stink bait, did he use any of those kind of baits?

REG: No, he didn't, he used natural baits. During the time when it's wet enough, he dug earthworms. We had earthworms on our place that would be eleven, twelve inches long, and he'd take one of those and wad that whole thing on that hook. You know, up and down? Boy, that'd catch them old big catfish. He'd take him a pick out there, and he'd dig those earthworms out. And they, they were awful good bait.

TS: Well, the kind of catfish, the big catfish, that were in the Cowhouse, were they those—?

REG: Yellow cat. And then we had channel cats, and then we had blues. The best sport was you get on one of them shoals and catch one of those blue cat. You talk about a two-pound blue cat, fighting that current, and boy they were something to fight with. Real good scrap. And they're the prettiest fish, I think. But under the banks you catch them old bull-headed yellows. And 'course they'd get big, you know.

TS: They were the biggest ones in the Cowhouse, right?

REG: We had lots of them in there, you'd run into them thirty, forty pounds.

TS: And they were the ones that liked to get into the dark holes in the bank and—

REG: Yeah, they bedded under there. You talk about fishing for them, some of them old-timers would take a pole and put a big hook on it and put a red bandana, a red flag, on there. And you run that back in there, and you can catch them old big cat if they're in their beds. They're fighting, then, and they'll attack that thing. You can get 'em. It was very illegal, even then, for that. But I've heard of people doing it.

TS: So, that was really a kind of foul-hooking technique. But it was based on the fact that the fish would fight the red bandana on the end of the pole?

REG: That's right. You know, a fish like everything else that's got a bed of eggs in there and everything, they're combative, and that was the theory on that. But we never did do that, 'cause Dad was strict on

it. But I've heard of people that did. Then, in the wintertime, I had a brother that gigged fish. We'd get out there when it's clear, and you'd get those fish. I've rode a boat and him fish when ice'd form on the handle of the gig. Those old catfish were sluggish, and you could get right over 'em, and you could just get 'em like heck.

TS: So, that was part of what made it work, that they were sluggish, they didn't have normal—

REG: When it's freezing cold, they just don't move as fast. And you can take a headlight and shine on there, which is illegal too, and shine it down on there and get it. But we were just getting what we ate, you know. And it's lots of fun, if you didn't freeze to death at it.

TS: Did you do that in both day and night?

REG: Well, you could gig in the daytime, too. You had to have good light, though. But the night was better, they seemed to move slower and your flashlight picked 'em up good. That might of kind of stunned 'em, too, you know, and you could do it pretty good. The old carbide light was pretty good for that.

TS: Let's see. What did your father think about your brother Frank grappling under the bank?

REG: Oh, he didn't mind that. He thought anybody's fool enough to go under there and get 'em, they ought to have 'em! (laughs) That's about the way it was, too, I guess.

TS: I've always thought they shouldn't have made that illegal because if anybody's got the nerve to do that, they ought to let 'em fish like that. I don't think they'd be a lot of people that would do it, these days.

REG: I don't have enough nerve to do it, myself. I admitted that. But a few years ago over at Killeen, we had an old boy that caught 'em over on Lampasas River. And he run his hand down in their mouth and caught 'em, you know, and his old arm'd be all skinned up from that. Shoot, ain't no way I'd do that.

TS: Yeah, and like in the Neches, the East Texas rivers, there're these enormous snapping turtles, and they're down there, too, in the same places.

REG: Yeah, them things are dangerous. I was always afraid of water moccasins when I got in the water, I never could stand the touch of any kind of snake. And I've caught a lot of 'em on trotlines and things, and I'd just cut the staging and throw the whole thing out on the bank. I was fishing at Lampasas. The Sulfur River up there is spring fed, it's real cold, and we's fishing that one night. A bunch of boys came up there, and we camped out and went over there and set our trotlines, and then we went to Lampasas to the midnight movie. We came back out there running those lines and got out there and got about halfway up, and something wrapped around my leg, and I got out of there and they didn't get me back in till daylight. It's a big old moccasin. Wasn't no way I'd get back in there!

People just don't know how to enjoy themselves like they used to, don't seem like. Anyway, they don't enjoy what we did. (laughs)

TS: What would you say about your brother Frank? Now, Frank interests me because he knows all of these old country things, like the robin thrashing and the grabbling for catfish. That's old-time stuff, really.

REG: Well, he was just one of these kind that just like to get out. He trapped all the time, he and I trapped after I got up old enough. You know, trapped for pelts, sent 'em into Sears and Roebuck all the time. He was just a natural at stuff like that. We had about four hundred grafted pecan trees on our place, and he grafted those things. Up to a year or so before he died, he grafted pecan trees, and he had about 97 or 98 percent living on 'em. He was just a natural. He'd get out there, he had a greenhouse,

and he'd just root anything, grow anything, just a natural-born farmer. He and I worked together in concrete work over thirty years, contracting, till he retired. He and I were real close, always. He had two boys, and they was just like brothers to me. He had a green thumb. He had a five-acre place out of Killeen and a big garden, and doggone, he gave me so much garden I just quit fooling with it. Wasn't no use, and I took care of his when he went somewhere or something, you know. He just had a green thumb.

TS: I was thinking—you know, we talked some last time about the trapping. You caught a lot of skunks, right? What sort of a set would you make for skunks? I've had people describe mink sets and other things, but I don't know about skunks.

REG: You could take a can of sardines and put it in a jar or something and leave it about half open, and let 'em go ahead and ferment and get stinking. And you'd set your trap out and put a little bit of that on the trigger and pretty well submerge that trap in leaves or something, you know, and you could catch a skunk good. Now, if you wanted to hunt for raccoons, we'd put our trap in the water, even in the mud, and then we'd put some bright feathers or something up over it. They're real curious. You could take red bird feathers, things like that, and put up there. Or, you put something there, and a doggone raccoon'd go in there and see what it is. And you catch them out that way.

TS: So, it would be a purely sight bait?

REG: Anything that calls 'em over there, they'll get over there and look at it. And fox and things like that, they go on scent. You use female scent to draw an old fox, more than anything else. Something like that. We didn't particularly trap for 'em, I've killed a few of 'em. Mostly we caught skunks and possums. And I hated possums worst than anything because their old belly's rotten in 'em, and they have those old wolves, they call 'em in 'em, that old worm-like outfit. They were nasty to handle. You take a skunk, and you cut the musk bag out, they wasn't no trouble. They were a clean animal.

TS: Well, didn't they usually make a great stink when they got caught in the trap?

REG: Well, they would, but you stay down wind with 'em, get around there and kill 'em, and then let 'em dry down good. And then take 'em out and cut that musk bag out, first thing, and burn it, and go ahead and clean 'em. They were a good, clean—you know, the flesh and everything was clean, and the pelt was beautiful on 'em. Long as you scrape 'em good, you know, and dry 'em.

TS: So, you scraped 'em and dried 'em on a frame?

REG: What you did, you turned 'em wrong-side out and put 'em on a stretcher, where they fit pretty tight, and you scrape 'em down and let 'em dry good. And then you just bundle 'em up and send 'em into Sears and Roebuck, is the way we used to do 'em. Wrap 'em in burlap. And they took possums, too, but they never did bring any money. Even back in the days when I was hunting, possum would bring the best was fifty cents, and a good prime skunk ran from two to three dollars, four dollars, or five dollars. And a raccoon was worth about ten dollars, then.

I was about eleven or twelve years old, I had a good hunting dog. Now, I don't know what breed it was, we didn't pay any attention to that in those days. And I went out squirrel hunting one day, and he bayed, and I went over there, and he had a fox treed. The fox was up about four foot in the air, and he's just high enough to tease that dog. And I shot that fox, and I wasn't trapping at the time. We called a neighbor, and yeah, he wanted it, and he give me a dollar for it, just like it was, and he took care of the skinning and everything. (laughs) But I was just a kid with a .22. But it's lots of fun to me.

TS: Well, it's the grey fox that'll go up the tree. The red fox goes in the ground.

REG: Yeah, well, these were tree fox, most of 'em, in this country. But I don't know, it's just lots of fun

hunting for stuff like that. And then we hunted rattlesnakes a lot, too. My dad was a big rattlesnake hunter. He would use a hook made out of bedspring.

TS: Let me go to something else, here, uh, I wanted to ask you and didn't ask you before about baptisms and revivals at Antelope Church.

REG: Yeah. You know, down on the corner of the school ground they had—I think Middick give the school a couple of acres, and he give the church down there about an acre. Down close to the road there, they was a little what we called Missionary Baptist church in those days, the same things as your regular Southern Baptist, now. And we had a little church down there that met every other week, I believe it was. We had a rural pastor, and usually those pastors in those days had a couple of churches, and they'd be in one church one Sunday and the other one the next, you know. We had a pretty strong little church there, and we had the—had at least, usually—usually we had a spring and fall revival. You'd always have a pretty good attendance at those revivals, the building'd be full for them. People were hungry to hear the word preached and singing. And I don't know, there was a lot of pleasure in it. And then, usually about the last day of the revival, you'd have singing all day and dinner on the ground, and everything. It was really a big thing. Usually, they had evangelists that'd come through. They'd usually hire an evangelist for a week or two-week revival in the summer. And it was real good, we really enjoyed it. People were hungry for some place to go, and it was natural that church would kind of be the center of your social activity, and that worked real good. I was nearly fifteen, I believe, when I was baptized.

TS: Well, that's about the usual.

REG: In those days it was. I was baptized in the Cowhouse Creek, down at Eliga. We went down there to the Cowhouse, it was accessible by gravel bar, you could walk right down to the water, and we was baptized there. I think I was baptized August 14, 1940. That's been a good while ago, hasn't it?

TS: It's been a good while ago. I was born January 8, 1941. Well, the baptism really took with you. I mean, with all your church involvements—

REG: Well, you know, my mother was the finest Christian woman I ever knew. And my dad didn't go to church. And when the kids got old enough to drive, we went to church. We was six miles from Antelope. And I don't know, she influenced me. Her and my wife influenced me more than anybody in my life—because of Christian attitudes, you know—and it makes a lot of difference. She was devoted to it. You know, what's hurting us today is a lack of Christian motherhood. You learn more at your mother's knee than just about anywhere in your early life. It's just something you can't get around. Even when I got up. I got out of high school when I was sixteen, and first summer I worked down at Killeen, then, we was living above Gatesville. And I worked down at Killeen, and I got down there, and I smoked and showed off like all the other boys. My oldest brother got drafted in the army, so I had to go back home and farm the farm. Well, I threw those cigarettes away and to this day I haven't smoked because I wouldn't smoke before my mother. And you know, it influences you, things like that.

TS: Yeah, that's unusual for your generation, which is essentially my father's generation. They were the heaviest. Adult males smoked, normally.

REG: When I was fifteen years old, me and an old boy was down at Killeen for Christmas, and we got an old boy to buy us a pint of whiskey. We had some little girls we was gonna go out with, we were really happy. We got that whiskey, and it burnt us, so we mixed that with grape juice. And the last thing I can remember that night I was sick, and I woke up the next morning I was sick. And I told 'em, that's the only time I'll ever drink that stuff. And I never have even tasted of it, since. I was fifteen years old, and that was enough for me. And I was scared to death my mother would found out

about it! (laughs) I don't know, I don't think anybody ever influences your life like your mother does. I told 'em, they talked about stars in your crown, you know. I said, "Well, if there's anybody rewarded with stars in the crown, it'd be Christian mothers." And I sure believe that way myself.

TS: What about—? And this will be the last thing. I didn't ask you what you remembered about Antelope School on the inside. Do you remember your first-grade teacher, or anything like that? How would those teachers handle all those different grades in the same classroom?

REG: Well, that's amazing. You know, my first-grade teacher taught first, second, and third grade. And she'd have the first-grade class, and she'd go right on to that next one—you'd be studying—she'd just rotate around, one, two, three on each subject, you know. And went right on through it, and excellent teaching. And then, when I got in the third grade, I got my second teacher, you know. And it just worked that way. Doris Whitley was my second- and third-grade teacher—I mean, third- and fourth-grade teacher, I believe it was. And we just went right through. We had tenth-grade when I started there, but when Gatesville went to running a school bus down there, well, after the freshman year I went to Gatesville. So, I went through the freshman grade at Antelope, then I went to Gatesville to senior high school. I'll tell you, the county superintendent was over the rural schools, you see, and they kept good supervision. Your subjects were the same all the way through. When you changed schools, you wasn't hurt because the whole county was using the system, you know. And I think we had a real good educational system. I know that we learned real well, and I didn't have any problem when I went on to high school. I made just as good a grades there, too. So, I think, I think it was real good.

TS: What about—? Do you remember the teachers having any discipline problems like they do today? You know, there's always gonna be some.

REG: You know, if you're good in basketball and you won a good many games, we'd go to the county meet and play basketball. Like, we went to Oglesby one night to play basketball. You know where that's at? It's in the northeast corner of Coryell County over there. Went there to play basketball one night, and bunch of boys got out on the court when they's told not to and went to shooting goals out of line, and every one got a whipping for it except me. They said, Well, why didn't he get one? He said, "Well, I know he wouldn't lie to me about it." I thought that was kind of funny, you know, and actually I didn't lie to him. But they had a time of it. They whipped—oh, every once in a while you'd have a whipping. Somebody steal something, something like that, they'd get a busting, right there. And then they'd call their daddy, and when they got home they'd get another one. I never got a whipping at school because I knew what'd happen if I got one there. I wasn't afraid of them, I was afraid of my dad. But it worked pretty good. We had a good bit of trouble one year, and they hired a teacher from over at Maple-Silver City. It was in the Antelope region, just over from us. They hired this old boy, and his reputation went ahead of him. He'd had forty-nine whippings in a year over there, and he had a Sam Brown belt that had ever' name on it. He stayed at our school three years and never whipped a person! (both laugh) That's what a reputation does for anybody.

TS: So, his reputation had arrived before he did, and nobody wanted to get their name on the Sam Brown belt. Well, that's pretty—if you're wearing your belt, you can always pull your belt off, the instrument of the discipline is right there around your waist all the time, it's almost like wearing a gun.

REG: Well, I never could understand. He was a nice teacher and a fine man, but evidently he walked into a hotbed over there of discipline, you know. But he straightened 'em out, anyway.

TS: They can kind of tree the teacher, and the whole school can kind of go—those rural schools, normally there's not much of a discipline problem, but a whole school can get out of hand like that. I have had people tell me. So, he was the one that got control over Maple-Silver City.

REG: Yeah, but he didn't have much trouble with us. He was there about three years, he was an excellent principal. Did a good job.

TS: How was the school heated?

REG: We had coal and wood. Part of the time it was wood, and part of the time it was coal. I believe it was coal nearly all the time I was there, and then they changed over to wood later on. Had them big heaters with a metal band outside of that to keep the kids from touching 'em. We used to get in trouble, we'd go out to the coal bin and get in a fight and get coal all over us. We'd get in a little trouble over that and get in more trouble when we got home. And then we had kerosene lights still. Oh, about the third grade I was there, they bought this Star Gas. You know, bottled gas? Put in gas lights in the school.

TS: What was that like? I don't know about that.

REG: They're not bad. You had a globe up there that come down, had a burner in it, and it lit up good. You know, in comparison to kerosene it was good. It's like natural gas, is what it was like. Butane gas is what it really was, you see. That was the first time I'd seen it, and I haven't seen it in the last several years, but they put it in that school system. All the rooms had gas lights.

TS: You know, I've listened to a lot of people about things like this, but I'm still hearing of things I did not know about. Like, I know about the carbide systems, and I know about the Delco systems, but this is a new one. So, it was kind of a natural gas system—

REG: They called it Star Gas, I don't know. And they had tanks about the size of a water heater tank, you know, that set outside. And then they had the copper tubing running to your lights, you see. Or whatever you're using it for, I understand it could be used for cooking or whatever, but lights is what we were wanting. And that's what they put in there.

TS: Well, you wouldn't normally have those lights on during the school day, right?

REG: Not unless it's cloudy or something.

TS: So, it was mainly for entertainments and meetings and—

REG: Yeah, you know we had a big picnic every year, and we had plays about three nights before and after that picnic. Ever' class had to put on a play and everything. And ever' once in a while we got a musical or something come in there. You know how your schools are, they get some entertainment come in from outside.

TS: Yeah, there were sort of traveling entertainments. The little school that I taught twenty years ago, the donkey basketball people came around at a certain point in their school bus. And they were living on the school bus with the donkeys, if you can believe that.

REG: When I was a kid, we had a little country store about a mile from school. And they had a theater group come in there, it was a movie theater deal, and they had a tent, and they showed those old movies, Tom Mix and such as that. And I never had seen a movie in my life till that, I was ten or eleven years old. We thought that was the greatest thing in the world, we went down there to that movie that night, and I think it cost a whole dime.

TS: Where were they setting up?

REG: Set up down there by the store in the vacant lot, you know. And that night I guess everybody in the school district carried their kids and went to that show. We had a big time at it, it was really a novelty to us, you know. They come to all the rural schools that would let 'em come in, it was a traveling

deal. They had a motion picture hook up, you know, a portable screen, and they went around to all these schools. And that was the first movie I'd ever seen, that's old Tom Mix. 'Course, that goes way back there.

TS: Yeah, I remember watching Tom Mix.

REG: But you know, I never saw a movie in till I was fifteen. My youngest brother married first. He got married and they was going to the movie, they was out there one night, and they was going to the movie, and I begged and pleaded till they took me with 'em. And I saw the Eddie Albert show, I believe it was, Eddie Albert and Stanford University. He was a football player or something. That's been a long time ago, been about sixty-something years ago.

TS: What about water at Antelope School? Did you have a pump outside?

REG: A deep well and a pitcher pump, one of these up-high ones, with a long lever handle on it.

Norris Sidney Graves Jr.

Date of birth: 11 November 1924
Community affiliated with: Pidcoke
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase

AED: This is Amy Dase. Today is July 25, 2001. I am interviewing for the first time, Norris Graves. This interview is taking place in his home in Waco, Texas. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

I was hoping that we could start out with you telling me a little bit about your family.

NSG: All right. My family is all raised in Coryell County. My mother was one of seven children of my George A. Strickland, whose home still stands on—where they built it. They built it in 1903. Started in 1903, finished it in 1905. So my mother married my father in 1921. And I was born in 1924. So we were in the heart of the Depression, really. My dad was a sharecropper, (laughs) and he, ever since I remember, he said, "I'm not gonna hop clods for a living." And he didn't, but we were in Coryell County. At the one time we left and went to West Texas. He was foreman of a ranch in West Texas, and then he came back and my mother had diphtheria, and she came back, and she and I lived for some time at the old Strickland place, which is still—so that's where—and my grandfather, I knew him, but he died when I was six years old. So I'm an only child,.

And I've always loved to prowl around and investigate and do things like this, but I got started on this research deal, not to write a book or anything, but to find out who my mother's people were. They did not know. She did not know. Never talked about it. My grandmother never talked about it. Consequently, I've learned more about the Strickland family than I do the Graves family. Well, the Graves family is pretty well published. The Graves came over here in 1608, so they've been here a long time, and as it turned out the Stricklands landed in Virginia in 1682, so they've been here quite awhile. And I've followed them. We went back to Virginia, and we went to North Carolina and all down through the deal to Mississippi and back in here. And my grandfather was the first Strickland born in Texas.

AED: And was that in Coryell County?

NSG: In Coryell County.

AED: What year was that?

NSG: He was born in 1868—1868 in Coryell County.

AED: So his parents were there very early.

NSG: Yes. Yes. He came with his parents. They left Mississippi and the conclusion—my great-great-great-grandfather had a plantation in Mississippi and the Civil War just completely took care of that. So just

as soon as Appomattox was history they bundled up and came to Texas, and they came here in 1865. So my granddad's father was named Justin Strickland. He—that's who my mother's named after. She is Jud, named after, Judson, I say Justin, Judson, J-u-d-s-o-n, Judson. And my mother's named after him because they thought they needed another boy and she came along. (both laugh)

But anyway, they came here in 1865. They came down the Mississippi by steamer and then took the ship from New Orleans over to Galveston and then came up the rails to Houston and then they rode overland, rented a pack, and rode overland to Brenham. And they stayed in Brenham two years until they could locate some property. And so my great—the great-grandfather, he and his son, found a place at Eagle Springs, Texas, which is very barely on the tip of Coryell County.

AED: On which side?

NSG: It's on the—it would be in the northeast corner. Down close to Mother Neff Park, near that park and all that. In fact, the Neffs were next door neighbors to my grandfather, so—in fact he signed—his signature is on several—no, it's on—the father, Pat Neff is on several of his documents, especially when he died and all. Court documents. And so when they moved there—my—they did—my grandfather, my mother's father was born there, but he—it wasn't their home. They were passing through, and he was born—was stayed there for about a year—and they were born there. Then they moved on up to Jonesboro, Texas. So that's where they finally got into Texas. Now he lived at Jonesboro, but right across the road, which would be in Hamilton County.

And he was one of several children and finally he went to McGregor, my grandfather, and he was over at McGregor, and he decided that he wanted to become a stock ranger. He didn't like farming either. He liked stock farming and—so he tried to lease some property over close to his granddaddy, and in doing so, he didn't have the money, and he was only nineteen years old, but his granddaddy or grandmother loaned him, or signed his note and that's what got him started. And it was real interesting because his father would not sign his note, but his grandmother did. He got his start, and he stayed there, and his farm—his grassland was next door to a Phillips family that had come from Tennessee. And they had a girl there that he got to sparking, and that became my grandmother. (both laugh) And they married, and they had one, two, three, four, five of their children was born on that place. And then he said, "I've got to get more property." And so he started surveying back in the western part of Coryell County and in doing so he run across—well, his father in the meantime became a real estate man. And he found this place. And he bought it, and it was, oh, it was around six hundred acres originally.

AED: And what was it near? What little community?

NSG: It's near Pidcoke. Between Pidcoke and Copperas Cove. And Topsey is off to one side of it. So that's where he—

AED: So, you're getting closer.

NSG: Yeah, getting closer. So he stayed there about—they lived in the old house that was there, and then he decided to build something because he was becoming pretty well-off, and he was able to get some more land, and he leased land, and he bought some more land. In fact, 'fore it was over he had about forty-eight hundred acres. So he had a lot of grassland. He just had enough farmland to feed the stock. So he decided to—that's when he started getting—his boys was beginning to get older. My mother and her baby sister was born at this place, within the old house. None of 'em were ever born in the new house that's built—that's there now. But the boys got older, and my granddaddy decided that well, he was buying this cattle, and all of it was coming from Mexico, why couldn't he get it down in Mexico. So he and his oldest son went down to the border and made arrangements to buy cattle, and he left my uncle down there to buy the cattle and let him know when they had it. Well, at the price

they were buying 'em, they had a pen full pretty quick. So he sent word, and he drove about two hundred head back up to Coryell County. And then the next year they brought in five hundred head. So they had—

AED: Also from Mexico?

NSG: All from Mexico. They would just sit there on the border, and they—my uncle tells me the story that this old Mexican couldn't speak English at all. And I was amazed that—later on I lived in El Paso after I got out of the service for a while, and I was amazed that my Uncle Mohler, his name was Mohler, he could speak Spanish. Oh, he could just—I said, "Where did you learn that at? Yeah." He said, "If you spent all the days and nights that I did across that table," said "you'd learn how to say pass the frijoles real quick." (both laugh) And said, that it was real easy after that. But what they did, they offered these—anybody on the other side of the river, so much a head for the cattle, which just seems like nothing. And sure enough, said, the next morning there would be cattle coming across the border, and they'd put 'em in these pens that were mostly corrals had a lot of cactus around them to keep 'em in, and they'd keep 'em, and then they'd send word. My uncle would send word back to Gatesville, or Coryell County, Pidcoke, that he had a pen full, and my granddaddy would come down with some hands, and they would drive 'em back.

AED: Where were they in Mexico? Do you know?

NSG: I—the little town they have was—they called it—he called it Jose, but they weren't in Mexico, they were on this side of the border. That way they didn't have any trouble. In other words, I'm not gonna go over there and buy cattle 'cause he was afraid that—they were having a little trouble over there anyway at the time. So he decided that—this old Mexican put out the name—put out the word that, if you'll bring this cow over, I'll give you a dollar a head, or whatever it was, you know. And they'd drive it back to Coryell County. There they'd put 'em on grass, the grassland he'd bought. And then, later, they would take 'em to a railhead or drive 'em to Fort Worth. And that's where he got his—just kept going on that. It was—it was a really interesting deal.

But I never knew this uncle had had this history behind. He never talked unless you asked him, you know.

AED: Ask him the question—just the right—

NSG: Yeah, just the right thing. He was very quiet. He was the quiet one in the family. So he stayed with My grandfather died in 1930. And the place went to my grandmother, but their older son that had been down to Mexico, he more or less didn't marry until after they got stabilized and all there. And my mother's baby sister got married. And they lived on the place, and so Mohler got married and moved over to Copperas Cove. And he was a stockman until the day he died.

But they were all, I guess, pretty well except one. The next to the oldest was a—I guess you'd call him a mechanic. He was a welder. My granddaddy set him up in Pidcoke, downtown. Bought a little place there and built a shed on it and set him up as a blacksmith. And he worked and worked on anything, plows, anything, and automobiles began to come in about that time. In fact, in nine—I haven't got the exact date now—1919, I believe it was, or '20, my granddaddy decided he would buy an automobile. And he went over to Gatesville, he rode his horse over to Gatesville. He had two aunts over in Gatesville, one of 'em was married to the banker there, and the other one was, well, one to give me most of my history for the Strickland family. And he'd go visit them, and he'd—but anyway, he went and bought a car. He bought a Ford automobile, but he couldn't drive it. (both laugh) And he tried. The dealer tried to show him how to drive it and everything. He just didn't feel safe driving all the way back to Pidcoke in that. So he rode back to Pidcoke and told—well, Mohler was there and George, George Junior, that he'd bought a car if they'd go get it. (both

laugh) So they went over and got it. 'Course the one that was a mechanic, you know, it was ideal for him, 'cause he could drive it.

AED: What was his name?

NSG: George Junior. My granddaddy's name was George Augustus Strickland. Or he was always known as George Junior. And he could do anything—he worked for the—'fact he later retired from Fort Hood as a mechanic out there and he could do anything along that line. He could do electrical work and all of that.

'Fact, when he was at Mineral Wells, this George Junior was, at Mineral Wells, Fort Wolters I believe is up there, and he was there when this explosion down at Texas City came about years ago. And they called for help and he took the fire truck at Camp Walters and came, well, took it to Texas City, but before he got there he turned off and came to Pidcoke. And they were eating lunch, or eating dinner then, they called it dinner—you have dinner and supper back in those days. They were sitting down to dinner when they heard in the distance a siren, just coming—blowing, blowing, blowing, as they sit. Out there in the country there's no such a thing as a siren. And they got up to go to the front porch and looked and here comes this fire truck, all down the road (laughs), he turned in front of the house and stopped, and George Junior got out and said, "Is dinner ready?" (both laugh) And they said, We're just setting down, go in. So he stayed there a couple of hours, and he took off to Texas City. But he was always, you know, doing things like that. During World War II he helped make convoys ready to, you know, go overseas, go down, put 'em on the ships, and everything like that. So he was the only one in the family that was other than a rancher or a stockman.

AED: Sort of a rebel.

NSG: He was a rebel. He didn't like to do any of it. We have a picture of him at the threshing machine, and he looked like he was miserable. (AED laughs) He just didn't like anything to do with that kind of work. He would work his heart out on anything else, but he just would not—

AED: Work on the machine itself, but not do the work that machine was for.

NSG: Yeah. Yeah. Well, they tried to get him to hall hay to the thresher and didn't like that. And catch the oats as it comes out. But then they got an idea that maybe he was miscast and they said, How would you like to run this thresher, the separator? How would you like to lubricate it and check the belts and all that? That was it. They got him. (laughs) And they had a steam engine to pull the hay out. So he was in right then. But my granddaddy was real—he was a cattleman until the day he died. We have some pictures of him roping some of his cattle and all that.

AED: How many acres did he have then?

NSG: Well, at the time, you mean how much overall? He had around forty-six hundred acres. But then there was a depression in 1924, I believe, that just nearly wiped him out. He went bankrupt, and only thing that saved him was that his aunt over in Gatesville was president of the—by then her husband had died—and she was only president for about a year. She was president of a bank, First National Bank, over in—so she made arrangements for him to buy back, and so he got back on his feet there. And then I guess he kept—held on to that property until the government came in and wanted everything on that other side of the road there and that's when he'd lost that.

AED: But the house itself was on the outside.

NSG: The outside. It was on the outside by about five-eighths of a mile. So he was lucked out on that, and there was some property with it, so he was fortunate. And then after they settled, got it pretty well determined, the lines and all, there was about thirty or forty acres that the government sold back to

'em because it was on the other side of the road really. So it kind of cut off—zigzagged in there, so they wanted to make it uniform. So he bought about, well, he did, my grandmother bought about twenty-five of that back and there's another guy that lived—he was adjacent to—the Lockharts bought the other ten acres, so it turned out all right.

AED: And you said your grandfather died in 1930.

NSG: Thirty.

AED: But your grandmother lived on and stayed in the home.

NSG: Yeah, she stayed in the home until she died in 1962. So she had—but her baby—after my grandfather died, my mother's baby sister was unmarried. She never married as long as Granddad was sick. He had stomach problems, I think it was stomach cancer, what it was diagnosed as. And he lived off and on, he'd get better and get worse and finally, in 1930, on Christmas Eve, he died. So this baby sister, or Mother's baby sister—well you probably remember—do you remember at the Pidcoke reunion down there, there was a girl in there with me?

AED: Yes, yes.

NSG: That's her—that's my cousin, first cousin.

AED: Right, your mom's baby sister's daughter.

NSG: That's right. That's right.

AED: What was the baby sister's name?

NSG: The baby sister was Winnie, Winnie. And so—Bill—she married in nineteen—this baby sister married in 1931 or two. She married a fellow that she had known—been going with for six years, but she wouldn't marry on account of her father. So she married him, and he was, at that time, during the summers, he was a cook. He went to the Bar S Ranch to cook.

AED: Which ranch?

NSG: Bar S. Bar S.

AED: Is that nearby?

NSG: Round Big Springs. He'd go out there, he went for years he'd do it. He was the best cook I ever seen—I ever had. But he was also a rancher and a farmer and so they got married in 1931 or two, and they—she went to the—he was out there cooking, and so she went out there and they had their honeymoon at the ranch and the people treated 'em just lovely. But—they just were—but he would cook at the Bar S and the Spade Ranch. There was two of 'em out there.

So when they came back, well naturally they stayed with my grandmother. And he looked after the property, and he knew what he was doing and everything. And finally, in about nineteen—well, I'm not sure of the date, but anyway a little—a few years later, my grandmother decided that it was best to resolve the property situation. So everybody agreed that since Bill and Winnie—his name was Bill—Bill and Winnie were taking care of my grandmother so good and everything—and he was a big baseball fan and played baseball—and my grandmother was a big baseball fan. She loved baseball. I'd set at her knee many a day, and we'd talk baseball. But anyway, they decided that since they were taking care of her, if Bill would give 'em so much money, he could have the whole thing, it was all his. So that occurred and my grandmother—'course the law—the deal was that she'd live there until she died. And so they kept the property. And actually when Fort Hood came around, my grandmother

was still—it was still in her name. And I think that was about the time we'd better do something. So they got that settled, and I'm not sure—Billie knows exactly—and I've got it written down, but all my notes and everything are in San Angelo at the publisher. But Billie, I'm pretty sure that it's around 200 acres. Could be 250. Somewhere right there. It was in the 200 range. And, 'course the only thing I dreaded about it was all those cedars over there because we always, every Christmas that was the deal. We all came home for Christmas, and the kids and the men would go out in a wagon and pick out a Christmas tree. We'd bring it home Christmas Eve and decorate it and put it up and then—

AED: Lost your Christmas trees.

NSG: And then, of course, the well where they drilled for oil was over there. That was in there, too. And we used to go over there a lot. That's where we'd meet. We'd go out hunting, or we'd go out in the field, a bunch of us boys, we'd go over there, and that's where we'd build a fire around close to it, and set there and meet.

The well was built, I believe, in nineteen—oh, I did have that down—1919, I believe. I know it was built by the Buckeye East Texas Drilling Company. I remember that. I remember that. And it was a fairly deep well. They hit gas that was profitable, but they hit oil, but it wasn't profitable, and that's the reason they just capped it, or—they left it, they didn't cap it, they just took off.

AED: Was it ever capped?

NSG: I think they capped it where they were getting the gas at. They had two holes there and they capped it there.

AED: So they did do some natural gas production for a while?

NSG: Well, no, not—no they didn't. It would've been profitable if they'd pursued it. But here, you just don't need—one well won't do a gas deal, you've got to keep drilling there to what's to do it.

AED: Do you know anything about the company? What was it the Buckeye—

NSG: Buckeye—Buckeye East—let's see, East Texas—Buckeye East Texas Drilling Company. But I know very little about the company, but I do have all the papers on it.

AED: You do?

NSG: Yep.

AED: And is that part of your publication?

NSG: That's part of that publication. The papers on it show what they were striking at different depths, right on down, and how the weather was good, bad, or profitable and all that.

AED: And you think it was in the '20s?

NSG: It was around—right around 1919. And we, we were looking forward to being millionaires I guess. But they would—'fact I put it in the little book—

I didn't start the book out as to even write a book. I started out just to trace my—like I did the other family, my Grandpa Graves and all of 'em—just to put it down, really. And Billie, the cousin, she got interested in it and she said, "I know somebody that will print it. Let's get this," you know. And from there it went into that. But she has a collection of photographs that we have collected that's just unbelievable. I mean all my grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and all of 'em, and we've got them and the grandmothers. And so she's gonna have, I don't know how many pages of just photographs. And then there'll be some photographs in the book itself, you know, where they come into the picture. So

we got a big kick out of that, but that's the only reason it's being printed because I didn't intend to print it at all. But I love—you know, I got interested in that, and then I got to thinking about the Stricklands, and we got to looking, but all of the property they owned or leased and how many acres and how much they paid tax on and everything.

AED: When is it gonna be—when will it be ready?

NSG: Well, we thought it would be out by July the Fourth, but the fellow that's overseeing the printing and all got sick. And he had a pretty serious operation. So he says—Billie was—she jumps him now all the time. (AED laughs) I left that up to her. I said, "I'm through, I wrote it, I'm through with it." So she says that he told her, says, "Oh, well," says, "maybe by Christmas I'll get it out." And then he said, "No, it'll be sooner than that." So we're proofing it now. See, I've got a fellow doing some extra proofing where y'all don't have to do some of it. So that sounds good. And he's showed Billie how to do the pictures and everything, get 'em, and what kind a notation on the pictures. She's already got it on the sheets and everything where he can just run through his photograph deal.

AED: You'll be glad you did it.

NSG: I guess I will. She told me the other day, said—Danny is his name—said, "He's ready to—all he wants to know is what kind of binder you want on there." I said, "I don't care if they put a binder on it, it's up to you." (both laugh) That's how come the whole thing isn't ready.

But the Strickland family was one of the early pioneers there, you know. Because I remember the story of the house. I have photographs of the house when they started building it.

AED: Do you really?

NSG: I do. They started in 1903 and finished in '05. All the lumber had to be shipped in. And some of it—

AED: And it's all wood?

NSG: All wood. And it come from New Orleans, and Louisiana, I don't know if it was New Orleans. And they shipped it by rail over to Copperas Cove, and then they hauled it by wagon. And a man and his son, Mr. White, built the house. And they came, and they put up a tent right beside where the house was, and they lived there for those two years while they built that house. And—it was, I guess, in its day, was a show place for that part of the country, 'cause it's a two-story house, and nice stairs, and it had carbide lights. So—

AED: Progressive.

NSG: Oh, yeah. And those carbide lights, turned out that some of 'em are still in the house when the electricity came they used the same thing to run through the deal. So it worked out real good. But the house was—the girls—Mother and them, she says she remembers trying to play in the tent this man had. (both laugh) And if he didn't run her out, well, her mother did. (both laugh) So it was a—it was a real good deal. But they built this house.

AED: But they were in a home.

NSG: They were in the old house, right there on the property.

AED: Which was also frame?

NSG: It was an old frame house that you—she said you could nearly see daylight through.

AED: Was it a smaller dwelling?

NSG: It was a much smaller dwelling. The boys all were in one room, and the girls were in the other and my mother—grandmother and granddaddy were in the other. I anybody came to visit they had to sleep out next to the fireplace somewhere, you know, there wasn't any—any room for 'em to do. So they were glad. I got to asking my mother some questions one time. And I asked her, I said, "Well, where was the house?" It wasn't there when I was raised. I said, "Where was the house in relation to the windmill?" There's a windmill down there. She said, "What windmill?" I said, "Oh?" And so I got to asking her, she didn't remember, and I got to asking my uncles. There was Uncle George Junior, and Mohler, and Clay, that was the other deal. And Clay, incidentally, was the playboy of the group. He always had fun. He give everybody a nickname. And he was the one that took care of the kids and all that kind—but anyway, Clay said he remember when they came in and drilled the well there. They said there was an old, hand-dug well that they used and said, we used to have a pump. Hand pump like you've seen, the old metal pump, setting on the kitchen sink. And they used that. That was their water. But they came in and got the windmill and that was—that was it. And then later, this new house, they pumped—they had a pipe running up, it's about a hundred yards, nearly a hundred yards, a good hundred yards. They had a pipe running underground from the windmill and tank to the water there. Well, after—and the house was built, in the book I describe each room, and there was a room in the middle of the house for—was gonna be the bathroom, but they never had a bathroom.

AED: They didn't get that far.

NSG: They didn't get that far. But when Bill Smith, Billie's father married Winnie. He could do anything, too. He was a wonderful rock layer and all that. And also electrician. And he said, "Well, we're gonna have a bathroom here," says—says "Grandmother is getting to old to go outside." So they went in there, and they put in a bathroom—real nice bathroom. And they went out back and took—hooked onto this pipe that went from the windmill and put in a pressure tank so they were set.

AED: When do you think that was that they added the plumbing?

NSG: The plumbing wasn't added until about 1950. It was along there, about 1945 to 1950. War was over, so it was then, by that time.

AED: And when did they get electricity? Do you know?

NSG: I'm not sure when they got electricity. I know Pidcoke, down on the rural electrification, did not get electricity until after the war. That was one of the, I guess, plusses that the army camp had. They helped get REA in there, and they helped to get some paved roads. Pidcoke didn't have a paved road to Gatesville back then.

AED: So that main road that goes up there now was just gravel?

NSG: Just a gravel, caliche road. So it was a long trip. Because we lived within sight of the Strickland place when I was younger, going to school there in Pidcoke. And I remember when a fellow came around—we didn't have electricity. We had coal oil lamps, and we had Aladdin lamps, and we got as far as we could go. I remember a man came around through the country, and he talked to my dad and I was out there under listening. And he said, "If you'll let me put a wind charger on this pole here, I'll wire your house for electricity and you'll have electricity if you'll let me use this as a demonstrator." My dad said, "Well, nothing to lose," you know. (both laugh) So we're in. Well, wiring the house, a couple of rooms is about all we got, and we couldn't run—we couldn't run two lights at one time. (both laugh) We'd have to run one of the lights and a radio. That's the first time we got a radio. We could listen to "Lum and Abner." (laughs) "Amos and Andy." "One Man's Family." We got all of that we could get in there. So that's where we got that, and we never did get electricity. But finally my dad—the church, the First Baptist Church or the Baptist church in Pidcoke, got a new Delco system. They voted to get a Delco electrical plant to give 'em some more light 'cause they had two buildings finally. They got

two buildings down there, still do. So when they did, my dad said, "Hey, I'll buy the one that's down there now." They had one that run about four batteries. So he bought that, and brought it home and gosh, we could run—we had lights. And we never had lights as long as I lived in Pidcoke, I mean real lights, like they do in the city. But I'm not sure when it came because I must've been in the service when they got it in, 'cause it was after I left there. But I think that they sure used it. (both laugh)

But, you know, we used to have domino parties, or Forty-two parties, and they'd go into a room and most of 'em played—you advanced, you know, as you win. If you knock off somebody they'd go back to the end of the line and you'd keep going. And they'd have these Aladdin lamps setting around, and it was pretty bright, you know.

AED: In your little corner. (both laugh)

NSG: I still wonder how I studied by 'em, you know. It was amazing that I could do that. But I understand Abraham Lincoln reading by the fireplace.

AED: You can sort of envision that.

NSG: Yeah, I can envision that, I sure could. But we had that old fireplace.

We were living right across from the Strickland place. In fact, the road we lived on, in front of our house, out there in the country, went into Topsey. And the other one went down to Pidcoke. I used to walk to school—first—I used to walk to school to Pidcoke, 'bout three, four miles. It was a good walk. But we lived across—this was the old Graves place that my Granddaddy Graves had it. My Granddaddy Graves originally had a place over in the army camp. But he wasn't moved out by the army, he moved out by choice.

AED: He was already—

NSG: Yeah, he had already moved out and got over there. And we ran cattle and we had some mainly sheep is what we had. Dad had a little place where he raised some grain, but that's all we had to go by. But I was always at my Granddaddy Strickland's place all the time.

AED: It was so close.

NSG: Yeah, it was so close. And all of us kids every Christmas, you know, we'd come to get the cedar tree and put on the—only two years I—that I remember we put on regular lights, candle lights. Oh, I tell you, that was amazing. It was beautiful. And we'd sit there, and then we'd go upstairs, after everybody'd sing a little bit, they'd sing and there was—my mother played the guitar and I had an aunt that played the piano. And one of the men—this Uncle Clay, he played the banjo. And, in fact, when he got to cutting up, he'd take his shoes and socks off and he'd play the banjo—strum it with his toes. (both laugh) Oh, he was a character. And we had some baseball, he played, he was a good baseball player. And he played. Every picture we have of him with his baseball uniform and all of 'em lined up, he'd have his cap out on the end of his deal, his shoe and all that. (both laugh)

AED: Something goofy.

NSG: Yeah, something goofy. He decided he would build some buggies or, with two wheel parts, like they do in Ireland, they build two parts, and he'd build those. And he'd try to race 'em. And he built one for each one of the girls in the family. And they went to school that way.

AED: Did they really?

NSG: Yeah. He was quite—he was very talented, but if he'd put it in the right direction. He loved to sing. I can still—if I come down from up by where we lived, up from Topsey, down from Pidcoke, I can still

hear him leading the choir at the Baptist church, "When the Role is Called up Yonder." That was his, that was his one, and he would be higher than anybody else. But he was real good. And his sister was a piano player, so they—for years he led the singing, and she was the piano player at the church.

AED: And he was a rancher?

NSG: Yeah, he turned out to be a rancher. For a while, he went and worked for a road outfit. String Brothers Road, out around San Angelo, and in doing so he met a woman. He had a road stop where these trucks could go any time and he stopped and this woman drove up and she wanted to go ahead and he said, "No you can't lady, there's tar on the road," and all that. And she said, "Don't I know you?" And he said, "Yeah, I think you do." Come to find out it was an old flame they had back when they were kids. And within three or four months they were married. And they moved to Tulia, Texas, and they had a ranch up there. And it was beautiful. He built a new ranch house and everything. It was a beautiful country. But he was, I guess, the one in the family if you wanted to be heard, he was the one that you got to. But he was very outgoing. But we thought a lot of Clay. And he lived to be ninety-two years old. And my grandmother lived to be ninety-five. And my mother died at seventy-six. And I was just trying to think, my Aunt Winnie died at ninety-two.

AED: How 'bout your dad?

NSG: My dad died at eighty-two.

AED: Okay, well, you've got a long ways to go then.

NSG: Yeah, I sure have. Both of my grandmothers, his mother and my mother's mother, both lived to be ninety-five. And both of their husbands died at sixty-one. One of 'em died of a heart attack, and the other one was a stomach problem. So you never know. No you don't, but most of 'em lived to be—well, my dad's oldest brother just died two or three years ago in '99. So he, (laughs) and he never—he smoked, he'd drink anything you'd give him.

AED: Did all the bad stuff.

NSG: Yeah. And never took a pill in his life that I know of. He just was the hermit of the family. He lived out in the country. He was a farmer and a stockman, too. And he lived out in the country, and he didn't want anybody to bother him, and he didn't want to bother anybody.

AED: And that was just fine by him.

NSG: That's right

AED: Seemed to serve him well for a long time.

NSG: Oh, yeah, sure did. He didn't have any problems. So we loved Uncle Lillard. That was my dad's oldest brother.

AED: And your dad was a rancher, too.

NSG: Yeah, my dad was a rancher.

AED: How many acres did he have?

NSG: Well, when he came back here he leased his property. He had, at the house, he had about thirty-five acres.

AED: Right there.

NSG: Right there. He had a pond built back there so he could—a seat built so where he could sit. (both laugh) That's his kind of ranching, but Dad was a foreman of a ranch twice. He had—one time it was forty-two sections of land and the other was eighty-one sections of land. So he really loved ranching. It was in his blood, yeah. So when he retired, well, when the war broke out, that's what started it. When the war broke out, he decided to—he had a very good friend that was with Central Power and Light Company. And this friend said, "Well, Norris, why don't you come and get into—I got a place for you if you want to get in with the electric company, and we'll—we can use you and you'll be on an essential service an everything." So Dad did that, and when that was over with, he was getting transferred to Del Rio, I believe it was. And he said, "I'm not going to Del Rio." So my mother, in the meantime, went to work for Fort D. A. Russell, which was at Norfolk, as a telephone operator. Well, by the time the war was over, she was a supervisor there at the deal. But really enticed her to go further was when I was a little boy, and we lived in Pidcoke, she was a switch—my dad and her owned the local switchboard service. They had the telephone service. In other words, Dad would go out on the—

AED: Works the lines.

NSG: Works the lines and try to collect the money, and she would sit there and take those drops and, you know, you rang 'em, you know. So—and then I'd have to watch it sometimes and she'd say, "If that drops, you deal with it." Well, anyway, and in a sense, you know, that served a purpose. That was before the Dairy Queens became—where everybody would gather and get their information. In other words, if somebody died or somebody was dead, they'd call the switchboard and they'd ask you and you'd put out the word. If there was not gonna be school, you'd put out the word, you know. The switchboard was a very—it was a very interesting thing and was very essential. 'Course now days we always laugh at those towns—they have the Dairy Queen, and that's where all of 'em gather and get their information, get their coffee, and whatever. But my mother—we had that switchboard—when she was getting ready, she said, "I think I'm just gonna quit," when Fort D. A. Russell was getting ready to disband. She said, "I think I'll just retire," you know, quit—she couldn't retire and so somebody got—Southwestern Bell got investigating her and said that, "Hey, if you'll come to El Paso, we'll give you the same job you have now, supervisor, and we'll bridge your service." She said, "Bridge my service?" "Yeah, we'll give you credit for all those years you ran the switchboard in Pidcoke." So she naturally went to El Paso.

AED: What a great opportunity.

NSG: Dad went to El Paso and he said, "Well, there's very little stock farms around here." So he owned a couple of service stations and, you know, he was good at that. 'Fact he was a very good person to meet people. He was very good. And so he ran the service stations, and she stayed on the switchboard. They built 'em a new house in El Paso and he was always—'fact he built two houses there. He was a good carpenter. He was a good contractor. So they did that. And then he decided to—she decided to—my mother got sick again. She had some problems. So they said, Well, we'll give you disability retirement. Dad said, "How quick can we get to Pidcoke." (both laugh) Well, they went to Gatesville, outside of Gatesville. And he bought about thirty-five acres maybe. And then—that's where he built the pond and all that. It was old Judge Bell's house that used to be judge of Coryell County. And it was built—I mean the walls were that thick. I've never seen—it looked like he was waiting for the Indians.

AED: And they were gone for a few years by then.

NSG: (laughs) Yeah, that's right. So they fixed that up, and they had everything they needed there. And Dad said, "I need some property to run my stock." So he went out towards Pidcoke out there and leased about 380 acres. He'd go to every Monday or Saturday or whenever they had the auction, I think it

was Saturday, and he'd go out to the auction and he'd buy him some cattle. And then he'd have trailers and take it out to the place and feed 'em up and vice versa, he'd bring 'em in and sell. And so, he just loved it, he just ate it up. I don't imagine he made too much money. I don't know. He lived comfortably. But he got all that from the ranching experiences there 'cause he was a good one. He used to take me on the roundups. And then when I got out of high school, I wanted to go into air force, or air corps they called it then, and I was too young. I got out of high school at sixteen, so I was too young to go in. And they said, Well, your parents could sign for you to go into the navy. I said, "No, no, not much water in West Texas, and I don't want to, I'm not used to water." (laughs) And so I stayed out a year and went back to one of the ranches he was foreman of and worked on the ranch for a year. Happiest time I ever had. They treated me great.

AED: And you worked hard, I'm sure.

NSG: I did, I did. It was real hard work. It was hard—that's hard work out on the ranch. You know, you don't ride all the time. You fix fences and you fix windmills and you know. Then when I became of age, well I joined, I did join, I made a pre—you know, arrangement, so—just before I went back, I went to El Paso. I went in at Fort Bliss, but from there they sent me to Kearns Field, Utah. But I was happy. You know, to get in what I wanted in. I didn't become a pilot or anything, but I was a radio operator.

AED: And where did you serve?

NSG: I served in Kearns, Utah. I went to Scott Field and then to—well, I took my basic—I went up to Kearns, Utah, there was a new camp, it got so bad up there, and the barracks weren't built. They were using canvas to cover the barracks. So they sent us to Saint Petersburg, Florida, and we lived in a hotel—hotels down there. (laughs)

AED: That's really too bad. (both laugh)

NSG: And I got to laughing about it. We got down there and then, all of the sudden, they called us over to the quartermaster, and they said, Hey, your winter underwear has come in. (both laugh) We needed it up there, and we got down there. So great. From there I went to Scott Field and that's where radio school was. And made some flights down to Hondo, down here, I believe, was stationed at Hondo for training flights. And the closest to overseas I ever got was Alaska. I spent thirteen days in Alaska. Came back, and I got sent to Saint Louis, Jefferson Barracks, Saint Louis, and there my high school football coach was a colonel there. And—

AED: Small world.

NSG: Yeah, he set a deal. So I followed him around. He went to Syracuse, New York, to a war college. And then he got out of war college, well, his commanding officer got out of war college. He said, "Would you like to go home on furlough?" And I said, "I sure would." He said, "Okay." He took me out to the field and caught me a ride. I got to Memphis, Tennessee, and from Memphis we were flying to Oklahoma City, and we got over the Ozarks and one engine went out and the other one wouldn't run real good, couldn't get any altitude and we crashed in the Ozarks. Fortunately, we were in contact all the time with the CA, you know, the civilian air patrol, and they were—they even had—they had cars, trucks out, right below us, where we crashed. So they were there right quick. So I was in a plane crash, and there was one other fellow hopping a ride with me, and he said, "Are you all right?" I was hanging up in a tree there and he was, too. I said, "Yeah, I'm fine." And he said—the plane didn't burn, that was a—that is great. And I said, "Yeah, I'm fine." And he said, "Well, what's wrong with your leg." And I looked down and it looked like it was just hanging by a thread. But when I looked at it, I went—(slaps hands, closes eyes, laughs)

AED: So much for being just fine, huh? (both laugh)

NSG: Just fine. (laughs) I ended up in the hospital in Joplin, and from there they took me to Springfield, Missouri, and from there I was—got back up to Jefferson Barracks but only to be discharged, medical discharge.

AED: So it was severed?

NSG: No, it was—they were able to put it back together and everything, it was just that muscle holding it on and one—there was one vessel that was giving me trouble, I guess it was the artery, I don't know. But this old boy, I never say him before or after. He cut himself down out of the deal and got on the plane, took one of his straps and cut a tourniquet. And he was—I don't know where he was from, but he was just hopping a ride, and we didn't get to know each other that much, but it's amazing what will happen under crisis. And we were the only two that got out.

AED: Really.

NSG: That's right. That's right. I always flew in B-25s, but that was one that I was glad to get out of. (both laugh) But I went from there. I spent some time in—they told me, said, We'll give you some limited service, if you'd like. Limited service, they will find you a place to go, and they sent me to Fort Worth making B-24s. I went in there to work, and it was fine except in the summertime. It was so hot outside, 'bout like here. Inside it was cold. And I couldn't stand it. My legs wouldn't take it. And so I—they sent me—I got out of there, and I sent to Silver City for a recoup for a while at the Veterans Administration. From there I got a chance to go to work for Lincoln Mercury, Ford Motor Company. I worked for them for a while and then it began—time we got married, it began to be on the road quite a bit, so I went to work for Texaco. Spent thirty-one years with 'em.

AED: That's unheard of these days.

NSG: Yeah, it sure is. And I don't think they let 'em work that much longer now days.

AED: Somehow it's become against the rules to stay in one place.

NSG: Yeah.

AED: Now, where did you meet your wife?

NSG: I met my wife in El Paso. I was in El Paso visiting. And she was visiting her brother. She had a brother. She only has the one brother, and he was in the service. She and her mother came out to visit him from Kentucky. She's from Kentucky. She's from Kentucky. And so we got knowing each other and everything and that—we got married in New Mexico and took our honeymoon at the Grand Canyon. (laughs) It worked out real good.

AED: What year was that?

NSG: Nineteen forty-three. No, in '43 I was in the service in '43, '48 I guess it was.

AED: And when were you discharged?

NSG: In '45 to '44.

AED: So just a few years before you were married. And when were the years that you lived at Pidcoke?

NSG: Okay. I was born at Pidcoke, I say Pidcoke, in the vicinity of Pidcoke, about six miles from Pidcoke, where they had to pump sunshine to find me. (laughs) Oh, it was a pitiful, poor old place. I've seen it since. Cows would come up on the porch and things like that, you know. But that's the best Mother

and Dad could do and everything. So that's where I was born. And I lived there, well, until—from there I spent most of my time over at my Granddaddy Strickland's house, but anyway—from there I was about one and a half, two years old, Dad got word—or Mother got word—that one of her great-uncles over in McGregor had a job at the cotton oil mill. And they wanted Dad to come over and see if he wanted it. And he came over, and, yes, he wanted it, because it was more money than he had ever seen. And so we moved over there with these two old brothers, you know. And three old brothers and Dad worked there and both brothers—there was only two still living—and they both died while we were there. Soon as they died, Dad got a chance to go work to the ranch in West Texas. We went out there, but we were back in '32. Then from '32 on I lived at Pidcoke. Oh, we came back and forth. I spent one summer at my granddad's, but, you know, in between that time.

Billie's mother, Winnie, she and I were real—she was always picking on me and I was picking on her, (AED laughs) you know. 'Fact, we laugh, her mother had a crooked nose, right here, big, looked like an Indian I told her. And what was happening in this old house here had banisters all the way around it, and I'd get up on the banister, and I'd reach over and slap her when she walked underneath, if she was picking flowers or something. And she'd reach up and grab me. Well, one day, she pulled the banister plumb loose and right on her nose. (both laugh) But isn't that terrible! I came tumbling off and, 'course, parts of me, but my Uncle Clay was right handy and he caught me and took the deal. And that was that. And so we spent from '32 on at Pidcoke.

AED: And did you have other cousins that lived locally?

NSG: Yes, I had my dad's sister, older sister, had two boys that lived close by. And I had a—Clay had a daughter. When we lived right across the road from the Strickland place, they lived right on part of the Strickland place. Clay had bought it. I mean, in other words, more or less, give it to 'em for a wedding present. I only had thirteen cousins, all told, out of all these people. Out of thirteen, there was thirteen uncles and aunts on both sides of the family, six on one, seven on the other, and I only had thirteen cousins.

AED: That's a pretty low number considering all of that generation ahead of you.

NSG: That's right. And George Junior had five of 'em. So that really left 'em good. This Uncle Lillard that lived so long, he didn't have any children. Clay only had one. Mother and Dad only had one. Dad's brother had two—I can't think of—

AED: And Winnie and Bill?

NSG: Had two—they had two daughters and one of 'em died a tragic death. She had leukemia, I think she was about nineteen. Just married. They found out she had leukemia. So I didn't have many—we were Depression babies. And families couldn't afford like they could prior days.

AED: Dramatically different.

NSG: It was. Changed the face of things.

AED: And what year were you born?

NSG: Twenty-four.

AED: Twenty-four. So when you came back in '32 you were—

NSG: Six. No, was I, yeah. No, eight. I was eight.

AED: Your granddaddy died—

NSG: My granddaddy died in 1930, on Christmas Eve.

AED: And at that time you were in—

NSG: We were on the ranch. And we came back. And, I remember, oh, I remember his death just like yesterday. We got there thirty minutes after he passed away.

AED: Oh. 'Cause you were coming home because of Christmas—

NSG: Yeah, well, we were coming home because Mother got word that they called.

AED: Where was he when he died? Was he in the hospital?

NSG: He died, no, he died right there at the house. Right at the house. I know we got there and of course it was misty, rainy, it was a bad trip. And we came in an old Model A they had. All the way from San Angelo, putt-putt-putt-putt. (both laugh) We used to come quite frequently to see 'em. I know my mother—we always come—from San Angelo we'd stop down at a—there was a—Table Rock Creek runs right below, and we'd stop down at Table Rock Creek, and Mother'd get out and get her a towel or a rag and she'd clean my face (laughs) and wash me.

AED: Scrub you up. (both laugh)

NSG: No kidding! Change my clothes. But anyway, we got there a little late and, after he died. I know they took my Aunt Winnie and my other aunt, Uncle Lillard's wife.

Incidentally, Uncle Lillard's wife was my mother's sister, brothers married sisters. So the family was real knit. And there was another time that it nearly was gonna be another wedding. Clay was engaged to my dad's sister, and they were gonna—oh, they went strong and everything. They had a picture made, everything. And Clay was a cutup, but I don't know what incident brought it up, but she started going with a Basheim.

AED: What's that?

NSG: A Basheim. B-a-s-h-e-i-m. Basheim is how you'd say it now.

AED: Okay, it's how it would appear. Okay, I've seen the name.

NSG: You've seen the name. Well she somehow met him at a picnic or something, and Clay's, big-hearted Clay, he'd give you the shirt off his back, he said, "Hey, I'll—." She knew that her daddy and mother didn't care for the Basheim family at that time, so Clay said, "Well, I'll tell you what, I'll just pick you up every time you want to have a date with Woodley," his name was Woodley Basheim, "and I'll take you to meet him." And this went on for we don't know how long. And finally she and Woodley decided to get married. So, Clay said, "Well, I'll take you." So he come to pick her up just like he always did, got her date, you know, and then drove down a ways, and she'd hidden a suitcase out in the brush, and she threw it in the back of the buggy, and here they went. Well, they run off to get married. So Clay got to thinking, I've got to go back and face Mr. Graves. (both laugh)

AED: He gets to be the bearer of bad news.

NSG: The bearer of bad news. So, he went back and he said—he came back and, 'course, first thing my granddaddy—my granddaddy was a strict ol' coot, too—he said, "Well, where's Ora?" He called her Nat. And said, "Where's Nat?" He said, "Well," said, "she got to partying with the rest of 'em so they're all picnicking, and she didn't want to come home." And my granddaddy said, "Well, I'll see about that," you know. (laughs) And so Clay said, "Well, I'm sorry Tom, but I just, you know, I couldn't get her to come." He said, "That's all right," said, "I know how she is." Okay. Well, Clay

got—you know, he got out of there, you know. And so Granddaddy went over to where they're—nobody was there, they were all, you know, that was just a fictitious deal. And they got married. But it's so odd. I have a picture of Clay and Ora, their engagement picture and I've got a picture of Ora and Woodley. They're exactly the same. The picture was taken by the same photographer.

AED: What was her maiden name?

NSG: Her maiden name was Ora Graves—Graves. She was my dad's—yeah, Ora Graves. Ora Lee. Ora Lee. So that was—it was really a hilarious deal. And they asked Clay, says, Well, what happened? He said, "Well, I just wasn't ready to get married." (AED laughs) Whether that was it or not, but he passed it off like that, you know. They never thought, my mother and her brothers and sisters, they didn't think Clay would ever settle down. He'd said that he was just not gonna settle down. He went with everybody and he would carry his banjo across his shoulder, you know. He was a regular—he was a good lookin' son of a gun, too. And he played the field (both laugh) for all it was worth I guess. I was on a subject awhile before I got off on Ora, but—I forget what it was.

But Granddaddy Strickland died, as I say, on that day. Oh, I remember.

AED: You were talking about—right—

NSG: That—the deal. I remember us getting there, and they took—these two aunts took me into the dining room. They had a big long dining room, beautiful dining room table, and it could seat, I forget how many. But anyway, they fed us, they knew we'd been traveling. And they said—I know my dad'd come in and told me, said, "Do you want to see your granddad for the last time?" "Noooo." (laughs) "No, no, not me." And these two aunts got to talking to me, says, you know, Why don't you see your granddaddy? Said, You know, he looks just like he's asleep, and all that, you know. So they got me by the hand, and they took me in and I'll never forget. He was laid out. Come to find out they had took the door off the—

AED: Off the hinge?

NSG: Off the hinge. That's what they did then.

AED: Oh, he was on the door?

NSG: Yeah. They took the door off of the opening and laid it on some chair. Put a chair here and a chair there and maybe one on the side to hold it, and they'd lay the body out that way. And 'course, I didn't know it at the time, I got to asking questions, you know how kids [do]. (laughs) "What's he laying on?" (both laugh) "That don't look like his bed." (laughs) And I asked my grand—they took me in there to look at him and he was laying on this board. And actually he was on—it'll come to me later—he was on—Uncle Lillard told me—he was on sawhorses. He was on—just resting and this door, big tall door, laying across there and, 'course, they had a pillow under his head and the sheet over him. And they had two candles at his head and one at the foot. I'll never forget that, you know. And I looked in, and they said, Now see, doesn't he look like he's sleeping? And I said, "Yes, he looks like he's sleeping." Does he—can you tell any difference or something, and I said, "Well, he looks like my granddaddy." They said, Well, that's good. They said, You look, because this might—and it was the last time I ever saw him. Because I wouldn't go—that was night. It was the next day, sometime up in the day, they brought a casket from Gatesville, and they put him in the casket, and put him in the parlor. They had a parlor there where the girls used to spoon and all. (both laugh) And they put the casket in the parlor. I wouldn't go in there and look. I wouldn't go.

AED: Pretty spooky. You were six at the time.

NSG: Pretty spooky. Six at the time. So I remember—and 'course, people started bringing in food and, you

know, everybody in the country, 'cause he was known everywhere. His brothers came in, one from Goldthwaite, and one from, I forget where the other one—Hamilton and things like that, you know. And an aunt from San Saba, and his sister from San Saba. They came in and they brought all this stuff, and they took me that night to spend the night with my Uncle Lillard and Aunt Spoonie. Her real name was Luna, but Clay called her Spoonie. My mother's name was Jud, and he called her Pet. Everybody got those names, even on my dad's side, he named them.

But I stayed and spent the night. My Uncle Lillard had this place over there up on the old Strickland place. My granddaddy'd sold him this property. And this was before—Clay later bought it—that's where Donna Fay, my cousin, lived. But Clay, Lillard, and the boys had built a barn over there. Lillard and Spoonie lived in the bottom floor of the barn and—caliche floors and she had to sweep up, she'd get down and sweep every day. And I just loved to go over there because I got to sleep in the loft. (both laugh) That was great. So I got to go back out—I used to go out there and spend—I loved that loft. So later when Clay bought the place, he built a house out there. A little small house there in front. But that's where Uncle Lillard—and I thought it was so good. You could just open the back door and step out there and pet the cats and dogs and calves and whatever, you know.

AED: There you were. For a kid that would just be—

NSG: Oh, yeah. You'd just—

AED: Instead of all this formal house—

NSG: Oh, yeah. Well, I went over there and then the next, I forgot what day it was, I guess it was not that next day, but the next one, that they buried him. They took him to the cemetery. And they didn't go, back then, they didn't use the churches, they went directly to the cemetery. They took—

AED: So they had a service out there at the cemetery?

NSG: At the cemetery and they kept 'em in this parlor, and people would come and view the body and everything there. And then from there it went straight to the cemetery. And I remember sitting there. I can still remember. I remember that I had a knife, and I found something to twiddle on and my dad came up to me and said, "Put that knife in your pocket." (laughs) This was not the place for that. And it was cold. It was cold. It was December, you know. It was cold and windy, dampish, going to the cemetery.

AED: Just like it can be.

NSG: Yeah, it sure can.

AED: Unpleasant to be outside doing that.

NSG: Yeah. So he was buried that day there and I never will forget that. I can remember that cemetery. But, you know, this—laying on that door. I can still. I said, "That's not his bed!" Granddad said, "No," I guess it was my uncle talking. Said, "No son, that's not the bed." They need something solid, rigid, you know. So I learned a lot. That's the only funeral I'd ever been to. So, you know.

AED: That would make a big impression.

NSG: It would.

AED: And you were old enough to know what was going.

NSG: Yeah. I knew what was going on, but, you know, I didn't know why, but, so much, but I knew what was going on. So that was the end of my granddaddy, but my grandmother picked right up, and she

was a trooper.

AED: And you spent a lot of time with her?

NSG: I spent a lot of time with her. I used to. I can still hear her in the morning. She'd get up real early. I can hear her grinding them coffee beans. Oh, she'd grind those in the kitchen and everything. But the house beautifully built inside and everything. And it still stands. I don't know what it looks like now because it's been—Billie's rented it out, but she said the people'd been there sixteen years. So it's to their liking. So—but it's a nice old property. But that's the way it was when—and they were all, every one of 'em belonged to the Baptist church.

AED: I was just gonna ask you 'cause there's another church there.

NSG: There's a Methodist church there.

AED: A Methodist church, but your family was all—

NSG: I was raised a Baptist. I'm Methodist now. (both laugh)

AED: They got the better of ya, huh?

NSG: Oh, yeah.

AED: And you even live in Waco?

NSG: Beg pardon?

AED: And you live in Waco?

NSG: I live in Waco. Yeah, uh-huh. The deal—our son, along with that, our son is a Baptist preacher.

AED: Oh, he is?

NSG: Well, not now. He's a chaplain for the State of Texas prison system. So that's what he does. So he's doing that. But he was a Baptist minister for about twelve, fourteen years. I think he likes this. Well, I'll tell you one reason. He likes the benefits. You don't get that with these churches, you don't get that. It's very rare unless you have a big church, you know.

AED: Well what do you remember about the church as you were growing up?

NSG: Well, the church, I remember going to—I used to go, I used to get there early—my Grandmother Strickland—my Grandmother Graves used to live in Pidcoke.

AED: Right in town?

NSG: Right in town. And I used to get there early and go see her. Well, they—I think that came a habit. I think my dad used to say, "Why don't you go down to Mother Graves's and walk with her up to the church?" And so that got to be a habit. I looked forward to it, 'cause she always had some something to give me, (both laugh) you know. But yeah, I remember the church. The church that stands as the church in Pidcoke now, the other building which was a church is an educational building, Sunday school rooms. But the church that we—they had now—we lived next door to it when it was built. And I got to drive a few nails in it. My dad gave me a hammer and told me to get out there and drive a few nails. That's when they had the switchboard. That switchboard in town. We were right next door. And Dad was, as I say, was always a good carpenter and everything. So he was more or less in charge of helping get everything. Get the windows. We didn't have—they have windows now, but back then they—oh, this church was actually the Presbyterian church in Harman.

AED: It was moved?

NSG: It was moved. And they just knocked the lumber—give us the lumber, and we built it like our way. Or like their way.

AED: So it was taken apart.

NSG: It was taken apart. No, it wasn't moved as a—down the road. No, unh-uh.

AED: So you had the wood and the materials.

NSG: The material, and they put the siding on it, they all put everything on it. But they didn't put windows in it. What they had was these sidings that you raise up and then you put a board under them. Well, that was nice if you had a revival in the summer and the mosquitoes were coming.

AED: But you needed them to open because it was hot.

NSG: Yes—gets cold—oh, it was hot in there, no air conditioning naturally. And then the mosquitoes would come in, and I think the cats would run through there, and then when—I think what broke the deal was a cow came in. (both laugh) That was the end of that. So they found some place they could buy a bunch of windows, and they bought windows, and they installed the windows, and then took that flap off, and it looked so much nicer, and it's nice inside. They've redone it since I was there, and it's real nice looking. In fact, my Aunt Winnie died two or three years ago and I've got the exact date, but I don't remember exactly. Our son, David, the chaplain, (laughs) he wasn't a chaplain then, but he helped—he and I held the services. And he did the hard work. All I did was the eulogy and memories and all that, everything.

AED: But that's hard, too.

NSG: Oh, yeah. And it was packed. Everybody—'cause Winnie knew—she knew everybody and everything. Both the judge from Lampasas and the one from Gatesville were over there. They were all there. It was just a real nice service.

AED: When do you think the church was built then?

NSG: The church that exists now there was built in about 1934 or '35. Now the history of the Pidcoke Baptist Church, it goes back to the cemetery up at the place. It was a cemetery—a church built on the ground up there that—it was a school and a church. And then they decided they would move it. And they tried to move—they moved it to the foot of the hill, back behind where the Methodist church is there now. There's a good—

AED: It drops off.

NSG: Yeah, it drops off. Okay, they moved it up to there, and that's where they had school, and that's where they had church, but then immediately they started building a school up on top of the hill. And the Methodists started building a church there in 1908—1907—1908. The Baptists bought that property where the Baptist churches are now. They bought it—they started out with an acre of land, and they built that church, and one year later, 1909, they built that church. Now the church was not called the Pidcoke Baptist Church, it was called the Harman Baptist Church until 1917. They didn't vote to change the name until about 1917. That's one way I was able to trace my Grandmother Strickland. We didn't know what years she really got up where they're at now—where the house is now, but we found out that in 1902 she affiliated with the Harman Baptist Church in Pidcoke. So we know she was there in the summer of that year. So that's how we got it.

AED: So the school was where the Methodist church is?

NSG: No. The school is right—is just near, well, it's pretty close to the first school was close to the Methodist church, up on top of the hill. But the main—the old school that most of us remember and the one I went to was right across from the Baptist church.

AED: There's something there right now. Is that the same building, or is that something else?

NSG: No, that's been torn down. That's—do you—there's a windmill over there. That windmill serviced the church—the school, the school, it was for the school.

AED: And that's the school that you remember.

NSG: That's the school I remember. That's the school I went to. It was built in about 1922 or '23. And I 'member this uncle I have that lives alone, he helped haul rocks from down at the Bee House Creek down there—up there.

AED: That's right by the gin?

NSG: Yeah, it's right across—Bee House Creek is right over where the cemetery—it goes by the cemetery. And they hauled those rocks up there, and they quarried them and built. The school was rock. Now, in 1939 the school decided to—they were coming out of the Depression, it looked pretty good. They decided, Hey, we need a bigger school, we're getting more students. Let's do it. So they floated a bond, and they built a school down towards the bridge. You have to look through the brush to see it. Yeah, and it included a gymnasium. That's something nobody knew, you know.

AED: Was it on the east side or the west side or the road?

NSG: It's on the—well, as you're going towards the bridge it's on the left. That would be the west—west I believe. But that's where they built it. And 'course, that was—the army was what done away with it. But that's—they built it. They had a nice—they had a gymnasium. Had all these rooms. Home ec room and all that. Had good—had a lot. This cousin of mine, Billie, says that when she started to school there, she was in the first group that started there. And she said that when they started there, she had twenty in her first-grade class. The year that they abandoned the school she had five. It really went to pot. And they couldn't—they didn't finish the full year. They had—at the end of the spring semester, they consolidated with Gatesville, and Gatesville took it in. So it really, it really just—here they were this beautiful school. It was a pretty school. Made a good skating rink. (both laugh) The kids would—she said she'd skated down there. They said it was a great skating rink.

AED: The school that you went to was it one-room, two-room—

NSG: No, it was one—this one here was one, two, three, 'bout four rooms.

AED: Was it?

NSG: Yeah, it was real uptown. Now, I started to school when I was—out in West Texas. I went to a ranch school, and it was on ranch property. There was twenty-five students, there was four in my class as first graders.

AED: And the students were all from the employees of the ranch?

NSG: No, it was run by the public schools. It was. But the ranch, they donated the land and everything, kept up the deal. They put a windmill on the property and they kept up everything. They furnished the deal.

AED: So that's where you started.

NSG: That's what I started. I rode a horse six miles to school. And the owner of the ranch, he had a pen

built out next to the school and a shed, and he put food out there, and put a little sty in there so I could get on my horse and everything, and that's where I went to school. That's where I started.

AED: But when you lived in Pidcoke you said you walked.

NSG: I walked most the—we didn't have busses there in my time, so I walked. And every now and then there was a little girl up the street, Sydney Howell. I never will forget her. She rode, 'course she lived on the other side of Table Rock [Creek], so she had a ways to come, and she'd come by, and every now and then she'd pat the back of her saddle, and I'd jump up there. (both laugh) But in the summertime, towards summertime, May, April, it'd get hot there and the sand would get pretty warm on your bare feet. I was barefooted in the summer and early fall—I'd go barefooted. I had a pair of shoes, but I kept 'em.

But one good thing about living out on the farm and everything, we didn't starve. We had plenty of food. Even during the Depression. It was a good place. And we would barter with the neighbors on everything in the world. And my dad had a green thumb and he really could do anything. He took that from his mother.

AED: And so he—he had on the ranch mostly sheep you say?

NSG: Well, they had sheep and cattle, but the last time they had mostly sheep and goats. The first time they had mostly cattle, back in 1926 or whatever it was, back then, that was mostly cattle. It was right out of San Angelo. This other one was down toward—it was at Sheffield, Texas. It was on the Pecos River down towards—it was in three counties, the ranch was. Eighty-one sections takes up a lot of land. Nothing, but we had a lot of varmints down there. We had—and one thing and—I got a pet hog. Javelina hog. I brought to this uncle I had, and he had more fun with it than anybody other the sun.

AED: To which uncle? To your Uncle Clay?

NSG: No, this Uncle Lillard. The one that lived so long—ninety-nine. And he'd take it over to Gatesville on a leash. And he'd go to the—(laughs)

AED: It's hard to picture a javelina on a leash. (both laugh)

NSG: Oh, yeah. He'd take him over there. And a javelina, unless, you know, a javelina, they are a one-man hog.

AED: I stay away from them.

NSG: That's right. One-man hogs, and so she'd—he take him on a leash, and he go there into the wool and, I don't know what they called it—Doug Smith, who used to be judge of Coryell County for several—many years, was his bosom buddy, but he—and that was his wool—mohair and wool place. I guess he had feed in there, too. But he'd take it in there, and these boys would be stacking wool or something and he'd holler, "Oh, I dropped my leash!" And these guys would head for the top of the—I mean, they were scared of that hog, you know. And he was something. You could—I caught him as a baby. We were out riding one morning and, on the roundup—or was it—no, it was on the roundup. And I got out of this place, and I heard these hogs come sailing off of that hill up there, and then they'd turn around and run back up off a little mountain up there. So, as I was looking around, I saw this little hog. Little pig. He wasn't that big. Still had his navel cord. So I said, "Well, I'll just get this bugger." And I reached—got off my horse, and I reached down and picked him up. Fortunately, I had my gloves on. He bit through those gloves. I picked him up and about that time, them hogs came off that hill again, and they were—this little fella was squealing, see. And I couldn't get my horse to go. I couldn't get him turned around they way I wanted. My hands were full. And finally I got him going, I told old Possum, I said, "Let's go!" And on he went, and we got out of there, and I took him over to

the first windmill we came through and put him inside the shed. Usually all the windmills have a shed there where they store things in. And when we came back by that afternoon I picked him up and took him to the ranch house—or the bunkhouse. And I kept him there for about a month, and then we got ready to go—a chance to go back to Pidcoke, and I took him to my uncle and—but you could sit there and he'd put his chin across your boot and when you'd get up, he'd get up with you. And you could go through a screen door and he'd—you wouldn't have to look around, see if he was coming, he'd already be there. He was that close to your heel. Just all the time. And you'd better not get out of—somebody better not do anything to you, or he'd get him, he'd get 'em.

AED: I had no idea.

NSG: Oh, they're very, very—

AED: Like a dog almost.

NSG: Yeah, it's just like a dog. We had a—did that—we had a dachshund, was just about like him. You couldn't shake hands with anybody without—that guy'd get you. (both laugh)

AED: Did you have dogs growing up?

NSG: No, I didn't. My first—I had asthma as a child, and they wouldn't let me have dogs or cats, and now I love all of 'em. But when I was on the ranch, this last time, we had some collie dogs, sheep dogs, that they brought—one of 'em they brought from Scotland, a Scottish dog. And I had one out in the bunkhouse, and he would sleep with me. He'd get on my—I'd have this—'course I kept a tarp over my bedding because if it rained during the day I'd end up getting—and this dog was sleeping with me. Her name was Boots. So when I got ready to leave that ranch—and we'd go on a roundup, and I'd—Mr. Mokie, who owned the ranch, he would say, "Come on Boots, go with me," and he would take off and the dog would follow him a ways, and I'd go with somebody else or go the other way and pretty soon I'd look behind me and Boots was there. He'd leave him and come back. So I got ready to leave the ranch, and Mr. Mokie told me, says, "Tell you what, I want you to take that dog with you when you go." (both laugh) I said, "Mr. Mokie, he belongs here." He said, "He won't do a thing for nobody else but you." Said, "You just take him." So I took him to this uncle, Uncle Lillard. And he poisoned Central Texas with—this dog sired that many pups. We had pups all over. I never seen so many dogs that looked like Boots in my life. And until Uncle Lillard died, he had one of the pups, offsprings of it. They were—and Imogene got a big kick, my wife—we'd go out to Uncle Lillard's place out—he was outside of Gatesville about six miles on the Levita Road. We'd go out there and Uncle Lillard said, "Well, I guess I better get," he always got a kick out of it, "I guess I better get the sheep in today." And so I'd say, "Well, I'll go with you." He'd say, "Well, just a minute." And he'd stand on the porch and get Boots to get 'em. Bring 'em, and he'd bring 'em, they'd bring 'em right in the pen. And I said, "Well, Uncle Lillard, we'd gotta go shut the gate." He said, "No, Boots can handle them." She'd stand—set right in the middle of the gate and keep the sheep in the pen. Imogene thought that was a—she said, "I'll tell you what."

AED: That's fantastic.

NSG: This is. This is. And he would have those—that dog was trained like—but they were easy to train. That was their use.

AED: Instinct.

NSG: That's right. That was their instinct, it was. So, I loved to go see that dog. I really did.

But I lived in Pidcoke, well, all through those years. After we had the telephone service, used to go out with Dad, and we'd try to fix the wires, and you can even use barbed wire to run some of those.

AED: I didn't know that.

NSG: Yeah. He'd go out, well, it was during the Depression. He'd go out, and somebody hadn't paid for two or three months, and he'd cut 'em off. Time he'd get back to the house, that drop, that thing was dropping, they'd already hooked it back up. (laughs) People would. Yeah. It wasn't complicated. So finally he started cutting the wire and rolling it up. Well, that's when he found out that they'd used the barbed wire. (both laugh) So it was real funny. And he'd get up there and work on that thing. So, about that time, one of the stores came vacant down there, whoever owned it—

AED: In Pidcoke?

NSG: In Pidcoke. Decided they wanted to sell out. So Dad said, "Well, that might beat the telephone business." So he bought 'em out, and for a while they had both places. Until they could find somebody that wanted the telephone system. And so we ran the—and lived in the back of the store.

AED: Oh, you did?

NSG: Yeah, lived in the back of the store. That old store is falling down now.

AED: Where is it from the churches and the—

NSG: Okay, it's toward Gatesville, towards Gatesville there.

AED: Is it past the gin?

NSG: No, it's on this side of the gin. As you, okay as you turn down the road to go to the cemetery, it's on the left corner. On the left corner, and it's falling down. I got a picture of it before it fell down, but I'm gonna get another one now with it in disarray. But—

AED: How long did you live there?

NSG: Oh, we lived there about three years I guess. And I enjoyed that, too, because—people in and out, and I got to pump the gas, you know. Them old hand pumps, you know, and everything. And I had a salesman come through one time. He sold peanuts. They had a little—they used to have—sell little boxes of peanuts. They were round, not much smaller than that. And they put coins in 'em. Not all of them, but just every now and then. They put, always a nickel, dime, or quarter, I believe. I think they advertised a dollar, but I—but this old guy come through one time, and he, "Come over here." Says "Son, I'll tell you how you can make some money." I said, "How's that?" He said, "All you gotta do is shake those just right, and if you know what you're shaking, you can find 'em." Do you know he played with me there for once, and then the next time he came through he asked me if I could still do it. I got where I could hear that nickel, that quarter, that dime. And I used to go over to Gatesville, and I'd go visit every place I could find that had—and we used to get enough money to go to the show.

AED: I never heard of those.

NSG: Yeah. They put 'em out and they had coins in 'em. It was nickel, dime, and quarter, I believe, and they may have advertised a dollar, but boy, you'd be shakin', and if you knew what you was looking—sounding for, and I always had good sound. I'd shake that thing. And 'course we'd get peanuts to eat, in addition. (AED laughs)

Where we lived up at the old Graves place where I walked to school, Dad had a tremendous garden and everything, and he gave me so many deals. And my granddaddy raised—he worked at this—by that time he worked at the state reformatory. You know, the prison's out there now, it was a reformatory. He had a—he had a—oh, he kept the boys at night. They had a dormitory, that's what they called it, a dormitory. And I'd go down there with him every night when I was visiting, and I'd

go down there and these—just before the boys had to go in, well they had balls and gloves and everything and these boys'd play catch, and I'd play catch with 'em and everything. And they loved him. They called him Boy Daddy. And they made him little rings, and things, most of 'em were Mexican boys, I think, from El Paso. And they'd make him all kind—I've still got a stand of, oh, it looks like it doorman with a ashtray here, you know. But anyway, I'd go out there and play with 'em, and I'd sleep down there at night, but where we slept was fenced off from the others, so, naturally. But he never had a problem, everything with 'em.

Back in those days they used to—for the tops of cereal boxes you could send in so many box tops and get this and that. Well, he'd go over to the—what do you call it? I'm losing my memory here this morning—where they had breakfast, and he'd get 'em to save all those tops. I'd come back with stacks of box tops. (AED laughs) I could get the shirt—we had a club there—and one place—and what it was, you sent in so many tops, you could get a T-shirt. We got T-shirts, and we got this and that. But he used to get all of that for me.

But he also told, says, it was in the middle of the Depression. He said, "If you can raise some popcorn out there, son," says, "I can sell it for you. I'll get it sold for you." So I went out, and I planted popcorn, and I had popcorn, I didn't know it made so much, you know, had popcorn. And we had a grinder, so I'd grind it and sack it and put it in five-pound sacks and everything. And there was three movie houses in Gatesville, and by george, I was able to sell all of that to Gatesville. But, you know, you didn't get much, that was the Depression, three cents a pound or five cents a pound was a lot, you know, but the main thing it did was allow me to go into the movie theaters and see the shows. (both laugh)

AED: It kept you entertained.

NSG: It kept me entertained. And I never will forget, one time I ran out. I had more or less a contract, I guess it was a verbal contract, I never signed it. That I'd furnish 'em until the first of September or whatever the date was, maybe the end of the year, just all the popcorn they needed to make their popcorn. And I ran out. My stalks all began to dry up, and I didn't have anything. So my granddaddy said, "I'll tell you what," says, Ada, that was his wife, says, my grandmother really, her folks up around Gorman and DeLeon and Comanche, says, "they raise all of that stuff, we'll see what they've got." So one weekend I went with Granddaddy up there with Grandmother, Mother Graves we called her, and went up there and, sure enough, they said, How much do you want? And they wouldn't even charge me. They said, We're glad to get rid of it. Get rid of it, you know. And then I came back with a big old sack of peanuts. Yeah, I remember my first encounter with those same folks with peanuts. They told me, Go out there and help myself to the peanuts. And I went out there I went through every bush and I didn't find a peanut. And I told 'em, I said, "You ain't got no peanuts out there." They went out there and just pulled it up, you know. (both laugh) So, they said—they used to call me the peanut kid. So I went up there and I got the popcorn and brought it back and was able to meet my obligations. That's right, so I learned right quick to meet the obligation.

AED: Now when you were living in Pidcoke in the store, were there other stores, too?

NSG: Yeah, there's two other stores there. There were two other stores. In nineteen—as I say, like awhile ago—'39, 'bout '40 or '41, things began to get pretty good in Pidcoke. They were beginning to get out of their deal. People were beginning to come in. The prices were lifted a little bit on things, and the farmers was doing better. And then, churches had good attendance, everything was good. Schools was looking up, it's when they voted the bond and everything. And then about, I know in 1941, Grandmother Strickland told me, says, "Do you know," says, "look like they might want to do something with an army camp out here." I said, "Oh." She said, "Yes," said, "I think maybe it might gonna end up at Valley Mills," but said, I was talking, she had a relative up there, says, but says, "I

don't know," says, "this is better country than around Valley Mills." But she didn't any more than that, and sure enough in 1942, the shoe drops, you see. And the churches went down to nothing. The school pooped off, done away with. In 1944 the post office left. That was the big deal. When the post office left, well that really hurt because all those people on the east side, they were, you know, they patronized that post office, they came through there and everything, so it really—it was just certain that these people were here.

AED: Where was the post office in town?

NSG: Okay. I was telling you where my—our store was, it was just to the left of it, the first house to the left.

AED: It was in a house?

NSG: Beg pardon?

AED: It was in a house?

NSG: It was in a house, uh-huh. It was Tom—the Jim Lovejoy house.

AED: And he was the postmaster?

NSG: He was the postmaster.

AED: And he lived there.

NSG: Yeah, he lived there and everything. And he taught me how to play checkers. Well, he didn't have anything to do. (both laugh) And I come over from the store, and I'd sit there on a bench and—you know, I got pretty good for a youngster—and he got to where he'd match me up with these other guys, (AED laughs) and I'd beat 'em. And then he'd just get the biggest kick out of that. So, it was hilarious, because he taught me how to play checkers and I never regret a moment of it. And 'course, lot a times—'course we were at the U.S. post office, but every now and then the mail would come and he'd say, "Hey, how 'bout it Junior, you want to separate this for me?"

AED: He'd talk you into it.

NSG: He'd talk me into it, you know, and I'd go in there and separate the mail, you know, and everything. But that was the post office.

AED: And then people would come and pick it up, or did he also deliver it?

NSG: No, they picked it up.

AED: So this was for people in town?

NSG: That was people in that town. Well, lot of these people out in the country—my Uncle Lillard, for instance, lived off of the road, back in—there was no road to deliver it on. He had to come into town. And that's where a lot of them over on the other side, they'd come into town to pick up their mail. They'd ride, not every day, but, you know, every two or three days, and they'd pick up their mail. There was no rural route back up in those deals.

You know, you take over where the army camp was, well, when the army camp took over, okay, a couple of the churches over there, and I can't think of their names now, they—when they were pushed out of Fort Hood, they left so much money to the Pidcoke Baptist Church. You know, they had some—they had money in the kitty. Hundred dollars or $150, and they left that to the church, and I'm sure the Methodist church probably might have been a recipient of the same.

AED: Was there a road that went from Pidcoke east to sort of toward where the camp ended up, or was it really just that main north-south road?

NSG: Well, if you go from Pidcoke towards the Strickland place or Topsey or Copperas Cove, just about where they split, Copperas Cove and here, there is a road off of the main road that goes on over there, goes to Antelope and all back in there.

AED: So that would've been the road headed towards, say Belton?

NSG: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, but in that area, towards that direction. Yeah, that would've been the road that went back in there. I used to go up that road to visit a friend—I'd spend the night up there, the Frys and the Logans and all those. I lost a lot of good neighbors when they did that. A bunch of Wilkersons were down there. All of it was in that deal. Used to go hunting down in there.

AED: Right. You talked about hunting. You would go with friends?

NSG: Yeah, we'd, (coughs) pardon me, no—usually a bunch of kids. We'd just get out and—back then, you know, they'd give you so much for a hide, if you wanted. We did it mostly for fun. Listen to the dogs run or something like that, you know. And we'd go hunting for raccoons, fox, possum, we'd leave the skunks alone. (both laugh) Talk about skunks, I'll tell you something, that this uncle of mine, Lillard, the one that lived so long, he and I went hunting one night up at his place. And we got out in the open place, there wasn't a tree around. We had this light shining and here was a skunk. And he said, he said, "You want to shoot him." I said, "No, I don't want to shoot him." And he said, "Well here, take this light anyway and keep your eye on him." Well, he give the light and unbeknowing to me, he took off. (AED laughs) Well, a skunk is attracted to a light. Here they come, you know, couple of 'em. He got so close, and then I backed up into what I thought was a tree, and it turned out just a big ol' bush sitting there. And I made a quick—bounced off of it right quick, and that skunk got me. (AED laughs) Well, he brought me home—took me home, and he told my Aunt Spoonie, told his wife, they'd never had children, and I was, well, he was a double uncle, see, brothers married sisters. And that was just—I used to go work with him and everything as I got older. He said, "Luna, we got a little problem out here." (both laugh)

AED: And he's outside.

NSG: Yeah, he's outside. And, so, he'd already pumping some water. He had a pump out there, a hand pump. He didn't have a windmill there, you know, it went over to a block. Pumping this thing up. She said, "What's the trouble?" And she stepped out the door, and she said, "I know what the trouble is. Is it you or him?" And he says, "Him." Oh, man, I tell you what. She gave him down the road. She gave him down the road. But he got the water. Didn't have any tomato juice.

AED: I was gonna say—what did you use then?

NSG: You went to the garden and got tomatoes.

AED: Just used 'em fresh, 'cause the acid is still there.

NSG: Used 'em fresh, yeah, it's still there you see. Fresh deal. And he—I tell you what—she took my clothes, and she said, "Well, burn them," you know. (both laugh) Boy she was, she was something, she was something else. They took care of me, and when this girl Billie came along, she lived with them for a long time, because her mother was sick and everything for a long time, so they took her, and boy, we both thought Uncle Lillard was it, you know, he was something. Because he picked on everybody that came by. Even Imogene never has liked him since he says, "Do you want this?" And she stuck her hand out, and he put a worm in it. She's as scared of a snake or a worm, anything that creeps, you know. And so he just really—but he is something else. But anyway, that was our

skunk-hunting deal. But we usually hunted fox, didn't see many fox at night. We used to trap—try to trap animals, and we'd—we had the raccoons and there was a little—there was an animal called the ringtail, I don't know if you have seen them.

AED: Yes, I'm familiar.

NSG: Okay, with the ring tail. They had quite a few ringtail down in there. I had never seen one until I came back to that country when I was six years old or so—eight years old is what it was. And there were a lot of ringtails there, so we'd hunt, but we didn't do a very good job of hunting. We just sat around.

AED: It was for fun?

NSG: It was for fun.

AED: What kind of guns were you shooting?

NSG: We had .22s, that's all we had. I think that Kenneth, this Woodley Basheim's son, I think he finally had an over-and-under, he had a .22 and a .410. And it was all one barrel—one gun, coming out, and I think that's the only one. But .22s, well you couldn't hit it with a—however, this boy I was talking about, he could do more with a slingshot than I could with a .22. He was perfect. He could sit out there and put these matches on the fence and strike 'em and shoot them sharp. He was good.

AED: Did you hunt with dogs at all?

NSG: We had dogs. This Uncle Mohler, the one that stayed in Mexico, or down on Mexico, he had some hounds. We'd take 'em out every now and then. 'Fact he lost one one night and it was about three days 'fore he came home. (laughs) Last we heard, we could just hear his bark, just barely could hear him going over. He was chasing something.

AED: Something.

NSG: Yeah, he was after something. They just don't give up, that's all they learn. But we would always, usually, we'd go over on the Strickland properties, we'd stop and meet at the oil well, that was the—that was the spot. Stop at the oil well. Because—and there was some water down below there, a little bit, so you could get some water.

AED: A little stream?

NSG: A little stream. We hunted with—we had the lights like the miners have. And we used carbide. And where we got the carbide, we'd go by the Strickland place, raise up that ol' big tank out there and get the carbide out of there, because that was the lights for their lights, you know, the gas. They'd pour a little water in there and put that lid back on it and—but that was a lot of fun. We hunted—had mucho fun. (both laugh)

AED: Well, now, besides fun, you probably had some chores you had to do as well.

NSG: Oh, yeah. When we lived up at _____ (??), I was a small boy, up at—up on the Graves' place I had to milk the cow. And I had to milk the cow in the evening, until I got into about the sixth or eighth—seventh grade, and then I go and I'd milk the cow at night because I usually stayed at school to play basketball or something, you know, active sports like that. But, yeah, we had chores. I've had the garden, that was mine to weed the garden.

AED: Especially with you being an only child.

NSG: Yeah.

AED: There wasn't a divvying up, you were—

NSG: That's right, that's it. It was either me or—you know, and then I took care of the hogs, what we raised, I had to slop the hogs, as they say.

AED: Did you have chickens and turkeys?

NSG: Oh, we had chickens coming out of the ears. Dad loved chickens. And he liked white layers, 'cause they laid better, more eggs. And he'd sell eggs, he sold eggs, even when we moved into Pidcoke and had the telephone deal out behind. He built a big pen and he raised registered chickens, white layers. And somebody started getting into his chickens there, and he had a hard time. He'd keep his gun with buckshot in it and these chickens would be yelling. This was one night, when the noise was going on, and he jumped up, and I heard it too, and I come to the front door, and Mother pulled me back. She said, "Just leave him alone." So he ran out there, and he saw something white, white shirt or something. And he fired. And he hit. And what it was, was the Baptist preacher. (AED laughs)

AED: Thinking maybe he could help himself.

NSG: Yeah, well, the poor preachers, you know, they didn't get any money. These people didn't have any money. And my dad was so sorry. He said, "Well," as he picked the buckshot out of him. (both laugh) He said, "Why in the world didn't you let me know that you were in this state." You know. And this preacher said, Well, he just—if you needed something like this to eat, so he said, "Well, I don't really need it to eat, I trade 'em for some money." Said, "There's no liquid."

AED: He needs some cash.

NSG: That's right, no cash. Then Dad said, "Well, I'll talk to the deacons and see what we can do for you," and all that. Well, this particular guy, and it's in the history of Pidcoke Baptist Church, he didn't stay around too much longer. They got up a collection of money to buy song books, and the preacher and the money left. (laughs) But I never will forget that. (both laugh) My mother, 'course she—as soon as she seen him come on the porch, they had a light out there, well, she run me back to the back. All I could do was figure out what it was by sound, you know. I never will forget about that. And Dad, he never mentioned a word to me about that until I was grown.

AED: And it was way in the—

NSG: It was way in the past when he said it—

AED: It was still pretty funny though. (both laugh)

NSG: It was funny, it was hilarious. I thought it was funny at the time. And it was funny to him then, as it was, you know. But he said, "I knew I couldn't kill him because of the way I shot," and it was buckshot, it wasn't, yeah, it scattered. I don't know if he had bacon rinds in there or not. (both laugh) But it was the Baptist preacher. Those preachers have rough time. They just have a—you know, they just—and I don't remember what kind of family he had, probably had a child or two, but I don't know. I don't know. But that's something else. Hilarious story anyway. (both laugh) But he began missing those white layer chickens. Now if they hadn't been registered and he paid more than he should have for 'em, I don't think it'd bothered him so much. And he checked that fence, he said, "I can't get over it." Says, "There's no place for a fox or anything, a varmint can't get in. I can't understand this. Where are they going?" And then he heard that commotion out there and he went out and he saw a white figure out there. That was just too much. (both laugh) But it was something. But the church, really, was a nice church. They had a lot of people going there. They used to have camp meetings. I went to one camp meeting.

AED: Where was that held?

NSG: It was held down on the Leon River. Now they tell me earlier, back in the time of my grandmother and all, that the camp meeting was held back behind where the Baptist church is at now, but they had to haul water and it wasn't a good deal. There's a building down there. It's on the Leon, where the bridge is at. It's, as you're going towards Gatesville, it's off over to your right.

AED: Okay, I'm not familiar with it.

NSG: Okay, there's a building. They built a brush arbor down there. First, the story has it that they built a brush arbor, a new one, all the men, Methodists, Baptists, got together and built a brush arbor. And they pulled all the brush away from it and everything, ready for the deal, and they said, Well, let's burn the brush, and they set the brush afire and burned the building, too. (both laugh) And that's s'posed to be a true story. But then they went back and got busy and built another brush arbor. They didn't have much brush to clear away, so they had that down there. But that was in the army camp. So that took away their camp meeting ground. But in 1948, after of course the war was over and all, the government give 'em permission to use it. So they're using it. As far as I know they're still using it. But that's where the camp meeting was and that's where I know they had a revival down there and that's where I joined the church. And as you go to Gatesville, on the left-hand side of the bridge, the Bee House and the Cowhouse Creek come together, that used to be the old baptizing hole. That's where I was baptized. A whole lot us were.

AED: How old were you when you were baptized?

NSG: I was baptized in 1936. I was baptized with my cousin Donna Fay and a whole bunch people that we knew. I decided, like I said, at that age and everything, it's like a bunch of sheep, one goes and they all start going, you know. (laughs)

AED: It was the thing to do.

NSG: That's right. And you gotta, you know, it's kinda—you don't get up nerve by yourself, but you're safe in numbers. (both laugh)

AED: What was that like? Do you remember the event of being baptized?

NSG: What was that?

AED: Do you remember the event of being baptized?

NSG: Well, it was something I felt. Two things happened when I was baptized. When I came up out of the water, I said, "Hey, I don't see any change." (laughs) Okay. And then I remember that I was a better boy after that. I really was. I was better. But I 'member, Gosh, feel just like I did awhile ago. (laughs) Just had water. But then I said, I feel like, really, and I did. I think I did come out of it. That helped me. That was a big turning point in my life. 'Course all of my family were Baptists, my daddy's side and my mother's side, they were Baptist strong. My Granddaddy Graves, he was a strong old Baptist. In the old Graves house up there where we lived, while he lived there, I remember one time his youngest child, which was my Aunt Dan, she was my dad's baby sister. She and I was laying on the bed playing cards. Now my granddaddy came in, and he looked down and he says, "What are y'all doing?" "Well, we're just having a game of rummy," you know. (AED laughs) Boy, I tell you what, he snatched those up. It was in the wintertime, and I never will forget. He walked to the fireplace, and he just threw those cards right in there. "If I ever catch any cards in the house again, I'll do the same." And then he got on my aunt, you know. "You know better than this," you know. Says, "What do you think this boy's gonna do when he—," you know. Said, "You are some influence on him." (both laugh) But he was strict. Boy he didn't—he didn't allow that.

He didn't allow cards, and he didn't allow dancing, and he's got the best bunch of kids that were dancers I ever saw. Every one of 'em grew up to be—(both laugh) yeah. My dad could. Dancing comes naturally, I think, from my grandmother's side, my dad's mother's side of the family, because she's Irish. And I remember my great-granddaddy. His name was Dukes. And I tell you what, I remember one Christmas he got up on the kitchen table, it was a round a table, but bigger than this, and he did the Irish jig like you wouldn't believe. (AED laughs) Granddaddy always, Granddaddy Graves was always catching him making some kind of booze down in the cellar. (laughs) I know he came around 'bout once every six months—three months—to visit my granddaddy and, well, his daughter. And he'd come around. My grandmother tells this story, she said, "One night I got ready for bed," and said, "we told Granddaddy Dukes that his room was over there and he went in there," and said, "he went there and came out with his walking cane with a snake holding on to it." And he said, "I knew you didn't like me, but this is just going a wee bit too far." She'd say that.

She was only four foot eleven. And red hair. And I used to have to get—she'd wash it. She kept a tub outside of the house to catch rainwater. She'd wash her hair and then she'd have me comb it and comb it, pull it around, comb it, comb it, comb it. Then she'd have me get—she'd stand up and she'd have me get down on the floor behind her and cut, keep it from touching the floor, cut—trim it there. That was a lot of hair. (laughs) Well, my granddaddy—she was real—'course their house was right across the road from the Strickland's house, and the Stricklands had a—I mean the Graves had an old dog that used to get over in the Strickland patch and chase sheep. Well, one time Clay and my Granddaddy Strickland were out riding and looking and sure enough there was a pack of dogs over there running. Well, they chased 'em off and shot at one or two and all. And here come—this old dog was a Graves's dog, started heading home just as fast as he could go. And he jumped—come across that fence and went under the house. And so Granddaddy Strickland said, "Clay, go tell Mrs. Graves that I want to talk to her," 'cause they were across the fence on the horses. Well, they didn't have to. Here come Grandmother Graves. She said, "Hello George," she said, just a friendly greeting. He said, "Mrs. Graves is Tom home?" And she said, "No." "Well, I need to talk to him," said, "your dog's been chasing my sheep." And says, "He's gonna himself killed. In fact, if I see him over there, I'm gonna shoot him." She said, "Just a minute, let me see." And she went in the house and that's a pretty long trip, back to the house, and come back. And they said she had a gun as long as she was tall. And held that thing up, and she says, "George, if you touch Rowdy," or what was his name? I'll think of it in a minute, anyway, "If you touch Rowdy, I'll shoot you out of that saddle the first time I see you." (both laugh)

AED: Wow, don't mess with her.

NSG: Don't mess with her. I've never known her to be like that. She's a lot of fun, she's a Duke. So my Granddaddy Strickland says, "Come on Clay, let's go," and they turned around. He tipped his hat, and says, "Tell Tom what I told you." Well, they rode off away, and this all comes from Clay, and so whether it's embellished or not, I don't know. (both laugh) But, you know, he says—Clay, he was over there, said, "I was just about to snicker." And Dad says, "Clay, don't you ever mess with a red-haired woman." (AED laughs) And then he rode on a little ways and he said, "Don't you *ever*, Clay, if I ever hear this gets out," says, "I'll shoot you." (both laugh) But I think there was—I know that she protected that ol' dog. And, incidentally, the old dog died of old age.

AED: Oh, it did.

NSG: It did, yeah.

AED: He did just fine.

NSG: He did fine, yeah. But—Laddie, it was Laddie, it was Laddie.

AED: Good Irish name.

NSG: Good Irish name, yeah. She was—but this granddaddy, her father, was strictly Irish. I mean, he came—of course they came down through Mississippi and out this way.

AED: But still had the—

NSG: Oh, yeah, and he had his—some of his brogue and all still there, you know. And he was a cutup. He was fun. I see where she got her deal, 'cause she was full of mischief, just full of mischief. (AED laughs) Then Granddaddy Graves was so serious. He was the same way with politics. I'll tell you what. I think a Republican was a bad name.

AED: I was gonna ask what persuasion that your family was politically.

NSG: Well, every one of 'em that I know of was Democrats. They were raised Democrats. You know, Coryell County didn't have Republican when I was a kid, that was a bad name. All were Democrats, except my Uncle Lillard, this old ninety-nine-year-old. He hated Republicans, he hated FDR. He just—oh, he hated Democrats. Yeah, he hated Democrats. He didn't like FDR. Anybody that was a Democrat, he said, "I just can't see, how they can take up that persuasion," he said, "I just," and he was—he would talk politics with you and all, but he wouldn't get in arguments with you. He said, "I just can't see that way of thinking," you know. And, 'course his other brothers and sisters, said, Well, there he is out here a dirt cheap farmer and he won't—talking Republicans. But he really knew his business I guess.

AED: I wonder what influenced him?

NSG: I don't know.

AED: To be so different 'cause it was so unusual.

NSG: One thing that probably come around, his mother, my Grandmother Graves, was a Democrat and Uncle Lillard, far as I know has always been a Republican. But in nineteen, hmmm, forty-one I believe it was, I'd have to go back to look at the dates, but W. Lee O'Daniel, down there in Texas. 'Course they used to listen to him at noon. They came on the radio. Ten Commandments—he's gonna run on the Ten Commandments and old age pension. Well, they got in control with that, and my grandmothers says, you know, 'course she didn't have anything at all. But she said, "Boy, if he could get us a old age pension, that's something else." Uncle Lillard said, "Well, that's—he's my kinda guy." And so, sure enough, he was elected, as you know. And beat James Allred. It was amazing. So they got up a bus in Coryell County—several busses. They got one for the Pidcoke-area people. If they wanted to go to the inauguration. Now, W. Lee O'Daniel, on his talks and all, "If I'm elected governor, the inauguration is for the people of Texas, and you're all welcome to come to the mansion. Come into the mansion. We'll be there, the boys'll be playing the music." My Uncle Lillard had never left Coryell County. Never. No, people said he—the only two things he ever left Coryell County for was to go to the inauguration of W. Lee O'Daniel and to the Astrodome to see a ball game. So, he come to ask my dad. Said, "Do you want to go with me to the [inauguration]?" And he said, "I wouldn't go down there to see him." (both laugh) So he asked if I could go with him, and my dad said, "Well, I don't know, you'll have to ask his mother. I don't think he would want to go." And my mother said, "Why sure." Now my Grandmother Strickland could very well have been a Republican. She was—she weighed the deals and all. I think she was just for the person.

AED: Might've been more like the independent type.

NSG: Yeah, the independent type. So anyway, we got on the bus, and we went to the inauguration, and we went into the governor's mansion. And they had—we got—well, I don't know where it's at now—a

little sack, like about a tobacco filled with cotton, that was the flour, hillbilly flour. Yeah, and it had a pin on the top, W. Lee O'Daniel, governor. And we went to that, and my Uncle Lillard, he was in high cotton. He says, "I'll tell you what." Well, sure enough, after the legislature met and everything, my grandmother got a check. She said, "See there, he tells it like it is."

AED: He did what he said he was gonna do.

NSG: He's gonna do. It wasn't much. It was very small, but that was more than she'd ever been getting. So—Uncle Lillard though, he—and he was a—in the last few years—he's been a Republican ever since I've known him. Now, my dad voted one—who was it he voted for—he voted for Kennedy—no, he didn't vote for Kennedy, he voted—yeah, he voted Republican for Richard Nixon, and he said, then they dirty up and turned round to be a crook. (both laugh) So—and so—I don't know—I guess that was the last time, 'cause I know he voted for Carter, so—

AED: Got burned there.

NSG: Got burned, yeah, one time was when he got burned. (both laugh) But that was most all of our deals. I guess they were mostly Democrats. But Grandmother Strickland—now Grandmother Strickland, there were certain people she didn't like—governor—people she didn't like. She didn't like Allan Shivers, when he was governor, she didn't care for him. And she didn't like—she hated—and I don't know the story on it, but she hated Pat M. Neff. The Strickland family lived next door, down there, and something happened when—I think some property deals, and I think that happened. And it didn't happen to her directly, but just the word of it. If you—somebody's not—way back there, it's still, she's not for 'em, if they were crooked then. She's swore where that Pat M. Neff, they beat her out of something. I don't know. Noah was the father of Pat M. Neff, and that's the one that lived next door, so I don't—it might've been the children, but I don't know.

AED: That's interesting, because you'd think being a local person, she would have been a supporter.

NSG: Yeah, you sure do.

AED: But something must've happened that she was aware of.

NSG: Something happened, she didn't buy it. She says, "You," she didn't—she wasn't real sold on Baylor for a long time, but nearly all the Stricklands, back a generation or two, nearly all of 'em went to Baylor. And they had one that was, I can't think of his name right now, but he was a good athlete. He was Southwest Conference—all Southwest Conference baseball player, and she loved baseball. So she kinda got into the Baylor way, you know, and everything. She finally got along with that. But she read the newspaper, watched the radio, and television, finally, when baseball came on. And she took the *Houston Chronicle*. She said, "They've got the best sports page in Texas." (AED laughs)

AED: So that was her reason for taking it.

NSG: That's right. Yeah. That's it. Was it the—it was *Chronicle* or *Post*, I think it was *Chronicle*, and she said the box scores and all of that. And she could sit down and tell you how some ball player, whichever one you want to name, whether he batted left-handed or right-handed, threw left-handed or right-handed. She could tell you something about their families. She took the *Sporting News* also. She kept up on all these. And I took her to her first baseball game.

AED: Did you really? Where did you take her?

NSG: Take her to the—Coryell County had a league team. Pidcoke was in it and Blackfoot and Mound and Copperas Cove and little Jonesboro, Turnersville, I don't remember which ones they were, but I've got a picture of all the Pidcoke team one time. Uncle Clay's in the picture. And they were in the

county league, and their uniforms were all uniform, but they had "PT" right across the front, Pidcoke, Texas. And everybody called 'em pigtails. (both laugh)

AED: How funny, if they'd only thought.

NSG: Yeah, if they'd only thought, you know. But I took her down to Mound to watch Blackfoot and Mound play ball. And I was writing sports at the time for the *Coryell County News* and the *Gatesville Messenger*. I wrote for both of them at the same time under different names. And also I was a senior in high school. So I took her down there, and she saw that. Tell you what, she—boy, she was wide-eyed. I never will forget a ball came bouncing right towards her, and my dad was setting on the other side of her, but he reached up and grabbed the ball. He was quite a ball player himself. And he said, "Here," I'm gonna forget what he called her, he didn't call her Mattie Lou, he called her something else—but "here, boy, would you like to have a souvenir?" She said, "I sure would." And she took that ball and looked at it. When somebody comes to retrieve it because those people couldn't have, you know. And Dad went out to meet 'em and told 'em what it was, and they said, Tell her to keep it. So she got that ball. But she said, "You know, this is nice and all," but said," it sure is nice to sit in your rocking chair and watch." (laughs) But that was her—I don't know if she ever saw another game or not. You know, live, but she went to that one. But she loved that ball—she could tell you.

And I'd set down there by the hour and listen to her ball games, but she wouldn't talk about her family at all. And I've asked her. My mother used to tell me, said, "If you want to know something about our family, ask her," you know. Well, I said, "Grandmother, did you have some sisters?" She said, "Oh, yeah." And I know her sisters. I know where they're at. And she'd say, "Yes, there, one of 'em lives over—up at San Saba, and the other lives out in—somewhere in West Texas—Robie." And I said, "Oh, yeah." I said, "Well, didn't you have any brothers?" "No, I don't think so." You know, and she had a brother that died on the way to Texas, see. And she just wouldn't talk about it. I said, "Was your mother, look like any of the rest of 'em—like any of the family?" She says, "Well, I don't remember." And she just wouldn't talk to us. I know she knew, I knew, 'cause she was nearly eight years old when they got to Texas. But they started out from Tennessee, and they got as far as the—the—trying to think of the river. Tennessee River? Yeah, Tennessee River, and she says the only thing she remembers is they camped there for about four or five days. So we surmised that maybe the—her mother and her little brother probably died there. They were having a lot of fever all back there then. So we think—'cause they went on to Dyer County—or Gibson County, Tennessee, and stayed there a year, just long enough so the census could catch them, and then they headed for Texas. And they all got to Texas and everybody that—all of her brothers—all of her uncles and aunts were old maids and old bachelors, and they never married. They're all buried over here at Comanche Springs Cemetery out in the graves.

AED: That's very unusual.

NSG: It is rare. Now, her daddy is buried there, too, and he had married, but he had lost his wife coming to Texas. But Mother said it was a real weird family. Said every one of 'em had their own buggy. Every—and you never seen, other than the girls, that you'd never seen more—the boys—there were no two to a buggy. And said, You'd go to their house and it looked like a Sunday go to meeting, all these buggies around. (laughs) Isn't that unusual? It's very rare.

AED: What do you think that was—what was—from your research?

NSG: I don't know, now. I don't know. Well, I've come to find out—now I've got some picture of 'em, and my great-grandfather, my Grandmother Strickland's daddy—no—mother and daddy—her granddaddy—he looks as much like any Indian you ever saw. I'm wondering if they didn't—I can't—I've never been able to get a picture of the matriarch of the family, you know, his wife. Because she

ran the family. She owned the property and all that and everything. She ran the family. He looks so much like an Indian, he looks like old Indian Joe in Tom Sawyer. Really—so I'm wondering if maybe. 'Course that may not've kept 'em from getting married, 'cause my mother's grandmother, was a beautiful woman. I don't have the pictures here 'cause they're all over in San Angelo, but we found a picture of her. It was a picture about this size in a round, oval loop. And she looks just like my mother—looks just like her. And on the back of the picture we found the wording, says, died on the way to Texas. That enhanced the theory that she died on the way. Yeah, yeah, without a doubt. So we'll have that, but she looks a lot like my mother, really does. So you get all these different stories—but my grandmother just wouldn't talk about it, or didn't, you know, wouldn't talk about it. But these old brothers and everything, now these three brothers—there was four brothers—five brothers came to Texas with their mother. And none of 'em married, one of 'em was widowed, but they never married and as they died off, my grandmother had two sisters that lived. The brother died. Two sisters that lived. And they married. One went to Robie, one went to San Saba. Married well, both of 'em. These old brothers lived to take care of these sisters. That's what they did. And my granddaddy and my grandmother were married at the First Baptist Church in McGregor. That's where they married at. And they—and they happened to meet by living next door to each other. I just don't know what happened to that branch of the family. I've been tracing it, and I've got 'em back to—well, I need to go to Virginia, but I can't find out who it is that's the deal. Then my grandmother's widowed brother that came to Texas, he fought in the Civil War and his daddy fought in the Civil War and I know where his daddy is buried. He's buried at Rock Island Cemetery in Illinois, in the Confederate side. He'd buried in grave number 1,935. I remember that. And I've got pictures of it and all that and 'course I've got all these cemeteries, but I can't go back beyond that guy. His parents were born in Virginia, but I have nothing to go on, you see. So I guess I'll have to give up on them for a while. It'll probably pop up. Something'll happen, yeah. But it's been a great deal. It's been a great journey tracing these people, 'cause they come in in Virginia and then they come down to North Carolina, then South Carolina, and then they stopped at the top of South Carolina to see whether they was going to Georgia or Mississippi. And they said, Well, the cotton fields over there are filling up in Georgia, let's go to Mississippi. And that's how come the Stricklands came into Mississippi. And 'course my great-granddaddy was a cavalry captain in Mississippi with the Confederacy. And he was caught quite well up, I guess, but he was one of these behind the lines guys, he disrupted everything. He was—and they all loved horses. Everybody loved horses. But that's all the transportation they had. That's all you had then, a wagon or a buggy. And you didn't—my grand—this great—well, his father, my great—the one that came to Texas from Mississippi, he was county commissioner for a couple of years, so he had to ride a horse and—from way down there in Eagle Springs to Gatesville. Ride every so often when they had commissioners' court, or he was on jury duty.

AED: He had to get there.

NSG: He had to get there.

AED: And that's they way they moved.

NSG: That's right. And they said that he had fine horses. And that's what his son had when he died. He had, they said he had six of the finest looking horses you ever saw, when he was a cavalry man in the war, and that's what he did. So, I'm telling you what. But the Stricklands—I've kept up with them. I know more today about them, their inner working, than I do the Graves, you know. 'Course the Graves I know came over on the Mary Ann Margaret in 1608 and all that. So they came over a long time ago. It is now the longest continuous name in the United States, without interruption.

AED: Oh, I had no idea.

NSG: I didn't either until I read up on it. But they—the Graves—there was sixty-one passengers on that

ship or—I say passengers, he was a member of the London Company and a lot is written about him in the legend—logs—that they sent back to Europe. So it wasn't like chasing these Stricklands down. (both laugh)

AED: They made themselves more obvious I guess, to try to document.

NSG: Yeah. It was—yeah. Right. 'Course a lot of stuff was lost because of weather and Indians and all that and the wars, but I was real fortunate on the Stricklands, it fell the same way. I was real fortunate when the Stricklands—I started tracing the Strickland family. The first Strickland was Matthew Strickland. And, if your name was not Matthew or George, you wasn't—everyone of 'em was in my line, Matthew and George. In fact, I told Mother one time, I said, "I like that name, Matthew." I said, "I wish I'd been named Matthew Sidney." I said, "That'd been a good name." But they—it was all—that's all they got. There's about four or five Matthews in that line, a couple of Georges, and then a Justin—Judson, he ruins the lot. (laughs) So the deal. But Mother was the first female that would be off on my line. Everything else was males. All the kids were all males.

AED: That's interesting, too.

NSG: Isn't it, too? 'Cause usually you get into the women, you lose—you have a hard time tracing.

AED: It's very hard to find.

NSG: It is hard to find. And Graves is the same way. Same way.

AED: So that made it a lot easier.

NSG: A lot easier. I'm trying to look up now a little bit of the Dukes side of the family and, you know, get their deal. And they were—but they came through Virginia also. All four of 'em the Graves, and the Stricklands, and Dukes, and the Phillips. Well, I say Phillips, apparently they'd come from Virginia because his parents were in Virginia. I can't tell who the parents were, you know—so I don't know. It's a terrible thing. But I think the army camp made a big—a big indent on Pidcoke. It's, well, it did away with Pidcoke. It's not there anymore. 'Course I imagine any other border towns, it's the same situation. I don't know of too many more towns.

AED: You know, I'm really not—until you look into the '50s acquisition area because of course they took that first big parcel of land, and I think that there was land on the border at that point, but then they ended up taking it. And a few other communities that were really close to the edge, but none of them, I don't think were as close as Pidcoke was.

NSG: No, I don't think so either. And what—when was it? Nineteen? Now Pidcoke, you don't hear anything about 'em or the people, but they came alive in 1970. When was the *Our Lives, Our Land* deal?

AED: I don't know.

NSG: I think it's '75. I'm not sure.

AED: Seventy-six, because of the bicentennial, maybe—or you know—around then.

NSG: But, you know, the army was—they wanted sixty to ninety thousand more acres. And our land—and that's when Coryell County, you know, got a—got all riled up and got organized. I think some—I think Billie was telling me, she paid seventy-five cents an acre to help subsidize the lawyer and all the—taking it to Washington. And, sure enough, it got as far as Washington, but the senator, I don't know his name. Ikehart or something, Eckhart, something. They said, No, y'all don't need that land. But they had to call the first meeting, and they had eight hundred people show, (laughs) in opposition

to the deal. So it hurt, too, was a lot of the people that had been in the army camp had moved into this area that they wanted to take again. And said, "One time—the last time."

AED: Yeah, right, back off.

NSG: Back off. But I, I remember that. I know she—Billie was real active in it. I think they really—and the bankers there in Gatesville were interested in it and worked really hard. They got some old lawyer, I forget who his name was. He was real—he was already retired, but they got him, and he really went to bat for 'em, I guess. Or whatever.

AED: Somebody knew what to do.

NSG: Somebody knew. But it was seventy-something that they did that. And cartoons in the paper and, oh, they had 'em. I still take the Gatesville paper, but they had 'em, you know, they had—I remember one cartoon when the tank was driven up to the fence, and this old farmer was out there—

AED: Ready to go?

NSG: Ready to go. (laughs)

AED: Enough is enough.

NSG: Yes, enough is enough. That's right.

AED: They've got lots of land.

NSG: No, they don't use all of it.

AED: Some of it's buffer.

NSG: Well, when was it when—it was right after they—not—they first maneuvered and they go clear to Brownwood on the maneuvers.

AED: I don't know.

NSG: Yeah.

AED: Did they really?

NSG: Yeah, yeah, they went to Brownwood, and they were gonna pay for all of it, but they tore up fences, they went through graveyards, and everything, you know. Some night movers you can't tell, I guess, but they went through fences, they tore up fences and everything.

AED: I didn't know about that.

NSG: Yeah, they did. I forget what years it was. It was right—not too long after they formed there and decided they needed some maneuvering deal, so they got permission to go to Brownwood, providing they'd fix up everything. (laughs) But most of the people—my dad had a very close friend that when he got his money from the government for—over at Pidcoke, he went up to Arkansas, and he bought all the land he could get. He went up to Arkansas and had enough money to buy all this land—as much land—you know, Arkansas land, at that time, was four or five dollars an acre, in places, especially in hilly country. And he bought all the land he could buy and fence. The fencing cost him more than the land. And he fenced it for goats. And he went back and he put those goats in there, and they cleared the land for him. It took—I don't know how long.

AED: But they got the job done.

NSG: Got the job done. And said that, said—really, that was the best thing that ever happened to him, was to move out. To get moved out. Get out of there. Said, "I was in a rut. Didn't know it, and I've land to—you know, livestock rather than farming." So that was—farmland wasn't that good anyway and wasn't that much. So he came out. I got a big kick out of that.

AED: That's funny 'cause most of the stories you hear are not the positive spin.

NSG: No, they're not.

AED: And there necessarily isn't regret or hostility left, but definitely, not—not as if it were an opportunity.

NSG: That's right, yeah. And 'course, I don't know, you know, some people—I think a lot of 'em got peeved over the price of the land.

AED: And I can understand, certainly can understand that.

NSG: I can, too. Especially if you go back today and try to buy. (laughs) But my—but I don't know what my grandmother—I do know how much my grandmother got, but I don't remember exactly what it was. It wasn't much, it—I don't think it was twenty dollars an acre, I think it was less than that.

AED: Very low.

NSG: Yeah. Very low. It was good grassland, and they didn't take any farmland from her, because that was all grassland over there. My granddaddy was strictly a stockman and—

AED: And they paid more for cultivated land than they did for grassland, so—

NSG: Yes, they did, that's right, that's right. So they didn't get that much, but—so I don't know, but people were irritated. I know they, as I say, they lost the post office. That was a big thing to the people on the west side, because, you know, they lost the use of the post office. So they had to get to where they could go to a rural route somewhere and—out of Gatesville. But the school, that was a big deal 'cause a lot of activity generated around the school.

AED: It's the center of the community.

NSG: That's right. So they missed that. They missed the school, and I don't know—

AED: So did the kids go to Gatesville then?

NSG: Kids all went to Gatesville.

AED: You went to Pidcoke School through—

NSG: I went to Pidcoke School through the ninth grade.

AED: And then did you go—

NSG: Up through the eighth grade, I went through the eighth grade. Yeah, I went to Gatesville. That's—and, of course, Billie was in the first grade at Pidcoke, but then the rest of her schooling was at Gatesville. And she had to ride a bus, and she lived—that's a pretty good ride back then in those days, 'cause it was on an unpaved road at first. And she went from up at the old Strickland place all the way to Gatesville and back. And then they picked up some kids over on the other side of Table Rock [Creek], which means that—

AED: Longer.

NSG: Yeah, made it even longer. So they had long days.

AED: And did you ride a bus back when you went to Gatesville as well? They had that going?

NSG: No, when I went to Pidcoke, I didn't ride a bus.

AED: To Gatesville though?

NSG: Yeah. Well, when I got in the ninth grade, my parents said, There's no use you coming back and forth, so they made arrangement for me to board over there. So that worked out pretty nice 'cause they stayed, and I came out on weekends. You know, long weekend or something like that. So I still was there for church and things like that, you know.

AED: Then did you pay board?

NSG: Yeah, paid board, and—I don't know what it was now, but my dad paid it, but I'm just trying to think. Lived on 506 South Seventh Street. (laughs)

AED: And was it with a family?

NSG: It was with a family. It was a rough deal. It was a widow woman with three girls. (laughs) And we had a lot of fun.

AED: That must of been awful.

NSG: (laughs) It was—it was trying time. One of 'em was in my same grade, and one of 'em was two years younger, and the one that was younger I dated, through high school. (laughs) But we really had a good time. We really did. I enjoyed it there. But I'd go back—and the last year—the last year in high school, my dad moved over there.

AED: Oh, he did? What was he doing?

NSG: He was working for the school. He drove a bus and this and this and that. Drove a bus and then, I guess, I don't know what he'd done, I guess he did janitor work, I'm not sure what else was.

AED: Was he still ranching at the time, too?

NSG: Beg you pardon?

AED: Was he still ranching then, too?

NSG: Yeah, he still had his deal.

AED: And all the time he had the store and the—

NSG: Well, he sold his store to move over.

AED: But when he did, he was ranching also.

NSG: Um-hm.

AED: So he was doing both things.

NSG: Yeah. Yeah, my dad, he ranched off and on all of his life. I noticed his obituary said, Coryell County rancher dies, or something like that. (laughs)

AED: So that was what he was known as.

NSG: Yeah, he was known as a rancher. He loved stock, and he was a good judge of stock, but he had a good background for it. He really did. I 'member from the very start he used to say, I'm not gonna

hop clods for a living I'm not gonna do that. I'm not gonna do it.

AED: And he didn't.

NSG: He didn't. He just didn't see that. Even when he was in El Paso and had two service stations, he enjoyed every bit of it. I mean, he didn't pump the gas, so to speak, unless there was an emergency, but he was out talking to the people and everything. He was a good man to—front man for 'em. But I really enjoyed that. But, I don't think I got anything here. Oh, found something, but I didn't—all of my notes are gone, I didn't know—

AED: That's good, though, 'cause this way you just talk.

NSG: Yeah. Pidcoke School, you know, Pidcoke School was known as the Belcher school district, after Belcher.

AED: I figured that out at one point.

NSG: Yeah, that's right.

AED: That was very confusing at first, I thought they were two different things.

NSG: (laughs) Yes. In the spring of '45, they transferred to Gatesville. I remember that. In '44 the post office left. And in 1948, the army let 'em have the campground back. And not only that, the government moved in one, I believe, I don't think there was two, barracks down there.

AED: So they could use those.

NSG: So they used the barracks. See, after the war was over and they had an excess, and they moved it in. So that was a kind of a helping, generous of 'em. I thought it was. I think it was real good of 'em. But you know the government—and there's other positive deals. I think they contributed by having a paved road. Paved roads.

AED: They wanted that.

NSG: They wanted that, and they wanted electricity, and they got that. So I don't know—

AED: And there were benefits for the people.

NSG: Yeah. *Our Land, Our Lives* was in 1975. They wanted sixty to ninety thousand acres to the west. 'Course that would've took in the Strickland place and everything then, see. That's the reason Billie was up—(AED laughs) the reason she was willing to pay seventy-five cents an acre. But they got news coverage from all over the nation. They had people come and camp and had nationwide publicity at all three news places. And the Texas legislature even made a statement that they supported the people, so that helped, it really helped. There was a Congressman Eckhart—Eckhart and subcommittee—that disapproved the expansion. They said that the army failed to prove that they needed this extra land. That's about right. But, it's much nicer to—but they came back with these barracks and everything, but it didn't bring back the people, and that's the bad part. They have a youth camp meeting down there every now and then, summer deal, but that's all they can do down there. All the stores are gone in Pidcoke, there's no stores. Got the Baptist church here. I get amazed every time I go through Pidcoke, I stop and go through the Baptist church. It's unlocked. They don't even have a key for it. They don't have key. You go right in.

AED: That's rare these days, even in the country it's rare.

NSG: That's right. And then the Sunday school building, you can go in and you can get ice out of the refrigerator, you can get anything you want in there, use the restrooms, whatever you want to do.

AED: That's nice to know.

NSG: Isn't that, that's nice to know, but they don't have a lock, don't have any way to lock it, they just left it open. And, gosh, I remember—well, we used to—well, I guess everybody kinda watches out for it, you know. When I was a kid, we used to have a bunch of trees behind the Baptist church, where the church is now, and we used to see how far we could climb through the trees without touching the ground, you know. (AED laughs) Oh, my, I tell you what. Had a lot of people, but it really diminished the population. I mean it.

AED: Dramatic change.

NSG: Yeah.

AED: And that growth of Killeen, which was nothing before, there was nothing there, just took all of that.

NSG: That's right. And Copperas Cove is bigger than Gatesville. Yeah. It's something else. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised to see Copperas Cove, one of these days, try to get—be the county seat.

AED: Because there's so many people there.

NSG: Sure, there's so many people there. 'Course, a lot of them are transit, you know.

AED: Temporary.

NSG: Temporary. But I don't know, but I get a big kick out of thinking about—and that road is busy. I mean, that—what is it—[Highway] 168? I—

AED: [Highway] one something.

NSG: One fourteen, [Highway] 116?

AED: I know which road you mean.

NSG: Yeah, that one way. It's just like all the time. Used to, you could walk down the road and nobody'd come by, and you couldn't get a ride. Now days—I was going to—oh, it's been two or three years ago, I was going to the Strickland place. And I was going through—just before I got to Pidcoke, that's what it was, before I got to Pidcoke, up on the hill up there, there was a helicopter circling. And all of the sudden, something come flying out of that helicopter. It was a door. It lost his door. Lost his door. So, I stopped, and he circled, circled, finally, he landed over on the, well, I guess it's the non-army side, he landed. And I didn't see where the door fell, but maybe it fell over there. But they were out there, just a-goin' over it. There he was. I said, What if I'd been under that thing?

AED: Right, right, and your car.

NSG: Yeah. But—now I'll tell you another thing that's benefited a lot of people there in the deal, is the ability to run livestock in the camp. That has been a deal. I have a—well I—this cousin, he ran—not Billie, but the other cousin, he ran livestock in there a lot. 'Course they've had some mix ups there, too. (laughs)

AED: Right, different problems occur.

NSG: Yes, they do. 'Fact I think they've—I don't know if they've took too many to court or not, but (both laugh) they've had some situations there that's been kind of deals. But there is good grassland in there, and it's not been used for a long time.

AED: And it's mostly safe.

NSG: Yeah, it's mostly safe. It really is. I've got a friend, a couple of 'em, that go over, I guess whenever they can get their—I don't know what the frequency is or not—to their cemeteries over there. They go over there. And they say that, for a while, at first, the cemetery was deplorable, but the government was—fixed 'em up now.

AED: They have done a really good job of that and protecting the ones that are there, fencing them and cleaning them.

NSG: They really have. They really have. Now the old Pidcoke Cemetery has some graves—bodies that were brought from the army camp.

AED: Removed—reburied.

NSG: Removed. Reburied. Uh-huh. And there, when it first happened, I don't want my people living over there. (both laugh)

AED: With those Pidcoke people.

NSG: With those Pidcoke people. But really, they say they take good care of the cemeteries over there. And I have friend that has relatives, and she was brought up around close to Ewing. She said that cemetery—in fact, they were—they hold a reunion every year. And they say it's surprising now, but said at first it was deplorable.

AED: I think they really had to fuss about it.

NSG: Oh, yeah, they did.

AED: But when they did, the army responded.

NSG: They responded. So it's good. I can see where a lot of the assets come out of this things, but I tell you from the communal deal, community deal, it ruined the community. It really did. It just ripped it out. Well, like people at that reunion we went, well, that's just a few of 'em and that's since '42, you know. They still come, they still get together when they can. But they are, a lot of 'em, most of those were over there in the army camp back there, a lot of 'em. And so it's a shame, it's a bad deal. I hated to see the community go down. I was—when I was a kid growing up in high school and all, I always swore that I was gonna write a novel on Pidcoke. And I was gonna call it "Ill-Bred Valley." (both laugh) But I think—

AED: That's great. Now that you've got your first book, this could be your second.

NSG: Yeah. Well, I don't know. I think the army camp took care of my people. But we had a—it was a really—you know, there was a lot of things going on back then in the deal. Families that didn't speak to each other. There was a—they actually had a—what do you call it? Like the Martin and McCoys?

AED: A feud?

NSG: Feud going on between a couple of families. And one of 'em, couple of 'em's buried in the Pidcoke Cemetery. It was real interesting to see all that, the deal. But I could, I can, I think I could write a novel on Pidcoke.

AED: Sounds like you could.

NSG: Yeah. It was a great deal. But the people up Bee House [Creek], or as you go past the cemetery, on up there, there's some houses up there now, but there's no more than what there were before. In fact, you know, the farms were consolidating, and you don't have the people out in the country like you did. But when they lost their post office, and they lost the school, that was it. That was the two big deals.

AED: It's amazing they still have the churches.

NSG: It is amazing. It is—

AED: And two, not just one, but there are two.

NSG: That's right. Yeah. I understand, I haven't been to it in years, I understand the Baptist church is in pretty bad shape. It's more of a inner turmoil. You know, the Baptists can have more strifes, they can split off more places than any—and come up—like a cat, and land on their feet than more people I know. (both laugh) I can say that—my son's not around, so I can say that.

AED: No, we're safe. You're safe.

NSG: But they can. And I understand that they've got some turmoil there with it and it's bad, because that was a fine church.

AED: They'll come about.

NSG: It'll come about. I think it will. I understand there's just very few people going there. I don't see how they can even afford a full-time preacher, unless he's just—they can't let him off.

AED: Maybe someone's giving him chickens. (both laugh)

NSG: That might be, but my—now the Methodist church is stronger than the Baptist church now.

AED: Which is sort of unusual.

NSG: It is very unusual. And, you know, the Methodist church usually runs on a circuit rider deal, every other Sunday or every fifth Sunday or some kind of deal. And they won't—they will not—but they're stronger. They built 'em a little—well, where we had the reunion. That's nice. They built that, and it's nice. It's a nice building. You just can't beat that. And they have, every now and then, they get a well-known guy to come down and do their deal and during their, I guess, it's during their evangelistic move and everything. They're good. They're good. They're doing good. 'Course I gotta take up for 'em, I'm one. I am one. I are one. (both laugh) But they are, they're real healthy. But I was raised a Baptist, 'course if my granddaddy was still alive today, he'd run me off. Because he was there when I was baptized and all that deal, but he—the folks were pretty good. Baptists have a lot of good things. That's all I knew for years. Baptist. But, you know, those churches, when I first started there, the Baptist church had every other Sunday and the Methodist church had every other Sunday. And they interwove to where we had four full—four Sundays of preachers there. Every Sunday we were set.

AED: So did you go to the different church?

NSG: That's right. We'd go to the different church or when they had a revival up there. What you did was you take all your books from the Baptist church, songbooks, and go up there and they'd, the song leader would announce in the Cokesbury songbook it's page so-and-so and in the Baptist hymnal it's so-and-so. And when the Baptists had theirs, the Methodists would bring theirs down. It was a real harmonious deal. And I don't know, now days, 'course people are different today than they are then, there's no getting around it. But now days, I would surmise that the Methodist church is a lot more cordial church than the Baptists there. And that's bad 'cause the Baptists are usually the—they're the—as a—who was it? Billie, I think. She's Baptist, and she goes up to Pearl or somewhere up there. Harman or Pearl. And she said, "Yes, that the Baptists are the ones that should be easygoing. They're the easygoing proselytizing people." (laughs)

AED: Exactly, you expect it.

NSG: That's right, you expected that. But it's not like that anymore.

AED: Well, let me ask you this question just to sort of wrap up.

NSG: I've about run out of material I guess.

AED: Why is that you chose not to be a rancher, since your family had that long history?

NSG: Well, I think mine stemmed from the fact that—what is it they said during World War—how can you—after they've seen gay Paris, how can you keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen gay Paris. Well, I think after the war, I was in the war, after it was over, I got into the GI program, went back to college and decided—got a chance at a job, they had these job fairs, and people come around. Got a chance to go to the—Lincoln Mercury came around looking for somebody to work. And I went to work for them. And then I—after you get in the inner city and you get in the deal, you don't think of the country that much more anymore. I love—every time I got a chance to get out there, I would love it, but I think it was just the—I think it was just the deal. And, at the same time, I went back to look at—visit a fellow on the ranch. I think the ranching business had changed. Changed immensely. And I'm not as much stock oriented as my dad was. He lived and breathed that. And I was—I certainly didn't want to be a farmer. I don't even like to work in the yard. (both laugh) So I think the fact that anything other than farming, and ranching is too close to farming, it can be. I mean, my dad always said that even for the—with the ranch he had—he needed to have thirty acres of some kind of feed stuff, yeah. Maize or corn or something. And I—it didn't appeal to me. I think I was too lazy to become a rancher. (both laugh)

AED: Well, plus you had the experiences of living in a store and doing some other things besides just being strictly on a ranch or a farm.

NSG: Yeah, yeah, that's right. I wouldn't take, for my experience that I've had—experiences I've had, I mean the ranch and the store and the army and working for automobile place, and then, of course, I worked in several different kind—types of jobs with Texas, the oil company. I traveled a little bit with Texaco and also the other, I got to the point of where I think I could—I got—well, I sat here not too long ago and wrote, just for my kids' deal, the experiences I've had. Kind of a life experience. And I said, You know, that's pretty interesting, I think I'll read it again. (laughs) But you know, a little bit of everything. You know, as a youngster I've had some different things. Oh, it was about 1930—it was in the '30s, while I was living—well, my Granddaddy Graves still lived up on the old Graves place. Late one evening an airplane came over, and he was a-poppin' and a-poot and sputtering and everything, and he landed in my granddaddy's back deal. And it was a man that was setting—he was plotting an airmail—or mail route for the air, for the air corps, an old wing—double wing—biplane deal. And he said, "I need some more gas." Said, "I'm gonna try to make it in." I don't know which way he was going, down towards Austin, I think, I'm not real sure. But he said, "I'm trying to make it in." So my granddaddy said, "We don't have any aviation gas or anything." And he said, "Oh, I can burn anything," you know. So we got in my granddaddy's old car and went down to one of the stores in Pidcoke, got a five-gallon can of gas and—no it took ten gallons, had two cans, so took two ten-gallon cans. We brought him back up there and filled it up. And I never will forget, this was in the summertime. I was out of school. And my granddaddy filled it up and this guy cranked it up and it ran, ran, he was satisfied with it. Then he came over and said, "Would you like to take a ride?" And, 'course, my granddaddy said, "No, you're not talking to me." And he said, "Well, would the boy there like to take a ride." I said, "Can I Granddaddy?" And so, anyway, I got to ride in an airplane. Got in the plane, took off, and flew over Pidcoke and over and come back around. Over the Strickland house. And I said, "Oh, boy, this is great." And so we landed and by the time we landed my grandmother was out there. And she told my granddaddy, "What are you doing letting him fly in that airplane?" And so, boy she just rode it down the fence and so—anyway, that was the time that—she

said, my grandmother told him, after he got back to the house, "There's no way in the world should you ever do that without asking his parents. It's not up to you." He said, "Well, I'll," he was a big tease, the biggest tease on the block. So—I don't know, but anyway, that's—I think—I got away from all of that. Wanted to ride in a—different experience. But I got to looking at all these different experiences and I've enjoyed every one of 'em. I think it's hilarious. In the service, things we did in the service. And things—you know, the plane crash. There's a lot of experiences to put this on hold, you know. So I really enjoyed everything I've done immensely. The horses. The experiences on the—well, when we was on one of these, for instance, it's a short, quick deal. When we were on the ranch. Mr. Mokie, the guy that owned the ranch. He and I was coming across the divide one day and the horse hit something that shattered. And we turned around, came back, and got off, and it was a half-a-gallon fruit jar. We opened it up and there was jewelry and coins and what have you. And what it was—they had had a train robbery years before down at Dryden. And those outlaws had come through. This old ranch, incidentally, was known as a hangout. They had another name for it, Hangout Ranch. Anyway, Mr. Mokie owned the ranch. He said that when he was a kid he used to ride across this thing to go to see his father. And said every time you'd get near that ranch, especially if it was in the evening, the lights would go out, he'd go to the door to see if he could water his horse and feed him or spend the night, and nobody would be there. And said that one time there was a cigarette still lit. And he said, "I swore that the day I got enough money I was gonna buy this place." And he did. He bought the place.

AED: You're kidding.

NSG: That's right. He bought the place, and it was the old Hangout Ranch. Underneath the kitchen—in the kitchen there was a trap door and, apparently, these guys went down and they could go about a hundred feet down there and go out a corner—a little berm or ditch. That's where they went out—could go out. And they must've—the robbers wanted to be sure they had an exit. I don't imagine they'd run from him, but they could, you know, they didn't know who was knocking. And so he bought that old ranch. But anyway, he took this jar. And he said, "I'll take this jar, and I'm gonna take it into the jeweler in San Angelo, and we're gonna see what happened." Well, so happened that's where they—they identified one of the watches with an inscription on the back as being one that was stolen in the train deal.

AED: So they then knew.

NSG: Yeah. So he gave me a coin or two and I forget what all, little souvenirs, which some of 'em I probably lost by now, but anyway, he said, "This here—remember this." Said, "Cicero," called me Cicero, said, "just remember Cicero, you've been in on the great train robbery." (both laugh) The things like that, you know, incidents, you know. Yeah. Or being in the wrong pasture and somebody shootin' at you, or shootin' a hole in your slicker and things like that, you know it. You get a wealth of material. But I've enjoyed every bit of it. But I think the fact that the war turned me in a different direction.

AED: Exposed you to different things.

NSG: Different things.

AED: That you would never—

NSG: How can you keep 'em down on the farm. (laughs)

Florence Joyce Haedge

Date of birth: 1922
Community affiliated with: Antelope
Interviewed by Thad Sitton

TS: This is Thad Sitton. Today is November 21, 2000. I'm interviewing for the first time Florence Haedge. The interview is taking place at her home in Kingsland, Texas, in Llano County. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

Tell me, first thing, where did you grow up? Did you grow up in Antelope?

FJH: I grew up in Antelope community, yes. Antelope. And I went to Antelope School, from there went to Gatesville, which was twenty-six miles. It was eight, eight miles to Copperas Cove, but they fought back and forth and finally ended up that we were supposed to go to Gatesville. And—

TS: Well, you were an only child, right?

FJH: Yeah.

TS: What did y'all do on your farm, what was—what did y'all do, what did y'all raise?

FJH: We raised corn, maize, highgear, and cotton, and we had cattle, which was the main thing. And we had horses. And we bought our first tractor, John Deere Model D, in 1936. Bought our refrigerator in 1936, and went to the state fair in 1936.

TS: So, you weren't doing too bad in the middle of the Great Depression, right?

FJH: No. I was eight years old, I think I was eight. And everything was just fine. The pastures was prairie land and didn't have none of these bushes and wild cactus and stuff that's growing in the pastures. And it was good for the cattle. We didn't have no mesquite like you see now. We had Johnson grass to come up on the public road. My dad would put a hoe on his back and go out there and chop it out. No Johnson grass nowhere. And we had a tank in the pasture for the cattle and a shallow well. Everything was just great, and when Fort Hood came in, well, of course they split everything to pieces, and they drained our tanks for whatever they needed the water for, and there lay these great big catfish, big perches, that you never would fish out because you wanted to save them until they got big. So, we never got much out of that. On the side of our land was a land—I really don't even know who that land belonged to, never did try to find out, but they called it Antelope Mountain. It wasn't a mountain, it was just a low, level hill, and it was beautiful, you could see all over the country. It was just a nice place to take walks and take your dogs to go hunting, and it was just nice country around there. They didn't—everybody that had homes, we was sort of in a circle, like. All of my uncles and aunts lived around us, and it was just great. And then for church we had—I don't really know how many miles it was to church—but we had church in the country, Twin Mountain Lutheran Church. And it was there from little as I can remember until we left it. And it's still standing. And they used to have a school

for the church, it's still there. It was just a great place to live.

TS: What did the country look like around there? I'm asking, I haven't even been there. Was it a lot of open country?

FJH: Yes, open prairie land.

TS: Antelope sounds like—

FJH: That's all. Except, uh, North Hood now, as they call it. That was all bushy, had lots of trees in the pastures. And then we had one creek, Cowhouse Creek, that on special occasions like July the Fourth we would have picnics there. It had a slab going across, and I don't know if that slab is still there or not. And we were, we were all German people except one American family, American family. And it was just a great place. The land was all prairie land, and when you saw a group of trees planted around someone's home, you knowed they were put there by hand. And on Saturday afternoon, if you was a good kid in those days, done your work, raked the yard, and done this and that, you could go to town in the afternoon. And those days, like Copperas Cove—have you ever been there? Well, it's nothing like it used to be. We, we, uh, we had in front of the theater—which we didn't have a theater then, but now they got a theater there—and Herbert Snyder, who's not there no more, had a store right in front of this parking lot, was just ground, and that's where we had our trades day. Whatever you bought in the store you'd get tickets, and if you got a ticket what they was trading off, you got it. And it was good, and the kids enjoyed it because there was ice cream to go get and a lot of soda pop to go get. Hamburgers for a nickel, and soda water was a nickel. (laughs) It was just real nice. And now—first thing I heard about Copperas Cove one time, they had had a red light, and then after the red lights (laughs) everything took place. And then I heard of a murder, and I thought, Well now, they're really in high cotton. (TS laughs) Somebody was shot. So now, all of our relatives that were in Copperas Cove, my cousin Herbert Snyder had the store, and Leo Fraze had a grocery store, too. And those were our kinfolks—you had to buy—or we sold chickens. We raised a lot of chickens, come to think of it, and when they got past two years old, you sold them. You'd sell your eggs and cream, and you took it to one store this week, and the next week you better go to the other store, where the other cousin was. 'Cause if they found out about it, they didn't like you no more. And we had one family in the whole—'course, that wasn't no relative, but their name was Thompson—they was in Antelope community, too, and we all worked together, and it was just a great place to live. And everybody raised the same thing—corn, feed, and had cotton. We didn't raise much cotton. You know, it just wasn't—just more cattle, and we had pigs.

TS: Yeah, yeah. Well, it's getting kind of dry out there for cotton. I mean, lot of years—

FJH: Yeah, it was. But they didn't—yeah, it was a little dry, and sometimes when it rained it rained too much and the cotton crop would just be ruined. But we did well. We had to walk to the mailbox, which was always good. You got away from the house awhile, not to do any yard work or something—(unintelligible; speaking at the same time)

TS: Well, so, y'all—the people in Antelope were all linked into Copperas Cove, the same families. How far out were you?

FJH: Eight miles from Copperas Cove and twenty-six from Gatesville. Reason we did go to Gatesville a lot was 'cause the feed was cheaper, and you got more for your eggs and cream, and when you took chickens in, why, you got more for your chickens. It was a little bigger town. But seems to be on a standstill, now—Gatesville. But anyway, it was good to go there. And the hill—you used to go on the road, and I remember one hill past Pidcoke, it was the roughest hill in the state of Texas. And you'd have to start way down here and gun-up your car, so it'd go really up there. But then you had to be careful 'cause it was so rough. Now, all you have to do is just relax and go on up. And all paved.

TS: Well, you know, twenty-six miles to Gatesville was a long way on those roads.

FJH: Yes, it was on the bus, too, but we liked it 'cause it didn't get there so quick. (laughs) Otherwise—this family that lived, that wasn't German, they had, they had sheep. None of the others, nobody else, had sheep. I don't know how come he did, but he did.

TS: Anybody have goats? It doesn't sound like it was goat country, at all.

FJH: No, it wasn't goat country. Not even to—I don't remember seeing any goats all the way to Gatesville. They might have had them further from—(unintelligible) and Evant—flat North Camp, where they—that's all bushy there, they probably had some, but I never—it was more sheep than goats. I never did see too many goats. It was like deer, I never heard of a deer until I came to Austin.

TS: There weren't deer running around out there?

FJH: No, there wasn't no deer, and now they have deer out there, too. And out there where our land was, even before—well, right when the camp run us out—why, kinfolks mostly they put their cattle on the open range, you know. And you go out there now you'll see cattle running around there.

And I never will forget, one time Mama and I—my daddy died during that time, so Mama and myself went to visit, we went to the church and then took our lunch and then went out to where we used to live to eat. Well, one time we went there, and the house was full of sheep. I just thought, that's just a little too much, I opened the door and let them out. And then, one time we came there, well, then the tank destroyers, I guess, they just went right through the trees and just smashed them. We had beautiful cedar trees and hackberry trees, just planted for shade, you know—really pretty yard and everything. They just split them open. And then towards the last we went there, and then the house was burned. You could tell it was burned, everybody's was burned, you could tell by the cedar trees that was left, they didn't get all of them. The top was burned—we had a two-story house. And we had a carbide plant for lights, in the ground. And—

TS: Tell—I think you ought to tell how that works, because I'm not sure people understand those. I've heard about it, but—it had a pit, right?

FJH: Yes, deep down in the ground, and then it had another—this was the outside, and then on the inside was a little cylinder-like, just enough—you bought carbide in a hundred-pound can, and you poured that down in the middle, and on the outside was water. And then it was fixed to the house.

TS: It would feed that carbide into the water, and then the gas would come—it was a gas, right? That you would light at the fixture?

FJH: Uh-huh, yeah. Yeah. And it was really a good light. I don't think anybody, I don't know of anybody else—I guess they did, I just never did heard anybody talk about it.

But anyway, we went there one Sunday, Mama and I did, and we's eating and nearly through, and I guess we set around a little longer than usual, and all of a sudden a soldier jumped out of that—you know, they dug it out, you know, was hiding—he was in that pit, in that hole—and first thing he said was, "Ladies, have you got anything left?" And liked to scared us to death, we couldn't say a word for a few minutes. 'Course, we didn't—he was waiting there to be told when they wanted him.

TS: So, you were visiting the place, and he was down in the hole left by the old carbide plant, and he was—

FJH: Yeah, yeah! He didn't say a word, I guess he thought he might scare us, but nothing was—not a sound—and of course we didn't take our dog with us, 'cause it was Sunday.

TS: You didn't know he was there until he jumped out.

FJH: I didn't know he was there, and Mama didn't either. We were eating, we ate on the steps that was left. That was all that was left, then. And then he jumped out.

TS: Well, what was in the Antelope community? What, uh—the Lutheran church you mentioned, what else?

FJH: Well, our little school. They had a Baptist church, a little white Baptist church. And a little white house for the teacher, the principal and his family, and he had room enough for two teachers. There was two ladies. The principal and his wife and boy lived in one side of the house and the other was two ladies that was teachers. And it was always two when the principal lived in that house. That's three buildings and then the outhouses! (laughs) That was, that was—well, they had a shed for some of them that drove or rode their horses to school. One of them rode a jackass to school. That was enjoyable, we tried to ride him during the lunch hour. They stand still. Somebody poked him—I was on him behind another girl. She couldn't make him move. One of the boys, they always know what to do, poked him in the side, and when he did he pitched his back end up. I went straight up in the air and I come down just like I left. (laughs) And talk about hurt! But anyway, it's a lot of fun.

TS: You landed right on the jackass's back.

FJH: Right, right where I was sitting. That's unusual. But I never done it again, you never could trust them boys, they'd always do something. But he didn't move, he didn't take a step forward or backward, he just stood still.

TS: What did the school look like? Just anything about the school. How did the teachers teach? So, it's a two-teacher school, it's gotta be divided into two classrooms—

FJH: Yes, it's a nice building. We had an auditorium, okay, and there was seats, it don't know how many. It was a long building, a long room. And in the middle they had these sliding doors, and that made another classroom. And then, they had the—where the little kids were, that was a big room. And we stayed in one room the whole time. Yeah, we stayed in one the whole time, until finally we got smart and they built another room on, and another class was taught in that room. And that was an extra room—two, three, four, and we had a big hallway.

TS: So, they made it into a four-room?

FJH: It was, let's see, the little ones, and then the auditorium two, that's three—yep, that's right. And that lasted—didn't last too long until the camp run us—well, the camp didn't run us out, but, you know, all the kids went here and there, and there wasn't any school no more. They either went to Copperas Cove or Gatesville. So, it didn't last long, but it was there through all the grade school.

TS: Do you think it had consolidated before the takeover? Do you think it had gone into town? It was still, it was still, operating?

FJH: Yeah, if that camp hadn't come run us all out, why, it would have been there. Well, you just went to the eleventh grade then, too. And I don't know, they might have—I guess maybe they would have. Yeah, I'm sure they would have, because any of these high schools in town, they soon started going to the twelfth grade—(unintelligible) and Gate—uh, Copperas Cove, has a big high school now, too. It was big then, too. Gatesville is where we all had our county meets and things.

TS: What would happen at the county meet? I know it's the schools in the county school system.

FJH: Well, we all played against, we all played against, other schools. And a lot of them played—well, ever' kind of sport there was—track, and throwing them disks, and tennis, I played tennis. Just competed against them, all the other communities. But that wasn't near as interesting—like in Antelope, uh, when school let out, they always had barbecue that that was known all over the country.

TS: Yeah, tell me anything you remember about that. That was like school closing, right?

FJH: Yeah! Yes, it was. And the men would stay up all night, they had pits in the ground and grilled over them, and I don't know how many cattle they killed, I really don't know. But anyway, they had it from yonder to here, and they'd stay up all night barbecuing. And the next day, you ate at twelve o'clock, and I want you to know it was good! And everybody always—they had people who'd bring other things to eat to go with the meat. And we had soda water and candy, and soda water was a nickel, also. And it was just a lot of fun, and we usually had a baseball game in the afternoon. And then most of the time we had a three-act play, and that took us—we had three-act plays for entertainment during the season, and we'd go from Antelope to Mound or Pearl, all those little old towns you probably never heard of. That was North Camp, what is North Camp, now.

TS: So, you'd go on the road with the three-act play, is what you're saying. And they'd come to you probably, too, with theirs?

FJH: Yeah! Yeah, they did, and we went just not to one, we went to several places. At least three different places I can remember one time. And 'course, everybody did real good in those plays, because they always wanted to go to other places, and they served food (laughs) and drinks.

TS: So, you'd be the entertainment at their school, and then they'd come be the entertainment—when would this be going on?

FJH: During school.

TS: Would it be, like, on a Friday?

FJH: Oh, yeah, yeah. It was usually on Fridays, yeah. It was usually on Friday. Unless something happened and they'd have it in the middle of the week—(unintelligible) but Gatesville, I mean Antelope community, even—(unintelligible) you can just tell, you can still tell when you're in the Antelope community, 'cause you can look—if you've been there recently—you've been there, haven't you?

TS: I have not been there. I'm just starting.

FJH: When you come to Copperas Cove and drive out—what is the name of that highway? I don't even know the number, what number it is. But anyway, like you want to go out to where the Lutheran church used to be, that's a highway that goes right straight into Gatesville. And then when you get out about middle-ways, about five or six—oh, eight miles—out of Copperas Cove, you can look to the right and you can see all the country—you know, prairie land. And the only place you'd see these bushes was—well, it was a few, low rivers—not rivers—branches, we called them. It's a lot of seepy land up there, we had some seepy land on our place, which is good in a way. Uh, you'd see trees growing. And they got a highway, and you get about eight miles out, and you turn to the right, it's a paved highway, what they use to go into the camp. And you can go in there, I haven't been in there, uh, and go back to where you used to live. I haven't been there, I haven't been there in a long time. I drive, I drive to Copperas Cove and go up to Gatesville, and from Gatesville I go through North Fort Hood and either go, I go to Kimble, that way. Go through McGregor—Moody and McGregor. But just to North Camp you drive through what used to be Mound—oh, little old mess out that way, we never was out that way very much, we stayed on this side, mostly.

TS: Did the Antelope School have a Christmas program? Mostly they would.

FJH: Yeah, every year.

TS: What would happen at those?

FJH: Well, we had programs. Every kind of occasion we'd have school programs to come on. That would

be on Friday nights. And they were enjoyable, everybody liked them. But any time anybody had anything at school, everybody was there. People all took it—you know, helped. Yeah, that's right, it's Christmas, and I don't think we had anything—I don't remember nothing at Easter. Halloween I do, I hated that!

TS: What would happen?

FJH: Well, they'd all—I can't stand masks at all, and they—you know, where there's boys it's always trouble. They'd have games, and they'd put up in the corner of a building, a room, they'd put up a tent that you couldn't see in. They'd have a washtub or something in there and put stuff that's wet, and it'd come up, and you'd feel the other end, you're supposed to grab hold of that. Ugh! It usually was some kind of rope that would absorb that water. Ugh! And all that kind of stuff, boy that was—but nearly everybody had a good time out of it. And they had, after they play so much at Gatesville, then they would have refreshments. That's about all we did, then.

TS: Well, you know, there wasn't a whole lot to do, and so people looked to those rural schools for entertainment.

FJH: They did. That's just like the Baptist church. They, uh, you know, they always had revivals. That was something to—they had good singing, and of course they had a good preacher, but the singing really was so good. And I know I did, I think the other kids did, too, they probably won't talk about it, but I know I got the cows up early, I got the calves separated from the cows—(unintelligible) it's usually in the summertime, but whatever I had to do, I got it done, so we could go that night to the singing and that preaching. And it was real good.

TS: And it didn't matter, the Baptists were putting on the best show around. The Lutherans would go see the Baptists.

FJH: They sure would. Everybody was good to everybody, everybody was a good neighbor and a good friend to everybody. You didn't hear no fussing and fighting. If it was, it was kept under the hat and didn't spread it around. And when someone passed away in the community everybody would go. And if there was a certain occasion, birthday of somebody or something, why, everybody usually knew about it, and they would go. And if somebody was coming to town on Saturday evening that you hadn't seen in a long time, and they call you and tell you, or you find out about it, you went! It was like the old days.

TS: How would they handle those, those home funerals at that time? I know it would happen—would they lay somebody out in the house? What do you remember?

FJH: I don't ever remember, I don't remember any of that, but I guess they did, come to think of it. I guess they did, I don't know. My uncle—my daddy's sister, the sister was in their house. I can remember that. Kindler, Paul Kindler, and then her name was Martha. I can remember, she was in the, as they called, the parlor—the living room, you know. I can remember that, I was a little kid. I can remember that. A kid was in the house, but then I remember them taking her to church. But I remember it, and somebody set up with her all night.

TS: But, you know, the funeral homes, at least out in the country, you didn't have that service available, so you had to, the family had to, make the arrangements themselves.

FJH: Yeah, that's right, I hadn't thought of that in a long time. Yeah, that's true, I remember, now, they dug their own graves. Yeah, I remember that, and I remember at the Lutheran church cemetery, nobody was—everybody was buried there, and then it kind of quit. I don't know, they got these other cemeteries in town, like in Copperas Cove and other places, and they buried them there. But you

know, now this camp happened, that cemetery is running over. Everybody is being buried there that comes to church there. In Copperas Cove Cemetery they—still in the same place—they took some graves from the country. You know, they had cemeteries in the community that they had to dig up, and they moved them. And Killeen is real bad, they had to move a lot of them over there, and Copperas Cove did, too. Buried a lot of people, had to dig up lots of graves and put them over there.

TS: But the Antelope—it didn't happen to the Antelope Cemetery?

FJH: Antelope didn't have a cemetery.

TS: Oh, okay. (laughs)

FJH: They went to—well, they went to Copperas Cove. Even some of my cousins did, too, lot of people went there. I don't know, they didn't bury out there at the church. I don't know how come. Like I said, it was something different, like now with Temple, where my folks are. They have buried them in what they call Old Cemetery, and they got a new one out on the highway going to Moody and McGregor. A new cemetery, so they're all burying out there. This old one is just sitting there.

TS: Uh-huh. What you're saying is that Copperas Cove—when you were in Antelope, there were a lot of German people living in Copperas Cove, right?

FJH: Yeah, there were. Yeah.

TS: So, there's a close relationship between Copperas Cove and Antelope.

FJH: And Antelope, yeah. Most—well, there was, well they had the church—lot of Baptists, too—

It was just—(unintelligible) I can very well remember, when we had spelling class, I always had mine written down in the spelling book. I mean on my tablet. I didn't have to worry, until I got called on. (laughs) We had one time—like I was talking about, the Thompson family in Antelope community were very, very good people. The oldest daughter was our first-grade teacher—Miss Margie, they called her. And she was my teacher, and, you know, kids will do anything. I did anything I thought I could get by with. I think I was the first one that invented the kids sit under the table, under the teacher's desk, I mean. After that happened, more of them got to sit down there, but I didn't do like the boys did, pull the hair on her legs.

TS: Pull the what?

FJH: Pulled the hair on her legs. (laughs)

TS: So, the teacher would have you sit under her desk for punishment.

FJH: Yeah, for punishment! For talking or—(laughs) I can still see that. I was the first one that I know of to sit under the desk. I was too scared to do anything else. But then after a while the boys got into it, too. They would do that!

TS: Pull the hairs on the teacher's leg.

FJH: Yes! They'd—(unintelligible) his leg, yeah!

TS: That is—

FJH: Terrible!

TS: That's bad. I mean, they're being punished already.

FJH: Yeah! But that punishment didn't mean nothing to nobody. But anyway, we had a lot of fun, we had

good teachers.

TS: Well, did they ever go beyond making them sit under the desk? Did they go to switching them, or—

FJH: No, no. I said no—I remember rulers, you know, these six-inch rulers they'd spank on your hand. I remember that, that was a lot of fun. Yes, I know it was a lot of fun, I never did get that, I always got to go under the desk. I think I stood in the corner some, but that wasn't enough punishment, I don't think. But anyway, we lived over it. (laughs)

TS: How was the school heated?

FJH: We had a great coal—a great, big stove, look like it had tin around it. And it had, uh, inside was just—you know, you could just throw your stuff in. And we also had a great big wood rat to live under the stage. I guess they'd come into that stove for the heat, somehow, from outside. And the stage was over there in front, and they got under that, and boy, that was scary. I never saw a wood rat before, but I saw that one! They'd come into warm, too. It was—that was a large stove.

TS: So, the wood rat's a big rat?

FJH: Just saw one, that's all I can remember.

TS: But it made an impression?

FJH: On all of us kids. It sure did, yeah.

TS: What about water?

FJH: I was just thinking, we had a pump. I can't remember if we—I just can't remember about the water, I know it was a pump, a hand pump. What did we have? I can't remember about the water. I know we had it, but I don't know where.

TS: Well, how did you—how far were you from the Antelope School, and how did you get there?

FJH: Walked! We walked I guess about two, two and a half miles—at least two. We walked through pastures, and we had to watch for the bulls, we had to watch for them old sheep, them old bucks. And it seemed like, cross a fence here and it was forever before you got to the other side. And you had to walk through branches. And people—I was told, I bet that everybody else did, you let that crawfish bite you, they won't turn a-loose until it thunders. But walk way over there, and them old bucks, with them old horns, they will sure put a move on you. That was our only problem about walking to school. And 'course, when it rained, it was terrible, too. And mommies and poppies didn't get in the car and drive you to school like they do now. That was something, it was, it was a good long walk, you had to get up early. It was two miles, I think, two and a half miles. Somebody might want to say I didn't, but I know it was that much.

TS: Well, you must have cut across. You didn't go around by the road, you took the beeline.

FJH: We cut across. Yeah. I went from our house to my cousins' house, to Glynda and Elvis. You don't want all this, but anyway Elvis, Glynda, Arlie, and Faye, they were all my cousins. Went to that house, and from there we went together cutting through pastures. One pasture was theirs, and the other, where them old bucks was, that was another pasture. I think we went through three different ones. It wasn't so bad when the weather was pretty, but boy, when it was raining, it wasn't so good. I remember one day I went to school and it rained, I got wet as I don't know what. When I got to school, I turned around and went back home. 'Cause I was wet! (laughs)

TS: You just didn't want to sit in school wet all day.

FJH: Yeah, yeah, I guess, I don't know what got into me. I was pretty immature, a spoiled brat, and I went back home. I don't remember if I came back. But anyway—that was for today. We took our lunches.

TS: What did you do at recess? You'd have lunchtime recess, and then you'd probably have a break in the morning?

FJH: Yeah, yeah. In the morning and the evening we had recess. A lot of us went to school just for recess. But anyway, it was fun. We could—if the weather was pretty and all, whatever was in season—baseball or softball or basketball—that's what we done. That's where we practiced for our county meet.

TS: Yeah.

FJH: We had a big, big playground. There was a lot of—it was a large place for our school and for the church house and the principal's house. And it wasn't too far to the country store. Bigger kids walked if they wanted to go there to get something, but they had to be sure to be back.

TS: What was—was this considered the Antelope Store?

FJH: Yeah.

TS: What, what did it look like? What was there?

FJH: It was a building, straight building, with a front porch, a place to tie your horses, drive up. It was just a country store, just a straight shot, and it had everything there. That was Antelope Store. And I guess it was about a mile, maybe two miles, from the school. I don't really know. But anyway, it was very popular, and people that—they had groceries—you know, little things, that people all around would come there.

TS: Did they grind corn there?

FJH: No.

TS: Where would you go to get your corn ground?

FJH: Well, we had our own mill, thing that you—and, you know, in those days I remember Daddy planted four rows of corn—wait, two rows of corn, and then he skipped over and he left two rows to plant something like black-eyed peas. And then—that was a lot, because he had a lot of corn. And we had to pick that like you did cotton—(unintelligible)

(visitor enters; interruption in taping)

TS: That was about what was at the store. And it was just one long room like a kind of a shotgun—

FJH: A shotgun, that's what I was trying to think about. Yeah.

TS: (speaking at the same time) Yeah, yeah, I know what they look like.

FJH: Yeah, that's what it was to the end of our time. And then they had—they had canned things, canned goods there, and of course the main thing was soda water and bread and, as they called it, lard. Things that you needed and didn't have to go to town for, big town.

TS: But we were really talking about, you were telling me how your father did the corn. It was interspersed with the black-eyed—with the field peas.

FJH: Oh, yeah, yeah. And then we raised maize and highgear, and he took maize and highgear and black-eyed peas and corn—and let's see, there was something else, some green stuff, millet—and he had his

mill, and he put that in that and grounded it up. And then we went, then he always got the chicken feed stuff in Gatesville or Copperas Cove, and that would be laying mash. And he would grind that grain all up, and then he would mix that with laying mash and feed about three hundred chickens, and our dogs and cats would also eat laying mash. (TS laughs) Yeah, that's what he done.

TS: That's what—they had to like it, right?

FJH: They had to like it! But they did, yeah. And so that was something that was good, he had his engine and he had his mill, so that took care of that.

TS: Well, how was it powered?

FJH: It had an engine, gas engine.

TS: It was a grinder, kind of an all-purpose mill, so it could grind corn, or it could make this mix?

FJH: Yeah, yeah. And that helped. The black-eyed peas—I think it was something to do with the government, too, or—I don't know. Wasn't it one time that you supposed to just plant so much, or something?

TS: Well, the cotton—but a lot of people would intersperse the black-eyed peas as—did y'all eat them?

FJH: Yeah, I can remember eating dried black-eyed peas.

TS: But you said they were hard to—picking them wasn't too fun?

FJH: Yes, they certainly were! Just like the corn, you know, or even cut the corn tops. There was always a, uh, what did we call a thing that bites you? Stinging scorpion? Scorpion, yeah! There was always a scorpion, somewhere, especially when you gathered corn. There's always one of them, and it was something to gather the crop. And then in the—I graduated, he didn't use the horses anymore to pull the wagon, but we's hauling corn or corn tops, you know, had to have that—(unintelligible) and I was always so proud of my of my daddy that he always said, "Now, you drive the tractor and stay on it, don't get off, I'll get it up there." Okay, then after a while, you watch. Every time you pick up a bundle of corn tops—fodder, what do you call it—anyway, every time you pick up a bundle, throw it on the trailer, all of the mouse fly out! And it wasn't the—snakes wasn't bad, I wasn't scared of them. It was just them little mice, and they was under every one of them. (TS laughs) And then, when we'd cut corn tops and lay them on the ground, then you have to come along with the twine and tie them, and you pick it up to tie, there was another mouse. (TS laughs) That was bad!

TS: Well, you'd cut the corn tops, when the corn ears got mature, you'd go through and cut the corn tops and lay them in the middles to dry, right?

FJH: Right.

TS: Then you'd along and get them, and that's what you—

FJH: Uh-huh, and mice come out of it. (TS laughs) And then when you got them to the house, you had to put them in the barn, you know. A lot of work to farming, wasn't it?

TS: Well, y'all—most of the families were big, and you must have gotten—you were standing in for—well, you just talked about the other Haedges, your cousins, there were like five or six of them.

FJH: Yeah. There was four of them—one, two, three, four. And then there was the Mathias family, gosh, I don't know how many they had without counting them all over the fingers. And the Adolph Haedge, they had a bunch of them. Well, I was the only one.

TS: And so, what all did you do, what were your chores, most days?

FJH: Well, every morning I had to go get the—the wintertime, now, I had to go get corncobs so we could start the fire in our cook stove. And then I had to wash dishes. And if they stayed outside a long time to milk the cows and everything, I could listen to the radio to "Amos and Andy" or something. But anyway, I was kind of the spoiled brat, I didn't have to do very much. But Mama always milked fourteen cows in the morning, and Daddy fooled around, he fed the horses and done this and done that. My job was only to get the corncobs in and occasionally feed chickens and bring in the wood, too, if it was in the wintertime. Like I say, I didn't have to do very much.

TS: Milking fourteen cows by hand must have taken her a few moments.

FJH: Mama did that. Yes, it did. Bless her heart, I don't know how she done it. When I got big enough, they thought they'd have a little help. I milked every once and a while, but I didn't—you know how spoiled kids are, they didn't do much. But I wish not I had done more.

TS: Well, a kid isn't inclined to volunteer to do more. If they say you will do more, you will get out there, you're being assigned six cows every morning—but if they don't say it you don't do it.

FJH: Oh, yeah, uh-huh, I never did. I never did. I really had a good life at the farm. I really miss it. And now, when the cool weather comes, you think about, Oh, if we just had some hog meat! (laughs)

TS: How did you—how did y'all manage your hogs? Where did you keep them? Uh, what did you feed them? And just anything about that.

FJH: We always—we had a pen close to the barn, big enough pen where there was one end for the hogs to sleep under their shed, and one place for them to drink and eat. And in the summertime, they had a place for them to wallow in the water. And the back room was on the other end. We fed them corn on the cob, we didn't shell their corn. And we had slop. That's what consisted of what's in the house and besides that always fixed up a bucket of milk and shorts, that was a feed, and gave that to them. And we only always had two, two little pigs. We got them from my uncle, he raised them. Poland China, black-and-white-striped, yeah. And we had only two, every year. And that's what we—and when the green stuff come up, like cane or millet or highgear, even, too, anything green, we'd take a bundle, make a bundle, and we'd cut it with a knife and carry it to them to eat something green. And in the wintertime it was just corn and we called it mash—that milk and shorts and whatever else. And sometimes he'd put in that grain that we ground, black-eyed peas and all that stuff. We raised them just for fattening, you know, for beef—I mean, pork—to kill.

TS: Well, this is about hog-killing time, right now.

FJH: Yes, it is! You know, I had a—we always made sausage, of course. The sausage looked like beef sausage, but it wasn't. But anyway, we had sausage—(unintelligible) when I first came to Austin, Mama always told me to take something, so I always did. You know where it was? It was right under the car seat, I was afraid people'd make fun of me, 'cause I had that sausage. I could kick myself, a lot of times. Nobody ever knew I'd done such a thing. But kids would—I wasn't a kid no more, but, you know—(unintelligible) but yeah, we made sausage, and we made soap at home, too.

TS: Made lye soap?

FJH: Lye soap.

TS: How would, how would you do that? Because I've never understood how?

FJH: Well, let me see if I can remember. (laughs) I know we bought cans of lye. One can of lye to our wash—I mean, we had the pot.

TS: Yeah, black pot.

FJH: Yeah. Huh, and now, by george, I don't know what else. I really don't know, I never had to do it.

TS: Hog fat. Lard, I guess.

FJH: I don't even remember that. I know they cooked it and they made cracklings, but that was an art, too. I don't—I mean, I don't know how they did it. I don't know how they made soap. I know it took lye. But I know Mama—they had a knife that long and I've still got it—to cut it. What does go into? Now, if my cousin Arlie was here, she'd say, that'd be just like you, to forget.

TS: Well, did y'all have electricity, or not? You didn't have it.

FJH: Just the carbide.

TS: Carbide. Okay. Yeah. So you had wood stoves—

FJH: We had a wood stove in the kitchen, that we could cook on. And we had a kerosene stove with an oven on the side, burners here. And in the living room we had a tall kerosene heater. And that was all. And Daddy slept upstairs, Mama and I slept downstairs. We had featherbeds, and I never knew what it was to really be cold. And then after the camp run us out, we went to Temple. Mama and I slept upstairs again. He bought us a house before he died in Temple, and Mama and I stayed upstairs. The heat was downstairs—(unintelligible) but anyway when you sleep upstairs, you got featherbeds and everything else, you don't have to worry about making your bed.

TS: It just stays there.

FJH: It stays there until Mama decides it's time to make it. (laughs) But in the country we always kept good warm with featherbeds. I can remember, Daddy slept upstairs, and he had two beds where he slept. His bed was a featherbed and all that stuff, but on this side I can remember a shucks, a shucks mattress.

TS: Corn shucks.

FJH: Yeah. I never did remember anybody sleeping on that bed, it made too much noise for one thing. (laughs) But I don't even remember what happened to all of that.

TS: Well, did you keep—did you keep geese?

FJH: No, we never—no, wasn't no water around. They like water don't they? And ducks either, never did have any. And we didn't have no deer. All we had was polecats, snakes, and armadillos, and mice and rats. That's all I can think of.

TS: Well, the polecats liked that open country.

FJH: Oh, yes, they did! Many a many a time my daddy had to get out there in the night. We had what they called a chifforobe, where we kept dishes in and everything, and on top was a place where Daddy had his tobacco and guns. And he'd have to get out of bed from upstairs about three or something, always an hour, you know, you'd been in bed awhile and hate to get up. The dogs would always bark and you always knew what it was. We had chickens, you know, and they'd roost outside on the cedar trees. Some would go in the thing, but most of them slept outside. Couldn't make them go in. So, you had to get them things, or they'd kill our chickens. But he'd have to go, and I always wonder to this day—you know how dogs go around an animal you're trying to kill, especially when a man comes up to them to kill them—how in the world he missed killing my dogs. But he never hit a dog. He was always, uh—it was always a good stinky polecat. (laughs)

TS: Well, you don't blast a polecat with a shotgun without making—generally speaking, you're gonna make a big stink, right?

FJH: Yeah, that's true. They'd always be—(unintelligible; speaking at the same time) that's right. We had rattlesnakes, but, you know, we all knew they were there, and of course I guess it's because they never got anybody within the family or anybody close to us that got bit by them. We never did. They'd bite my dog, and, you know, the only thing that would save him was that hog lard, you know. We always kept that, and Daddy always kept some skin, and he would make him eat some of it, and he would rub it all over with that stuff. And they never did die, thank goodness.

TS: So, that was his, that was his treatment for snakebite?

FJH: Uh-huh.

TS: I guess if you'd gotten bit, then, you might have gotten—

FJH: I carried around many a fat piece on my foot. You get a sticker in your foot? I went to bed with a sock on my foot just about every night of my life. I'd run around barefooted and get stickers in my feet, wouldn't let nobody get them out. And so, that stuff draws it out. And it draws the poison out from my dogs. Boy, their head would get so big.

TS: Well, how did y'all run your cattle operation? Did he make more of his money, was that more of a money crop for the family than anything else?

FJH: Yes. Yes, it was.

TS: How would he, how would he do his cattle? Now, the farm is fenced, right? The pasture is all fenced.

FJH: Oh, yeah. Well, he kept all of his milk cows separated. When the cows got good-sized, he would put them in another pasture. Not together, we always separated the calves from cows anyway, but—when he got to where he wanted them for butchering or for sale, they'd go in another pasture that was fenced, and he'd feed them different. And we just had good stock all the time, never had no disease. The Lord blessed us that way. We had lots of cattle. And the saddest thing was, whenever the time to leave, big old eighteen-wheeler come up there and he had to let them go on that truck. You know, he had to sell everything. That was sad.

TS: So, you've never forgotten them loading the cattle.

FJH: No, and I'll never forget my horse, I had Jim. He was old already. I'll never will forget, I had to lead him to the truck and let somebody carry him off. Always, from this—I don't think anybody in their right mind, or has any sense at all about farming, will ever forget leaving their home.

And it was a chore, but we had white-head, white-faced cattle. We had some Jersey. And when a cow and a calf, you know, he had it so few years, why, if prices were good, well, he would sell a cow and a calf. And people would come out to the farm and buy it from him, we didn't have to all go and—

TS: So, you didn't have to make a cattle drive to Gatesville. The cattle buyer would come around and say, "You got any you want to sell?"

FJH: Yeah. And if they didn't give the right price, they went off without any. (laughs) So, that's what it was, and he kept good fences, and you always kept a good bull. And if he got to where he'd run off to see what's going on somewhere else, you got rid of him. I remember Daddy—we always had good luck with cattle. Some people had blackleg in the community, and that was bad.

TS: Well, fourteen milk cows—you must have been selling—

FJH: Well, we sold milk, we sold our milk. We sold cream.

TS: Okay.

FJH: We had a separator, and you separated the milk and then, uh—

TS: What—would you just pour it? Was it a hand—

FJH: Let's see, what it is went like that. Four legs, four covered legs up, and had a big old thing at the top where you poured your milk in, and then one come out here and one come out there.

TS: So, the cream would come out—so, you'd spin it, right, it's kind of a centrifuge thing, they're different, and the cream would come out one—so, then you got the cream out of the milk, and you got skimmed milk.

FJH: Yeah, yeah. That's what went into the chicken feed and the pigs. Sometimes the pigs were lucky, they got good milk. When they were babies—(unintelligible)

TS: Well, how did you sell the cream?

FJH: We had cream buckets. Uh, let's see. Yeah, oh, gosh, that cream business was something. We took it to the—I told you about it—two cousins in Copperas Cove. One at the one time, then the other. We took the cream in, and we had cream buckets, they called them. And 'course, we saved our own for butter. And that's the way it was, and you had to do that every morning and every night. In those days, before we got our refrigerator—I don't know, we didn't even use a refrigerator for that. I can remember, we had water coolers, with the sacks around them, and that's where we put the cream in and milk, too. And that's where we kept—and you know? That worked.

TS: Were they homemade water coolers, or were they store-bought?

FJH: They're store-bought.

TS: What did they look like?

FJH: Got four legs, go up, up on top you put water, you had a trough, trough. And Mama made it out of chicken-feed sacks, a white cloth—thick, it was a thick cloth—and hung it around it. You hung it around that thing, and that water would seep down, and it was cool.

TS: I know, it really works.

FJH: That's before your time, I imagine.

TS: It's before my time, but I've heard about that. Actually, my grandmother had a cooler. One of my earliest memories, she had an evaporative cooler of some sort like that.

FJH: Yeah, yeah, it was good. And eggs, eggs we kept in the smokehouse. Never thought of putting them in—well, wasn't no place to put them, I don't guess. But the eggs—and lots of times we'd sit there and look through them, too. Only thing that was easy to take care of was—

TS: Let's see, we were just talking—what we've really been talking about is all the things that you did in the household. You know, you got milk from fourteen cows every day, way beyond what you can use. You'd sell the cream. How did you make the butter?

FJH: We had a four-cornered jar with a crank on top, and we turned it.

TS: Uh-huh. Oh, it was one of those. I know what they are. So, that's how you made your household—you didn't need like a huge quantity of butter for three people.

FJH: No, no. It's just like baking bread, you know. Mama always had four, at least four, sometimes six, when we's gonna have company over the weekend and she knew. (dog howls outside the house) That's my dog, Dusty! (laughs)

TS: We already got Dusty on the tape once. Now we got him twice. He doesn't like something that's going on.

FJH: (unintelligible) He may have—(unintelligible)

TS: Well, how often would—you must have had a lot of eggs to sell, too, with three hundred, you said three hundred—

FJH: Oh, yeah. We had them and sometimes even more. And we would order them through the mail. There were Czech people in West, Texas. West is the name of the town. Like you go to Waco and go on to Dallas, there's a settlement called West, and it's mostly Czech people who lived there. My mother was Czech, and she had relatives there, in West. They had a chicken—where they raised pullets, you know, where the raised baby chicks? And so we always had white layers, white leghorns, and that's where we bought them from, and they'd come by mail. And the mail carrier—excuse me—would bring them out to you. And we'd go to the mailbox and get them, and they would be a big box—four—one, two, three, four—and the little chicks would be in there. And when we'd get the chicks out, between their toes—one year, two year, and three—I still have the little thing you'd punch a hole in their foot. They would—that's how they marked them, you know, and they're only one year. That's where we ordered our chickens. And the eggs, well, that was another just like cattle, that's one way to make money for the farmers. And it was good, we had three chicken houses and one brooder house. And we heated it in the wintertime with kerosene stoves.

TS: Really?

FJH: Yeah. Then of course as they got bigger they went in the other houses. And each chicken house of course had along the walls—one, two—one up here and one down here—for the chickens to nest. And they would always, they would always lay good. Sometimes they wouldn't, naturally. When they was losing their feathers they don't lay good. But anyway lots of times you'd hunt eggs, and lots of times they'd be a little snake in there, and sometimes a mouse. I never did hunt eggs, after that! And, and, it was real good. You'd keep your chickens up and feed them good. And lots of green stuff, they could go out in the pasture a little ways. They also do that. But every night they had to be in, because polecats would come and, oh, possums would come, and so we'd kill them. So, we put them—but then when they got big, too big—they thought they's too big to be penned up—they'd go in our cedar trees and roost.

TS: Around the house?

FJH: Yeah, around the house. That was one of my other jobs. I had to sweep and rake under the cedar trees on Saturday morning if I wanted to go to town in the afternoon. (TS laughs) Or Sunday, when company would come.

TS: And we know why, right?

FJH: Yeah, yeah. (laughs) Yeah!

TS: So, you would clean up under the chicken roost to get—that was part of spiffing up the place for maybe visitors?

FJH: Yeah, yeah. (laughs)

TS: Well, would people come by and visit each other in those days? Like, families would come visit?

FJH: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh. Well, yes, they—we—did. Usually it wasn't during the week unless somebody was sick or something, but on Sundays everybody—like we went to church, we would, uh, a family would invite you, and they'd invite two or three families. And it's just like that goes on that when it comes your time you have them over to your house. And everybody was friendly with everybody, 'cause everybody, especially us kids, would want to go to this house where they had something good to eat or go to that house for something good to eat. And we'd always play Annie Over, and we had to play Annie Over at the chicken house at my house, but it was clean. And so—

TS: Annie Over. You throw a ball over a roof, right?

FJH: Yeah!

TS: It's coming, somebody's throwing it on the other side, you don't see it until it comes over the top, right?

FJH: Yeah, yeah. Go around and punch them if they got caught, then I don't know what happened. (laughs) But it was fun, that's one of the games. That's before your time. And we played marbles, and we played mumble, mumble, where you throw the knife in the ground.

TS: Mumble-peg?

FJH: Yeah, mumble-peg! I remember that.

TS: Where you make somebody, they have to—you'd stick it, and they'd have to keep spreading their feet until they couldn't do it anymore.

FJH: Yeah. And the smarter kids, when they got grown, when we got grown, they all, some of them, played dominoes and cards. And some of that that didn't have any sense would get around, somebody had a piano or something, and sing. But then, ahhhk!, that didn't last long. I'd rather go outside and play Annie Over. But anyway—

TS: Well, what about—did you have, did you have Saturday night dances?

FJH: Uh-huh.

TS: Where would they be? What would they—would they be at somebody's house, or would they be—

FJH: They'd be at somebody's house. In the summertime, they had, we had a nice pasture, but I never could have a party. You know how some of these pastures are, right close to the house, just real neat, the cows keep it all ate up just right, and it was such a pretty place. In those days, wasn't no dancing. I'm thinking about when the church young people came and had parties, they would go out there and hop around little and play, uh—let's see, what was it they played? I'll call you tonight and let you know, I can't think of the name of that. We'd play games. And then the dances, when the Baptists got mixed up in it, then we had house dances. I got to go to several of them, but I never could go to my cousins'. That's what I told you, I had to—(unintelligible)

TS: Well, would the house dance be in—would it be inside?

FJH: Inside the house.

TS: In a cleared-out room?

FJH: Yeah, sort of. I never knew of any of them outside. They wanted to have—they was usually house dances, in the house, in a room like a big living room, they'd throw some things out, like extra chairs and stuff. And usually somebody would play, they'd usually have a piano. Uh, that lasted a long time. I guess they did last a long time, it lasted until we had to move, I can remember that. But we's all in

school. Yeah, we still had house dances out there. And I can remember the first time I went to the city of Lampasas to a—back in those days, we called them honky-tonks, and I guess they call them lounges. (TS laughs) And the name of the song that was popular then was, "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire."

TS: I know that.

FJH: Do you, you remember that? How old was you, about five, six?

TS: I don't know where I know it from, but—I'm almost sixty.

FJH: Oh, good gosh. Little old kid like you! (shouts) What'd you do with your hair?

TS: It just fell out, it didn't do—

FJH: Aw, smart people are all bald-headed, aren't they?

TS: Well, that's my theory. (FJH laughs)

FJH: Oh, no, whenever that was that summer—well, that was in—well, it was in the '40s or '50s—no, it would have to be the '40s, since we left in '41 or '42. Which was it? Yeah! And Lampasas was a—I don't know how come us—my cousins, that I was mentioning awhile ago, there was four of them, and some more, and only reason I got to go was 'cause Mama was out of town and Daddy didn't care—(unintelligible) but, anyway, I got to go with them, and we went to Lampasas—all that way. And I got here at three o'clock, and I changed the key—to lock the house, you know? Daddy was gone, I don't know where he was. And I put the key in a different place, and when he come in, he couldn't get in. I don't know how he got in, but he didn't, didn't fuss at me. I had a good daddy that night. (laughs)

TS: Well, did you have work stock on the place, or did you have a tractor? You mentioned a tractor, I know you had—but did you at first have work stock and then go to the tractor?

FJH: We had horses. We still had horses to the end, but we—he never worked them so much anymore. One of them died, and then he sold them, I think. But then we got us a John Deere Model D tractor with lugs on it, because the black dirt, you know—I mean, a rubber will just spin. Does now, but people don't want no lugs on one. Don't even make them anymore, don't guess. And that's what we had.

TS: Steel wheels with lugs, and they would really grip.

FJH: They sure would. And I had to put my leg—my foot—on the axle to start that flywheel, you know? Didn't have a starter, had to turn the wheel. But I got it done! After he died, you know. Well, did it—you remember when I was telling you about all of the mice and all that stuff? That's what I was driving, was a tractor.

TS: Yeah. Well, how did it come about—do you remember, were there rumors that they're gonna put a—that Fort Hood was coming, or that some sort of military base was coming? What do you remember about how people heard about it?

FJH: Well, I just remember my daddy talking about it. I, I imagine it was rumors first because he heard it from somewhere. And then it came all of a sudden and real quick. And I know it was wintertime. Yeah, it was. It was cold, it was rainy weather, rainy and cold. It was—I can't say what month it was, but it was raining something terrible. And I remember my daddy went to Temple to buy where we had to go after we got kicked out there. He bought a place in Temple, seventeen acres on the edge of town, and it was raining so all the time I don't even know how he made it. And then, when we got all that done, everything settled, well then we had to be out at a certain date. And I remember then he got sick, pneumonia or something, and died. And Mama and I had to move.

TS: My goodness. So, it happened right—it happened even before you had moved.

FJH: Yeah, but he had—goodness, he had already sold the cattle. And we kept two calves with two calves. We kept that, that's what he wanted to take. And that's when we moved. And it happened real quick, and it was raining so hard, and got—the church people helped us. They loaded the corn on their trailers and moved it to Temple, and we had a trailer with lots of stuff on it that we had to move. And we already—they also moved our furniture and things. And then the last load—we was the last ones to leave—that Mama and I—that four-wheeled trailer was full, and it was raining and these old country roads—we went over a culvert—not a culvert, the bridge over a branch that was really overflowing, and we got—we had a '37 Chevy, got it out, but just as we got that trailer on the road, the water washed the bridge away.

TS: My gosh.

FJH: Aw man, I never will forget that. So, it was fast to get out of there.

TS: So, it went from just talking about it to all of a sudden it's a done deal, and now you have so many weeks to get out.

FJH: Yeah, it sure was. And it was such a bad time, like with the weather, you know, like it was. It was sad enough the way it was without the weather being bad.

TS: Yeah, I was thinking. I've never asked you how big your place was? How many acres did y'all have?

FJH: About three hundred, I think it was. But anyway, it all went fast. We had that neighbor I'm telling you about—'course, that thing is on—but anyway, that was the only one there that didn't speak German, and it took him so bad that—well, the others all died like my daddy, I know four or five of them that died, it was too much for them. But this one, he couldn't take it, he just shot his head off.

TS: Yeah. Well, I had heard that there were, there was, a couple of suicides.

FJH: Oh, yeah. There's always something funny.

TS: Well, it's a big—part of it was, there was so very little time for people to adjust to it. Like, if they're putting in a lake, you know years ahead of time that they're putting in a lake, and at some point—but there wasn't years, here. There was very little time.

FJH: That's right. There was another family that I went to school with, we're still together at the reunions, Edwards was their name. And he—you know, he had a book about Antelope that one, two, three people put together. Have you seen it?

TS: I have not, I know about it.

FJH: Do you? Well, it is very interesting, and it was telling about him. The soldiers were already there. And the father died, too—no, wait a minute, the father didn't die but it was almost—he had him at home where he couldn't, couldn't do anything, couldn't move. And they were kind of poor people anyway, it was so hard on them. And the soldiers come in, and they lived right by a river on their land, the river went there, and it was out of banks and everything was bad. And he didn't have enough help and everything, and the soldiers came and helped move him in one of their vehicles because they couldn't handle them in, I don't know, a car or something. And they took him, and they helped them move. And this was John Gail Edward's sisters. They're still alive, and they come to Antelope community reunion we have in Lampasas.

TS: That's where it is, it's in Lampasas?

FJH: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, there's a lot of sadness that went on, but the worst part was to give up your place. 'course, some of them, it was an answer to their prayers, you know.

TS: That's a good point, because some people were so—it depended on how attached you were to your place and how well you were doing out there, the way you felt about it.

FJH: Oh, yeah. That was—the other place was Eliga. I know nothing about Eliga, I don't even know the people when they come to the reunions. And how it got mixed up in there—there was one family that I remember. The Youngs was their name—Young. They were there, but the other people I don't remember. But it was a lot of people got run out. But at least we had it together.

TS: Yeah. Well, what communities were you aware of, what were the surrounding communities beyond Antelope? You mentioned some of the schools that you would go to, what were the nearest settlements around Antelope?

FJH: Pidcoke, and Flat—that was in North Camp—and Pearl, and, oh, Turnersville. Sounds funny, now, don't ever say it anymore, but that's it. And, I don't know, Palmer—it's not Palmer, Parmeil. Ugh! Something like that.

TS: Did they all have the same—you know, there were differences between rural communities in those days, they could be very different. I got a sense of what Antelope was like, were some of the others different?

FJH: Antelope was best of all! (laughs) Flat, in a flat place, that is—it is flat. And it's bushy, they don't have no—wish that thing wasn't on—no pretty houses, no nice places. And when you go through Flat it's just—ugh—even now. (TS laughs) And Pearl sits on a hill, and—naw—it's all right, but—I guess it's all right, but it's not like Antelope. Well, I'll just tell you. You know, where there's a bunch of German people, and they keep up their places and everything looks good, it just makes the whole country look good. Yeah. I wish I was in one of them—(unintelligible) around here. (laughs)

TS: This, this, doesn't have a German look around here. (laughs)

FJH: We got both—you still got that thing on, I can't say it. (laughs)

TS: Well, that's what I thought—they were not—that you thought where you lived was the best, the best of the lot, is what you're saying?

FJH: Yeah, yeah. Our town was the best, and where we went to church was the best. 'Course, we had a preacher that preached on dancing every Sunday, but that was one of the things, you know. He was a good preacher. It was just great, everybody made a good living off their land, and everybody grew to be a ripe old age. 'Course, I have away to go yet, I'm just thirty-nine. (TS laughs) And it was just a great place, everybody had a good home, kept their homes up, and kept their cattle up, kept their fences up, kept their crops up, and only one time I can remember was a bad time. That was during a rainy, rainy, rainy season, and we had nothing but crows! They would eat all our corn up—maize, highgear, everything! I can remember Daddy—somebody told Daddy, "Tie twine around all of your crop, they won't go in." Well, the two hundred, three hundred acres, I declare, we put twine—that stuff you wrap stuff with—wrapped it all up from one fence post to another fence post all around our corn crop and all this kind of stuff. They came in anyhow, any stupid man would have known that. Only thing to do was to sit out there with a shotgun like Daddy did and shoot them. And shoot—and Daddy was on this end and we had a friend on the other end, kind of, and shoot at them, make them go to the neighbors. (TS laughs) That really, that was bad, that's just like one year the grasshoppers came along. That's before your time, too. A lot of things happened before your time.

TS: I'm sure. Well, the grasshoppers would come in dry years, right?

FJH: Yes! You'd go out there—I don't know what we had, we had some kind of bigger than a fly swatter, big thing on the end of a stick, go out there and mash them. And it wouldn't kill them, really. Some it did and some it didn't. And your dogs helped you, too. 'Course, they didn't like that sticky stuff. We had a time!

TS: How would dogs help kill grasshoppers?

FJH: They would kill the grasshopper, but they didn't like it 'cause it stuck their tongue. I had good dogs, they'd help you.

TS: So, they'd get out there and? (mimics dog's eating noises)

FJH: Yeah. Just like when we moved, old Fort Hood come, our barn was the last barn there. Didn't have no roof on it or nothing, somebody already tore it down, I don't know who it was. But anyway, the corncribs, that's the reason they didn't get it all 'cause the corncrib was still full of corn. And that's when our church people helped us again with their trailers, as they did with the other stuff. And my cats and my dogs set there with their tongues hanging out, 'cause they could not kill all the rats that come out of there. Everybody's rat from everywhere came over there. I'll never forget that.

TS: So, they—the other buildings had all been torn down, and all the rats, the house rats and stuff, had come over to the last standing—

FJH: Yeah, that was us. Everybody was already gone. See, they moved theirselves. Some were young, and we didn't—well, didn't have Daddy no more. So, we had to wait for help.

TS: You were underhanded. You had you and your mother, at that time.

FJH: Yeah. So, we was so lucky, and it naturally was the last one. But they all came, and one'd pull through and then the other'd pull through, and they'd all load that. And they loaded the rats on to the trailer! And I'll tell you, when they took them trailers to Temple—it was raining there—and left them covered, left them standing there, where the door was to go into the barn. For me to shovel in! I waited a week I know, if not longer, for them dad-blamed rats to get out of there. And then I made Mama stand in the truck, I mean in the trailer, to help me, to see if there was a rat there. Boy, it took us forever to get that corn in our crib.

TS: Well, so the rat population rolled out to Temple and jumped out in Temple?

FJH: Yes, they did, they—they were in the barn, too, in Temple, but, ugh, them things scared me to death.

TS: Well, they'd get under the corn tops. Like when the corn tops had been drying up the middles, when you'd pick up a bundle of corn tops, they'd be a mouse under every one.

FJH: Oh, yes, sometimes a whole family. Ugh!

TS: Did, uh—I'm just jumping around, but did peddlers come out? And what kind of peddlers?

FJH: Oh, yeah, we had Watkins. They come out all the time. And he always managed to come around twelve o'clock. Dinner! And it didn't matter what it was, whatever they're selling, they'd come by. They'd have to stop at the mailbox, I mean at the road. 'Course, the mailbox was there. And they'd have to open the gate and shut it and then come. We had a little distance between us and the road. So, the dogs would bark, and we'd know somebody was coming. So, we'd be prepared for them. I remember Mama one time, we had a big porch in the back, and of course that was the door to the dining room and to the other part of the house. Mama would always tell me, "Shut the doors!" Close the doors. She'd tell me in German. So, I'd close all the doors so the smell of the food wouldn't hit him. (laughs) Yeah, we had lots of peddlers.

TS: Well, did the Watkins—would he be—was he driving a car by this time?

FJH: He was in a car, yeah.

TS: What did he have to peddle?

FJH: Horse lineament and salve of all kinds and vanilla extract and all kind of kitchen stuff. Oh, we'd buy stuff from them, and 'course that'd make them come back. It was just stuff. There was a Rawleigh, too, wasn't it? No, wait a minute. There was some other product, not Watkins but some other kind of product.

TS: I think that's right, I think Rawleigh.

FJH: Yeah, I think so.

TS: And then there were other kinds of peddlers, too. There was other stuff that might show up.

FJH: Yeah, yeah, oh, yeah. If something new came out, they'd come out to sell it. I can't think now what it was, but I remember old Watkins and that other one.

TS: There were—I've heard about pots-and-pans peddlers. I've also heard about people going around with those carbide systems in wagons trying to say, "Look what I've got, don't you want one of these?"

FJH: Don't remember that. I don't know how that carbide got there, I don't remember him—I just don't know how he bought that.

TS: Gypsies?

FJH: (laughs) I don't remember any Gypsies. Gypsies? They come around Dripping Springs.

TS: Gypsies showed up at my grandmother's in East Texas, and they were not always good news when they came around. You might not have everything that you had had the night before the Gypsies spent on your place.

Well, did y'all—did your mother have—well, we've already talked about, uh, treating the dogs for snakebite, did she have some home remedies? Or, would she pack you off to the doctor every time you got a cough? What would she do?

FJH: Well, she always—she smeared Vicks—I don't know what else—if I got a cold or something, and I even had to wear garlic one time for something. But on the way to school I took it off. I put it back one before I got home.

TS: Wore it around your neck?

FJH: Yeah! Uh-huh. (laughs) But that was when, let's see, what was some kind of flu? Every flu had a name. But I don't know what that was. But she always managed to—I never did—well, I was kind of puny—I's a little runt.

A wing on a Sunday dinner, and that was wonderful—it I was going to the hospital and didn't wiggle around too much. You know, then you had to stay in bed. And so—yeah, I can remember that.

TS: And so, you made it all the way to the Scott and White?

FJH: That's what we done, that's where we always went. My mother went there, too. And if there's anything wrong with me, that's where I went. That was a nice little drive in those days. They always had these—it was always a thrill to go, 'cause they had these dips, you know. And your daddy would always drive fast at the—you know, go down the dip, you know, thought that was funny. And but the

trouble was, we had an open door—not open door, what do you call it? No windows to roll up, just open car, and I'd sit over here at this end and over there'd be a mouse sticking his head out at us. Well, we didn't have no windows to roll up.

TS: Antelope was a wonderful place, but it had a lot of mice in it.

FJH: Well, I reckon it did! And then when we got our '36 Chevy it had roll-up windows, didn't have no more of that problem.

TS: So, what was the first car? If the second one was a '37 Chevy?

FJH: Their first car was an Overland. It looked to me—it looked like—well, it looked like a fancier Model T.

TS: Yeah. That's a pretty—Overland was a good one.

FJH: That I don't, I don't remember anymore about it. Then, we had that one where the mice were, it was a '37 Chevy, I guess. Yeah. Open. It was blue. But dadgum, I can remember how dumb a kid is. I can remember we was going to church. You know, you had to hold your, had to hold your hat and all that stuff—

(telephone rings; interruption in taping)

FJH: (unintelligible) Wasn't much excitement in my life, but—

TS: Well, did you have, uh—were y'all on a telephone system?

FJH: Yeah!

TS: Tell me about the telephone system, because the Wolfs didn't have a telephone.

FJH: They didn't? Oh, we had a good telephone. Wooden box and underneath it had a—(unintelligible) that means that while you're talking it's got to be up. But if your phone rings—we's on a party line. And I don't remember, our ring was two long ones and a short one. Or was it a long and a short? One or the other. And okay, you go talk, and then after while if the phone rings again, it might ring two long ones and two short ones. No matter whatever your ring was, it was you. Okay, if you want to listen in, you take this little thing and pull it out and they never know you're listening!

We had a good telephone, yeah, and the wires never broke in all the years that I can remember, unless a storm come through. And we didn't—we had hard winters. I mean, we had snow and cold winters, whole lot of 'em. I mean it was terrible, but I mean it was cold, and you had to keep everything—everything was full of ice when it was cold, and you really had to cover things up. But our telephone lines were always good, and everybody had the same kind of telephone, the kind you ring, pick up the receiver and yack.

TS: Did they have regular poles that they ran on, or—sometimes they would go along the tops of the fences, I remember.

FJH: Poles.

TS: Had poles? That's a good system, then.

FJH: Yeah. Oh, yeah! That's what I say, we had it—it was good out there!

TS: Yeah, that was the German influence. In East Texas they would sometimes run them along the top of the barbed-wire fences.

FJH: How come they done that? The cattle would tear that up. (laughs)

TS: They were just lazy.

FJH: Aw! What town in East Texas?

TS: I'm from Lufkin.

FJH: Good God, I always heard that was a richy place. You're from Lufkin. Well!

TS: Who told you that?

FJH: I used to work for the—well, I always heard, Lubbock, Lufkin, Odessa, and all that crap, and when I worked for the state, I worked in the print shop. Or was that at the insurance company? No, that's—we sent the stationary, envelopes, and all that kind of stuff—yeah, it was the State School. I didn't work at the print shop then, what's the matter with me? I worked in the print shop, though, we send equipment and supplies to all the schools and the hospitals. That was Austin State Hospital. Anyway, I remember Lufkin, and I always thought it was a richy place. I guess it is, you don't look so bad.

TS: It's kind of like Tyler. It had—it was a big, a fairly big place. You know, had a foundry and—well, well what—so, first off, you and your mother moved to Temple, the seventeen-acre place on the edge of Temple. Then, then where did you go from there?

FJH: I farmed two years, and then I went to—my cousin talked me into coming to Austin. And I was there for many a year. And Mama sold the place. But she got sick a lot, and we took care of her. And her mother was older, had to take care of her, so we worked together. But I went to Austin, and I was there until nine years ago. There about forty-seven years, I guess. I came to Austin in, I think it was the last part of '49. Forty-eight or '49.

TS: Then you went to work at Austin State Hospital?

FJH: I worked there for—I worked at Steck's first, I tried to get on there, but they didn't have no vacancies. I worked, they let me work for somebody that was on vacation at proofreading, stuff like that. And then after that I went to the State Hospital. And then from there to State School. And then from there to an insurance paper company, and then from there to the insurance. And from the insurance back to the state, in the print shop. That's when I retired.

TS: So, then you came back to the countryside?

FJH: Yes. Where you have to use shotguns first.

TS: Well, the countryside is different, it's not—there's nothing that compares to the rural communities that people grew up in. It's not rural in the same way, is it?

FJH: No, it's not. The people here are worse than animals.

You have to train them all over again. And if they don't have any training sense about them, you're just lost. Uh, so many people have moved in, and they're from everywhere, and some people are good, and some people that growed up where they didn't have to be responsible for nothing, didn't have to care where the next nickel was coming from, now we have welfare and that takes care of that, and here—I don't, I don't—like I said, our business is there and our business is there, you know—don't expect much of them. And just—it's all around. There's some good people that live down in there that have moved in, the doublewides, and they are really taking care of their places and taking care of their kids and everything. Hopefully, everybody will soon be that way, I don't know. But here, it's out in the open, you can have a garden, some people keep chickens.

TS: You know, I'm glad you say that, because I haven't asked you anything about—I'm sure y'all had a

large garden.

FJH: Oh, yes.

TS: Could you tell me a little bit about what you raised?

FJH: We had a big garden, and we always raised Irish potatoes and everything else. Green beans, all kind of different beans, English peas, black-eyed peas—oh, we had plenty of them in the field, but we still raised them in the garden. And radishes and peppers, just what you'd raise in a garden. And dewberries. Now they call them blackberries, I don't know why, but they're dewberries. And all kind of fruit trees. And we had wonderful peach trees, and they didn't die in those days like the do now, and we always had plenty of peaches, these great big freestone peaches. Sent them to Sealy, Texas, to kinfolks there. And it was—everybody had a garden, and it was just great.

TS: Everybody had a garden, but I've talked to some of them—it's like the Germans had bigger gardens than anybody and more different things.

FJH: They canned a lot.

TS: So, y'all canned, y'all did the sort of—canning?

FJH: Yeah, take care of the winter. Yeah, they canned a lot, and even when you killed hogs, or beef if you had it—meatballs and ribs, Mama canned all of that. We never used cans, some people used cans, we always used jars.

TS: Did the Antelope area have a beef club?

FJH: Well, here I go again. Uh, the church, there was a man that was a—he was our butcher. And at his place he had a shed built where he done his butchering. And all of us Germans—my uncles, all of my uncles and some of my cousins—each one would give a beef this Saturday and the other next Saturday on down the line until it'd start over again. This man would come out and kill the beef and get it all ready, get it ready to move to his butcher shop. And there he would divide the meat. Like, we always only took two pounds, two and a half pounds at the most, of meat that could be roast and steak and soup bones. Had soup every Sunday. And things like that. It was wonderful! Every Saturday evening late—not late, around four o'clock I guess—whoever had killed today, we'd go there and get it, and we all had it, he had it, in flour sacks, you know. And that's what he put the meat in. And then we'd take all of that meat and drive to everybody and deliver the meat to them. And, you know, you never heard—you know, whenever you go to one house or the other, you stand there and yack, but nobody was ever worried about meat spoiling. But anyway it was wonderful, it was really something.

TS: So, you'd get a different cut every week. You'd rotate through, right?

FJH: Yeah.

TS: You wouldn't get like—it'd be a really good cut one week, but you'd rotate through until you'd go through the whole critter, only it was made up of different kills every time?

FJH: Yeah, yeah. That's right. Didn't have to worry about it being too fat or anything, because in those days fat didn't hurt you. And it was good, clean—you know, just fresh—meat.

TS: Well, when you see photos of people in the '20s, farming people, uh, nobody's overweight very much.

FJH: No.

TS: There's too much hard work!

FJH: That's true, that's right. Yeah, you're right there, you don't see—like now, all you see, these young people, fat-butted things. (laughs) It's just terrible. Some people, some women, weren't fat, but, you know, there's always a reason behind some fat people. It could be some problem they got. I always looked like I was nine months pregnant, but there's a problem I have. Besides eating. (laughs) But anyway, that's true. In those days they weren't—you didn't have, like now, your good gas pains, and, oh, you just don't feel good, and you want to sit, like I do, sit in a chair and sleep all the time. Well, if you get out and work and work all that off, you feel better. And you wouldn't collect all that fat.

TS: Well, everybody had to work a lot.

FJH: Yes, they did. I know my daddy and mama did, everybody did. Yeah. Wasn't no certain people—I never knew of a lazy person, except when Mama and I called my daddy that a lot of times. But anyway, that was just fussing off.

TS: Well, your father was—he was a lot older, right? Didn't I see that in a note that he was sixty-two when he died?

FJH: Yes, and Mama, when she died, she was eighty-three.

TS: I know you're thirty-nine years old, but how old—how old were you when the takeover came in?

FJH: I don't know, I just got pictures, I don't know how old. But I was a baby, a little bitty—I was an infant yet, when they got me. And I know where they got me, and all that stuff.

TS: No, no. I mean when everybody got put off Fort Hood, how old were you?

FJH: Oh, how old was I? I was eighteen. Seventeen or eighteen.

TS: So then, all of a sudden, you and your mother were running that seventeen-acre—what did you do on that seventeen-acre place? What did you raise, there?

FJH: Corn and highgear and maize. I didn't raise no cotton!

TS: So, were the Antelope people generally not big into raising cotton?

FJH: Well, yes.

TS: Or, did some of them—was it just your family that didn't do it?

FJH: Just my family didn't have too much of it. We just didn't have it. We had—I guess we'd always have about three bales. We didn't do much, that was enough.

TS: How many acres was it?

FJH: That was—oh, I don't know. I don't know, I'd tell you the wrong thing, probably. But it was small acreage, we just had about three bales.

TS: Three bales is not—

FJH: That's not much, no, but like I say we did—Daddy, well, everything—he handled everything but Mama worked all the time, too.

TS: Somebody has to do a lot of work with a three-person family to raise three bales of cotton. Cotton is hard work.

FJH: Yeah, yes it is.

TS: Did you ever pick it? What do you remember about picking it? (FJH laughs) It was fun, everybody

says how much fun it was.

FJH: It was fun, I—oh, sometimes I'd pick, sometimes I'd get smart and Mama and Daddy be sleeping, I'd get out there on that trailer and fill my sack up. When they woke up, I'd say, "I've been working while y'all sleeping," you know. They'd say, Where's your sack? I'd have it and I'd say, "Ready to be weighed." And I'd got it off the trailer! (laughs) 'Course, they knew it. But, you know, I didn't have to pick. (laughs) But that's the way it was.

TS: Well, did you ever go to the gin? Did you ever go with him to the gin? Where was the gin?

FJH: In Copperas Cove.

TS: What do you remember about the gin?

FJH: Big old place, lots of rats there, too. It was a big place, and I remember we had to wait awhile, a good while, while they run it through. I didn't pay much—I didn't go into see how it worked. I've walked through it several times, but I didn't see it work. But it was at Copperas Cove.

TS: You'd put it in the wagon, and he'd pull it eight miles.

FJH: Yeah, and he took it to Copperas Cove. That poor old gin's not there. Nichols used to run it, I think. Yeah.

TS: Was there a gin at Antelope? I bet you're going to say no. Was there a gin anywhere in the Antelope community?

FJH: Nothing in the Antelope community except the country store, Antelope Store. And it's just community.

TS: It was spread out across—

FJH: Spread out.

TS: It was spread out, and there was a school. Were you telling me before that the Baptist church was very close to the school?

FJH: Yeah, it was on the grounds.

TS: On the grounds.

FJH: Yeah.

TS: And the Lutheran church, where most people attended, was—

FJH: On the other end by twin—there were twin mountains, and it was on the other side. We had—I don't even know how far it really was from us, but that's where all us Deutschmens went to church. Now, it's, uh—back in those days, men sat over here and women sat over here. Kids usually sat up at the front, and when you graduated from the front, you went up in the balcony. And now it's all mixed up, but isn't it funny how churches used to be. I can remember all—and then after a while men and women, the wives and husbands, sitting together.

TS: But in your earliest memories, they were still sitting them on different sides?

FJH: Yeah.

TS: The Baptists did that, too, up to a point, then they started—

FJH: Those Baptists up there, everybody sat everywhere. They weren't that way. Only them Deutschmen sat a little bit different.

TS: What do you think, how many people would there be in the church, like on a good Sunday? A hundred people?

FJH: At our church? Oh, yeah, there was a lot of them there. Oh, I don't know, gosh, but I know the church was always full, top to bottom. I guess it's about two hundred. If not, it was in the hundreds. I don't know how many. Somebody else might come along and put another number down. Yeah, I just couldn't say, but it was a lot of us. And now that that Fort Hood is in there, you know, I don't know anybody hardly no more. All the old ones are all gone, and we built, they built, another church in Copperas Cove. And 'course the Baptist church is in Copperas Cove. Well, that just tore that church up, they went everywhere—the Baptist church there in Antelope. But I don't know how many really went there.

TS: Did a lot of people from Antelope end up moving to Copperas Cove? Or, did they just move all over the place?

FJH: Moved all over the place.

TS: Like I know, you went to Temple. So, just moved wherever they could find another—

FJH: Place, yeah. Like these four cousins of mine, they moved to Seward's Junction. You know where that is, Seward's Junction?

TS: I think I know.

FJH: Yeah, It's where that intersection you go to Lampasas is?

TS: Yeah! Yeah.

FJH: And they bought that, on the right coming out, they bought that on the right-hand side. They used to have a big white house there. And then the brick house, that's my cousin from Dallas, they moved down to take care of her parents, my uncle and aunt, and they're still there. But the white house is gone. Her daughter got the house, and they chopped it in two and moved it around in the country there and put it back together, and her daughter lives in that. And some of my cousins moved to, oh, somewhere in Dallas, went to Dallas. They just like you said, moved everywhere.

TS: We've got—(interruption in taping) what you've just said was your grandfather bought a wooded area down in the southern part of the Antelope community, and all of the families got their stovewood there, right? Mainly, that's what it was—

FJH: That's what it was bought for.

TS: What it was bought for, and you had to have stovewood. If you didn't own some woods for it, you had to pay somebody for it.

FJH: That's right, yeah. Yeah. I guess he, I guess he knew that, 'cause it's mostly prairie. Like on our land, there was not no wood, no trees, or no nothing, you know. And that's where they went. I never did go there. He always went, he took a team and the wagon.

TS: Your father?

FJH: Uh-huh. And went there and got stovewood and sawed it up. And then Christmas trees, they got that there, too.

TS: Well, you really needed a patch of woods, you burned so much stovewood in those days.

FJH: Yeah, sure did.

John A. Haedge

Date of birth: 12 October 1907
Community affiliated with: Antelope
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase

AED: This is Amy Dase and, your name is John Haedge. [Today is May 3, 1998, and we are in Lampasas at the Antelope-Eliga Reunion. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.]

JAH: John Haedge.

AED: And it's May 3, 1998. I was hoping you could tell me about when your family first came to this area.

JAH: This area—

AED: Well, to Antelope? To Coryell County?

JAH: Oh, I was born there.

AED: You were born there.

JAH: In Coryell County, yeah.

AED: Right, and when did your family come there?

JAH: That's when this country was open. No fences. No houses. They moved up the _____ (??) of Texas, Austin County, in a wagon and _____ (??) and they lived in a tent until they got a two-room house built.

AED: Really.

JAH: Then they had to fence all the premises, which they had land through, from the father. He bought three sections. And they had eight children. Put them all in a hat, each one, what they drew was their tract. So that's the way that that was located over in _____ (??), _____ (??) Latham Prairie.

AED: Latham Prairie? Okay. And the two youngest daughters, they didn't draw for land?

JAH: The youngest daughters? I don't know how that worked.

AED: Somebody else was saying that there were ten children.

JAH: Nine.

AED: Nine children, okay, but there were two daughters too young to be out on their own.

JAH: I don't remember.

AED: No? Okay. Somebody else had said, had mentioned about the drawing, but there were these two younger daughters who didn't draw.

JAH: They never did settle on it.

AED: They didn't? Really.

JAH: _____ (??) kinfolks bought one tract and _____ (??) I think he was a, well, he never did improve his, he just left it as it was.

AED: And so your father was one of the people who got land?

JAH: Yeah, yeah, out his, out of that family.

AED: And what was his name?

JAH: Adolph.

AED: Adolph. Right. And he had a house on that tract?

JAH: After they moved there, they built them a house. That's what I was telling you, they built a two-room house. And it was all open. All they'd see were _____ (??) was the sheep and there wasn't many of them—(unintelligible) herded a bunch of sheep and stayed with them.

AED: So they were ranching and farming? Or just ranching?

JAH: Well, I guess you'd call it both. You had to till the land for it to be suitable for farming, breaking it down. And if it's grassland, of course, they couldn't run stock on where they were going to raise a crop, they'd put fence around it.

AED: And when were you born sir?

JAH: Nineteen-O-seven, October twelfth, the day the cow jumped the moon. You've heard that, haven't you?

AED: Uh-huh. That's great! What do you remember about growing up there, when you were young?

JAH: I can't hear you.

AED: What do you remember about growing up there?

JAH: Hard work, hard work.

AED: What kind of work?

JAH: Farm work.

AED: Right. Out in the fields?

JAH: Yeah, milked cows, hoed cotton and corn. What we raised, we ate. We did go to the grocery store for sugar and flour and other things. But, beef, hogs.

AED: Vegetables?

JAH: Yeah.

AED: When you went to town where did you go?

JAH: Copperas Cove.

AED: To Copperas Cove. And what would you go there for? For, like you said, flour and to take, would you

take your cotton to Copperas Cove?

JAH: Yeah, they had a gin.

AED: And how often would you go to town? Not very or—

JAH: Not very often. Well, when you run out of commodities, that's when we had to get them. But them days you bought more than just a quarter's worth. Flour, we would buy forty-eight pounds of it at once instead of a _____ (??).

AED: Because, your mother would make bread?

JAH: Yeah.

AED: Tell me about your house that you lived in.

JAH: Well, the first house wasn't up to modern, but the last house was.

AED: So there were two different houses?

JAH: Yeah.

AED: And the first one—

JAH: That was where all the children were born.

AED: Including yourself?

JAH: Uh-huh. I don't know, it might have been three children home when they built it.

AED: Did you need more room? Was it a bigger house?

JAH: I guess, it's just a better home.

(others speaking to JAH)

AED: And the newer house was a bigger house?

JAH: Yeah, it had about three bedrooms, but the first house we lived upstairs. So that meant the boys stayed upstairs and the girls downstairs. It had stairs.

AED: Was the new house on the same tract of land? So they were close together?

JAH: No, we built into the old house, remodeled it.

AED: Oh, okay, so it was the same building. And how many brothers and sister did you have?

JAH: Now?

AED: Then.

JAH: Oh, there was three girls and six boys. You saw the photo?

AED: Yes. And were the summers—in the summers you worked in the fields and picked cotton and what else?

JAH: Well, to prepared for winter we got to cut our wood for winter to store, all stuff like that. We had to _____ (??). It's a great old world, _____ (unintelligible). In so many different ways.

AED: Tell me what you remember about the school and going to school.

JAH: How long I went to school?

AED: Yes.

JAH: A grade a year.

AED: A grade a year. And how long did you go for?

JAH: Went through tenth grade and graduated, that's the _____ (??). And then, bigger schools, they taught eleventh grade, we went there—(unintelligible)

AED: How many children do you have?

JAH: I've got two living. Had three.

AED: Do they live in this area?

JAH: Oh, yeah. Not this area, Killeen.

AED: What do you remember about when the land was taken?

JAH: Huh?

AED: What do you remember about when the land was taken?

JAH: Well, I guess there's two ways. My father always said you can give up stuff willingly, but when you are forced, he says, you sacrifice (??) it. Think about it. Give it up willingly, but when somebody says you get on and get out of here within the next thirty days, you that's a damn shame. You know what _____ (??), I'd sacrifice it.

AED: Did you know that it was going to happen or you really just had that short notice?

JAH: See, I wasn't in it, I wasn't in it.

AED: Okay.

JAH: My folks, you mean, when Fort Hood took over?

AED: Right.

JAH: I understand. But that, that's when the trouble began. The only other thing—my twin brother, I had a twin brother.

AED: You did?

JAH: And he was. They would quote him a price. Tell him, Are you out of the camp area? He said the best thing he could have told them was, told them no, he said, then the prices would jump up.

AED: Really?

JAH: No one had force, they had to comply. There's different stories—(unintelligible)

AED: So he was your twin, and lived there, but you'd moved out already?

JAH: Got married.

AED: Did you meet your wife there?

JAH: At the hospital. Hurt my hand and so I had an infection. Got all cut up, had to go to Scott and White hospital to get it. She was working for the church. She came over to see me. _____ (??) pretty long.

AED: How did you hurt your hand?

JAH: Fishing. We had to—we tried to raise your arm to see to cut the top off of the corn stalk, bundled it up. And once you do that you've got to tie a string around it to make it a bundle. And we did that when the dew was on the ground. The day before we went fishing. Fish _____ (??) fence _____ (??). I _____ (??). Nothing _____ (??).

AED: That's too bad.

JAH: Scott and White couldn't hold my teeth still.

AED: Really?

JAH: When I got to Scott and White, they _____ (??), when Dr. Scott was still living.

AED: Really?

JAH: And he, was going to cut me and do whatever the hell it is and I guess he'd gone to work and the nurse hollered, "Wait a minute, he ain't asleep." That's the last thing I remembered, "Wait a minute, he ain't asleep."

AED: And then you were?

JAH: I guess I was, I can remember that much. She said, "Wait a minute, he ain't asleep."

AED: Tell me some more things about working the land?

JAH: We didn't have a lot of machinery, just had a horse and everything. Long as I was at home we never had no tractors, only horses and trucks.

AED: So when you went into town, too, you probably went on a wagon?

JAH: Yeah, wagon or buggy or surrey, whatever you want to call it.

AED: What were the roads like?

JAH: Bumpy. No black top. Some of them might have gravel.

AED: There were roads though, or paths maybe is a better way to put it?

JAH: I might call it cow trail.

AED: Did your family own a car, a vehicle, at some time?

JAH: Yeah, 1917.

AED: That's pretty early.

JAH: It was a Buick. I don't but history repeats itself. _____ (??). But anyway, we were—tires were rationed, I guess that was World War I. Food rationing, and all of that. Well, they had to. That was to end the violence—(unintelligible)

AED: Were you old enough to vote when you still lived there? Or had you already gone?

JAH: Again?

AED: Were you old enough to vote?

JAH: Yes, I was twenty-one.

AED: Did you still live there then?

JAH: Yeah, I guess I did.

AED: Do you remember where you went to vote?

JAH: I was twenty-one.

AED: Do you remember where you went to vote, where you cast your ballot?

JAH: Copperas Cove.

AED: At Copperas Cove? Okay.

JAH: Those were the voting places, where it would have been Coryell County.

AED: There were something like, I don't know, twenty, thirty districts—precincts around. Would you go to, ever have reason to go to Killeen or Temple to do business, or did Copperas Cove pretty much have what you needed?

JAH: Yeah. Not unless there was a reason. Maybe to—just for amusement when Ringling Brothers and Barnum Bailey come to town, we'd go to see the show.

AED: Did you belong to a church?

JAH: Yeah.

AED: Which one?

JAH: They call it ELCA now. Then it was a Lutheran church. They call it ELCA now.

AED: Where was it located?

JAH: Well, the one that was—see, all the churches they have a different _____ (??) Some get confirmed, others get baptized, and so forth. I was confirmed in the Missouri Synod. That's a Lutheran church. We moved to a _____ (??) different synod. Then it was the ALCA, American Lutheran, so instead of Copperas Cove we just, we went to that one, it was within walking distance.

AED: But the one in Copperas Cove was—

JAH: It's still there.

AED: It's still there. So that's the church that you went to when you were growing up?

JAH: That's where I joined church.

AED: And is your family buried in cemeteries here locally?

JAH: In Copperas Cove.

AED: Tell me what you remember about Copperas Cove? What kind of commercial business did they have there?

JAH: General stores, groceries, dry goods, they sold drugs, they sold cream, whatever you had to sell, money of exchange.

AED: Do you remember a broom factory?

JAH: Broom factory?

AED: Uh-huh.

JAH: Right down the road.

AED: Do you remember it?

JAH: Jenson Broom Factory.

AED: Oh, that was the name?

JAH: Pat (??) Jensen.

AED: Really?

JAH: _____ (??). I believe that it was just broomcorn. Do you know anything about it?

AED: Not very much, I'm learning.

JAH: Well, when that grows up, that grows a _____ (??). Like, cane and maize, and you separate leaves off and you _____ (??), so all those bristles are straight. And, when you tie it, you have to let it come a long way to chop each head off, pile it up in a pile and let it dry and then you have to thrash it to get the seed off.

AED: Did you know anybody who worked there?

JAH: Not really, just the people, but that's all. We'd just take it there and let them do it.

AED: So you raised broomcorn?

JAH: Yeah.

AED: What else did you grow?

JAH: Cotton, corn, oats, maize, potatoes, anything we had at home. We lived at home.

AED: Vegetables and fruit? Did you have any fruit trees? Peaches?

JAH: Oh, yeah, fruit. Of course, it takes time for that to bear. _____ (??) branches.

AED: How about your meat? Did you butcher your own meat?

JAH: We had pork, also beef. What you call it beef. Some may not _____ (??), but I think there was there at least one furnished beef, there would be one a week. That way whoever was butchering would cut that up and would feed the family. The pork, of course, we did some of that ourselves. Butchered it.

AED: Was that in Copperas Cove?

JAH: Out in the country.

AED: Did your mother and sisters do a lot of canning and things like that?

JAH: Canning? We didn't have any big grocery store. _____ (??). There wasn't any dollars like there is now. A dollar earned was a dollar made. That's the way you had to look at it. You had to work pretty hard, not like today. Today, I don't know, they're living hard and _____ (??). Them days you earned it. Now days you all say, How much do I get? When they hire someone, What do you paying? That's life.

AED: What year did you leave Antelope?

JAH: What year? Let's see—1931, times got so bad. There were no jobs. And Daddy sent us both to school in Dallas. We were twins. Took up a business course. That's a _____ (??). First thing you asked for a job. The school was a big one. Can't use you. _____ (??). Took my application everywhere, can't use you. Got so disgusted. Called my daddy and said, "We just ain't having no luck finding a job." He said, "I'll tell you what, if that's the case, I've got the farm here, if you all come back and work the farm, I'll let you work the halves." Well, that's better than nothing. So we made the big move to Dallas to come to town and went back. Put oats in the barn at eleven cents a bushel. Of course, we had a _____ (??) sacks, and when we _____ (??) rats had eaten all the sacks. We lost six sacks.

AED: That's awful. Not a very high price.

JAH: Fifteen cents was all we could get. And we had to haul it _____ (??).

AED: And were you farming cotton then at all, during the Depression? In the '30s, you were still doing cotton?

JAH: Yeah.

AED: Did they have a cooperative here? Any kind of co-op then?

JAH: I don't think so, the ginner or the gin got most of the time. He helped and—or he'd give them the seed for the ginning.

AED: Is there anything else you can think of you'd like to talk about?

JAH: Why are you all doing this?

AED: We are recording it so that we can better understand the history of what used to be, before Fort Hood came. And we want to make a booklet, or a history book, that the people in the community will be able to appreciate and enjoy. Maybe the schools will use it.

JAH: Did any information that I gave you, did that help you?

AED: It did. It surely did. I think it helps us better understand how things were then. Is there anything else you would like to say or talk about?

JAH: No, not really. I guess not. I've been married sixty-four years. Still sleep together. Still have all our meals together. That's something that is very special.

AED: You're very lucky. Your wife shared photographs of with me that she brought of you and your brother and your house. We now have copies of those. I thank you very much for your time.

Norman Ricketts Hall

Date of birth: 2 October 1922
Communities affiliated with: Brookhaven, Killeen, Palo Alto
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase

AED: This Amy Dase. Today is July 5, 2001. I am interviewing for the first time, Dr. Norman Hall. This interview is taking place in his home [1263 Terminal Loop, Lake McQueeney, Texas], and this interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

I was hoping you could tell me a little bit about your family to start with.

NRH: Yes. My mother and father lived four miles out of Killeen and on what we call a stock farm that does ranching and farming. And my dad lived to be ninety and was living out on the reservation when the fort came. And Mother lived to be eighty-eight and she was living there, but she always clerked in town at one of the department stores—the dry goods stores. And I have two brothers. I'm the youngest, and they say the spoiled one, you know. And the other brothers have preceded me in death.

AED: What was your father's name?

NRH: His real name was W. S. Hall, but his nickname was Doc, and everybody called him D-o-c, Doc Hall. And Mother's name was Lola, L-o-l-a. And her maiden name was Norman. My dad's mother's maiden name was Ricketts, so I came up with a Norman Ricketts Hall. (laughs) I had to bear the brunt of all this.

AED: The price you pay for being the youngest.

NRH: That's right. Yeah.

AED: And what did W. S. stand for?

NRH: William Samuel.

AED: Sam?

NRH: William Samuel.

AED: Samuel, okay.

NRH: And the story goes that they just called him Doc, and when he grew up and had to have something legal, he wanted a name for himself, William Samuel, after some of his relatives.

AED: So where did the Doc come from?

NRH: I don't know other than just a childhood nickname that, like they call Bubba or Brother, and for some reason his was Doc. He was from a family of eight children. And I believe he was the third oldest.

And there were four boys, I guess there were four boys and four girls.

AED: Did I read he was born near Brookhaven?

NRH: Yes, actually in the Brookhaven area, that's true. And, in fact, I understand that they moved from there when he was quite young to what we called the Palo Alto school district. It was a country school. And we lived there. But I always went to school in Killeen for some reason, I don't know why, they just—maybe Palo Alto wouldn't take me or something. (both laugh) You know, it had about twenty-five students in it, and Killeen probably had three hundred students at that time. And I think my mother just thought you'd probably get a better education at a larger school. And there were no busses then. So usually some of the older boys in two or three families, living on farms, they would drive and pick up the kids—own school bus there. It really wasn't a bus, it was a car. And then, I don't know, I must've been maybe in high school when Killeen started busses for the first time. They weren't yellow, they were old blue busses. I don't know where they came from.

AED: And so your father's family had been in the area for a while.

NRH: Yes.

AED: When did they come to Bell County? Do you know?

NRH: Well, they—they first evidently originated in South Carolina. And then came to Tennessee and then to Arkansas, and the people that we knew came from Arkansas to that particular point of Texas. And had lived there for—oh, I guess—I know my grandfather—I never met him, but I think he passed away at fifty-four probably, but he was a really small individual. Have some great pictures of him. Had a handlebar mustache and all that. He and Grandmother had eight children. And they were all lived in that particular area, round in Killeen and Temple.

AED: And your mother's family, were they living in the area?

NRH: Yes. Now they were the Normans, and I know that they lived in South Texas around Devine. And she tells a story about when they were going to leave Devine and come to Bell County. I think she was twelve years old—and talks about one of the songs, "I'm Gonna Quit Living in the Sandy Land." And so they came to Killeen. There were many Normans in the area, like there was a Norman Brothers Grocery Store and a Norman Brothers Department Store. She was related to them. And they came there, and then later on her father moved to West Texas to Anson.

And as a child I remember, we would go to Anson, and it was quite a chore. You'd ride the bus to a point and wait. I can even remember when we went one time in a Model T Ford. The roads, I mean they actually had gates across them, I mean barbed-wire gate. I'd have to get out and try to open the gate. Sometimes I could, and sometimes I couldn't. And it was usually Mother going to visit her father. And gosh, sometimes it'd take I guess—two weeks—take us two or three days to go. And I'd open these gates and then we'd have to put them back. And it's hard to imagine now a road would have a wire gate across it.

AED: You just don't see that.

NRH: That's right.

AED: On a ranch maybe, but not on a road.

NRH: Right. But you know, I taught school one year in Spanish Oak. I'd only had two years of college, and I ran out of money, and I was going teach school. Then, you could, you know, if you could walk, you could teach. And I got a job at a one-room school, taught first through the tenth in Burnet County, about twenty miles from Marble Falls.

It was twenty miles from Marble Falls to this place, and there were seventy stock culverts. You didn't have to open gates. You know, you'd slow down, and you'd go over them with a bump. And that was just before the war. In fact, I was teaching there when the war broke out. I was teaching there when they decided to build Fort Hood. That was quite a shock.

AED: What was the name of the community?

NRH: That I went to? Spanish Oak.

AED: Oh, that's right, you mentioned that.

NRH: But you know, that was quite a shock to the people. They couldn't believe it at first. They didn't have any concept of what this was gonna mean.

If I'm rambling, you tell me.

AED: No, you're doing great.

NRH: I recall that when they first came, they sent in about a hundred surveyors just to start surveying. They couldn't even accommodate a 100 people in Killeen. I think there was probably one hotel, and they'd never heard of a tourist court. Couldn't even spell it! And most of them were living in Temple or Gatesville or had their own camping facilities. But they were surveyors. Well, there was a 100 and then, gosh, it wasn't a year until you had eighty thousand troops out under the cedar brakes there in tents. And we'd never heard of a taxi either. But that got to be a pretty growing business when taxis would go out and pick up the troops when they wanted to go to town. And, of course, to come to Killeen was a real let down, 'cause only 1,263 people lived in Killeen when the camp came. And then they started a bus system and the bus system, would go to Temple and Belton and Austin.

AED: Other places also.

NRH: Yes.

AED: Right, 'cause there wasn't much happening.

NRH: No, it was just in Killeen, you know, it was just a little farming and ranching community. And it was a great community. I really enjoyed it. I—I would've been happy to go back after the war if it was just like it was, 'cause I loved that community.

AED: But by then it was a whole other place.

NRH: Yes. It was a whole different place. My mother told of a time she'd been to town and done her shopping and two or three errands. And she had not seen a person that she knew. Had a lot of the soldiers' wives, if they came—not many of them came back in those days, but if they did they were working. And they were—the people that she'd known were lost in the shuffle.

You know, I recall that they did not take our ranch in the first Fort Hood expansion. It was on two sides of us. And quite often some of the fellows driving tanks didn't know where the boundary was because they would cut across our land. I recall when they cut across one time and my dad had goats, and about 275 goats got out. So he went to Fort Hood to place a claim, and they said, Well, Mr. Hall, we understand that, but said, You know, you could just as easily have claimed 1,000, not 200. It's just one of those things. You know, we'll look for them, and all that. We never found them. But they did send troops out to fix the fence. And one day Dad went up to see the fence. They stuck the little part of the post in the ground because you didn't have to dig as big a hole, and here's the big part of it here. And they must've had a hundred yards of fence like that. And so, we learned that everybody didn't see things in Texas like we did.

But, you know, I mentioned they didn't take our place, but when the Korean War came along, by then they had built Belton Lake, and so they wanted to have amphibious training. So they took several thousand more acres so they could go to the shores of Lake Belton. And it became necessary for them to take our land. They moved—they paid us a certain amount and then they gave us—or we gave five hundred dollars for the house. So then we moved the house. And had to move it four miles. And of course by then my folks had bought a lot in town to move it on. And by then Billye and I were living in town. It was quite a project to jack it up, and all that business, and ready to move. And they couldn't move it down the roads for some reason, but they could move it through some of the pastures. And so they made arrangement to start moving. We knew they couldn't move it in one day. So they were going to come after they got squared away and started the move. They planned to spend the night with us. Well, I was teaching then, and they didn't come at four o'clock, they didn't come at five. It got dark, and they hadn't come, and we thought something was the matter. So I drove out to the home place. The house was gone. I looked all around, and of course all the other houses had been taken away, too. I started back to town, and as I did, I looked down in a pasture where there was a branch, and I saw a light down there. And there's not supposed to a light down there. So I parked the car as close as I could and walked. And as I walked, there was the house. There were kerosene lanterns in use then. My mother was in the kitchen, and I guess preparing a meal. And Dad was sitting at his chair, by the radio, reading a book. When I went I asked, "What is the matter with you people? I thought you all were going to come to our house." "Well, we just decided we would just stay here." Couldn't leave that house, you know it. And the next day it did arrive in town. But I had searched for them diligently and found them down there. Just having a picnic, you know.

AED: Sure, they got by just fine.

NRH: Right. But the house was propped up on those rollers, and I found the steps and got in the house. (laughs)

AED: They had to leave their land, they didn't want to leave their home.

NRH: That's right. And they actually lived in that house in Killeen until they both passed away.

AED: And is the house still standing?

NRH: Yes.

AED: Where is it?

NRH: Gosh, I've forgotten the address, but it's on Fourteenth Street, it's at Brewster and Fourteenth Street. It's not on the corner, but it's in that block.

AED: How was it to see that, for you—you'd been in that rural setting—to see it in town?

NRH: Well, like I said, he lived to be ninety. He must've been in his late seventies, is when that happened, perhaps. And he never gave up. He could sit on that front porch and I guess dream of the days that had gone by. Now Mother adjusted real well because she'd always worked in town. Went back and forth. And town was part of her life. But Dad didn't. He came to town on Saturday afternoon. And you spent Saturday talking to, as he says, to the boys. All of them about seventy, seventy-five, these boys that he talk to, you know. (both laugh) And so for him it was quite an adjustment, and he never adjusted to going to town. I'll bet he didn't even go to town during the week half a dozen times for the rest of his life. But he could sit on the front porch, and I suppose he could dream or visualize the past. And, here's a funny thing, he had always tilled the soil. Well, he would voluntarily just go to a neighbor's yard, and if it had Johnson grass or weeds, he would get it out. And he would do these

things. And tell them, "You need to spray this." He was supervising a new kind of farm. It was a block in town. (both laugh)

AED: An urban farm.

NRH: That's right. So—and—

AED: So he didn't farm again after they left.

NRH: No. No, in fact, he had pretty much just ranched for the last several years. And he had leased out his farmland. And, if I'm rambling—

AED: No, you're doing great.

NRH: We always had Mexican people working on the home place. We had two other houses on the ranch. And Mexican people with large families would come and work the fields. And they usually would stay on. I mean they didn't move.

AED: In those houses?

NRH: Yes. Not migrant—they didn't migrate north to work in the fields. And they would stay there, and my dad learned to speak Spanish, and he was their interpreter sometimes. He always got along real well with the men. They all had something in common. They always had big families.

I remember I had a cousin that was gonna start to school, and she was six years old. Well, we had always been—family had been real close—this was my dad's sister's child. I wanted to start school, too. So I—they let me start at five. I remember us going to the teacher, and she said, "Well, yes, we can start him." That was a mistake 'cause I was behind for the next twenty years trying to catch up with that cousin. (both laugh) They used to joke when we'd say that, and her name was Jean—Norman and Jean led the class. Jean when it was facing the front, and Norman when it was facing the other way. And it was almost right.

Dad really liked Mexican people. And after World War II and after the Korean War, when they started bringing back some of the soldiers, their bodies, they had to go to McGregor, which was about fifty miles.

To actually make arrangements to bring the bodies back. I don't know the circumstances. But I know there were any number of families—I can think of seven different families that got Dad to go with them more or less to interpret. As they made the arrangements. And so they considered him a great friend. And I don't know—'course, as he said, he outlived all of his enemies. At his funeral, there were probably as many Mexican people as there were Anglos, which we were real proud of.

AED: That's a tribute that he was an ally.

NRH: Um-hm.

AED: The house you talked about, was this the house you grew up in?

NRH: The house I was born in.

AED: Can you describe it for me?

NRH: Yes. I remember for years, it wasn't painted. It was just plain. They didn't paint many houses back then. I remember when they painted. I must've been junior high school—when they painted it. And, of course, it was quite something. It had started out as one room. Then they had added one room with a fireplace. Well, they added another, which of course was a bedroom, and then the kitchen was

outside in a separate building.

AED: Oh, it was detached.

NRH: And which was the case a lot of times way back then. Well they went ahead, and they added a kitchen. And finally, I remember, they added to it so they had a kitchen and dining room and a living room and two bedrooms. That was the house. It was a kind of odd shape because they'd added on. I recall that they had an L-shape porch at the back. Covered halfway around. Well, they took that and made it into what they call a sleeping porch. Lot of windows. And it became their bedroom. I had gone to college by then, but they slept there. And then—let's see—I guess—electricity didn't come until after the war. And—

AED: The house wasn't moved until the '50s, right?

NRH: Yes, 'bout '50, maybe '55, something like that.

AED: So, they maybe had electricity for eight, ten years?

NRH: Beg pardon?

AED: They had electricity then for eight, ten years?

NRH: Ah, yes. Probably about that. Yes. They told us the army couldn't close a bonded road. Well, when you came out Sixth Street in Killeen and that ran into what we called Route 4, our mail route. After a couple of turns there was a long lane, a little bit over a mile long, we called it Davy-Gray Lane. The Davys lived at one end, and the Grays lived at the other, Davy-Gray Lane, straight—just as straight as it could be. The army had built a airstrip for the little, what's it called, I think L-19s—they were the observer planes, mostly for field artillery. Well, they had this strip out there, but it crossed this road. But there was a taxi strip coming down from the hangars to the bonded road. My dad didn't drive a car. He had bad eyesight. So, Mother did all the driving. Well, of course, she would come to town, and usually worked late and go home at night. She would come by sometimes and pick up our oldest child, he must've been about three or four years old, and take him home, and he'd spend the night, especially on a weekend. And they tell a story when he must've been three or four years old. They had a detour and had to go up through the hangars before returning to the main road. It was raining and misty one night and, you know how a little—the kid stands up in the seat, beside the driver. They'd gone through the hangars and were returning to the main road when our son said, "Bam," to his grandmother, "What does halt mean?" She said, "Well, halt means stop." He said, "That's what that soldier was hollering at you when we drove through the hangars." (both laugh) I don't know whether they knew her or let her go or what. But we always wondered. They could've been shot, you know.

One time one of the insurance agents in town told me, he said, "You know, I work for the Hartford Insurance Company, we're all over the United States." But said, "The only claim we've ever paid for a car hitting an airplane was your mother." I said, "What?" She had never told us. But there was a plane taxiing down to the runway, and she was coming along the road. And she kept coming and the plane couldn't stop so it turned to the side, and she knocked the tail off the plane. And he said, said, "Ma'am, why did you keep coming?" She said, "I had the right of way." But the insurance company paid off. She had never mentioned it to us. So she was rather an independent individual. And—yes.

AED: Sounds like it. And so you grew up in that house. Did you have outbuildings in the area?

NRH: Yes. In fact, there was very little plumbing. I remember when we got a bathroom, but it was just a bath and a wash basin, there was no toilet facilities. And, in fact, it was that way when they moved the house to town.

AED: So you had an outhouse that was—from the house?

NRH: Oh, fifty yards. Yeah.

AED: And what was your water source?

NRH: We had real good water from a windmill. The well was 315 feet deep, I recall. And was great water. Now the neighbors, from across the road, must've been two hundred yards, what we called through the thicket, a lot of trees there, you know, and there was a trail through the timber. And their water, I don't know whether it was that deep or not, but it had a real gypsum taste. They didn't drink it. They would come out to our house and carry water back. They did that all the time we lived there. And—so—it was—we had what they called Trinity sand, which is supposedly a very good source of water. And there were several other people that had good water, but I guess there was a streak through there somewhere where you didn't get good water.

AED: So it was on a windmill. And how far away was it from your home?

NRH: The windmill?

AED: The water, to get water.

NRH: Oh, it was just outside the yard fence, it must've been, oh, thirty feet. Now, we always had water in the kitchen. And they had what they called a bathhouse, which was built way back there. And it had one of these real old tubs in it that you can see where it's welded or soldered. It came in parts, and you put it together. Well, this was a bathhouse and, of course, the water would run to the tub and then just drain out down the hill. So we had bathing facilities, but no toilet facilities.

AED: When did they build the house?

NRH: Oh, goodness, the first—that first room, must've been built—I think it was all—by 1911. It had two bedrooms, living room, and dining room, kitchen, by 1921. And the one house must've started off either in the very early 1900s. They moved over from what's called Brookhaven. Brookhaven was through the gap. There was a mountain with a gap through it. You see, you probably picked this up, but years ago, the towns, I believe, of Brookhaven and Sugar Loaf were thriving communities, but when the railroad came through and they had camps or places where they fed the workers and one thing or another. Well, of course, when the railroad went on, the part that stayed became the town of Killeen. Sugar Loaf just disappeared, there was nothing there but a cemetery and a country church. Whereas Brookhaven, as I recall, had a cemetery, a cedar post yard. You know what a cedar post yard is? At one time I think there had been a gin, but it had gone by the time I came along. And there were two stores that competed against each other for trade. Also a school.

AED: So it was a little bigger?

NRH: Huh?

AED: Was a little bigger? Brookhaven was a little bigger, maybe, than the Sugar Loaf community?

NRH: Yeah. Sugar Loaf had already gone before I came along. But I know they had a school at Brookhaven. Two teachers. Two rooms. Seemed like the place where I taught—the first through the tenth grade. If you had enough students one row would be first grade and another row would be another grade and so on. Now I did my best job of teaching in the third grade. *No* students were in the third grade. (both laugh) I had first grade and second grade and fourth, and on up. And I had one tenth grader that turned eighteen while I was teaching. He was drafted during the year. And I was glad to see him go. (both laugh)

AED: He was a challenge, huh?

NRH: Yeah. He always asked these questions about geometry, and I was—I didn't think he had a right to ask. 'Cause I had to go back home and talk to one of my former teachers and find out something about the questions. You know, I really have wondered a lot about—had a little—one little girl in first grade. I probably should have been court-martialed for what I did, 'cause I only had two years of college. And I don't remember having a course on how to teach reading or how to teach math. I only had the philosophy of education and all that, which doesn't mean diddly to somebody in the first grade. And so, you know, I'd assign her something, and one of the other kids would more or less supervise her. And I recall that her parents came to me one time and said, You know, we just don't feel like Susie is challenged. And he said, "She's just doing the same thing over and over." Well I thought, I can handle that. So one Friday I assigned her to write to a hundred over the weekend. You know, *now* they only have kids write to twenty in the first grade after a whole year. And so they came back Monday morning and said, It took the whole family all weekend to get Susie to write to a hundred. I didn't have the knowledge to teach properly. Then you could teach with just a high school diploma. But I had two years of college, but it wasn't helping a whole lot.

AED: Not the practical stuff for being in the classroom.

NRH: That's right, uh-huh. You know, I recall once there was a little fourth grader, and there was an aggressive kid must've been in eighth grade. Every time they'd have recess he would try to beat him up on the fourth grader. And finally I said, "What is the problem here?" Well, as you know, of course everybody could hear everything, like a kid in the first grade would have eighth-grade English eight years, I mean eighth-grade history. Well, this fourth grader was pretty sharp, and I would be asking questions about United States history or something, and if this eighth-grade boy hesitated, this fourth grader would answer. He didn't like that. So when he'd get that kid outside he'd try to beat him. "You keep your mouth shut and quit answering my questions." It was quite a thing there.

AED: Trying to balance in that situation of being the only teacher and all those grades.

NRH: Yeah, yeah. And, you know, like ironically enough, I still keep up with some of those kids. And we visit and correspond a lot. You know, we are talking about the school board now. Had three-people school board. And you taught until the tax money ran out. Then the school closed, usually after seven or eight months of school.

AED: It's the same.

NRH: In other words, you had a school was as long as the tax money lasted. I recall the county judge was the superintendent. Really, the secretary was the superintendent. She told me once, "Unless we get some more tax money, we'll have to close school the last day of April." I said, "What?" You know, that's cutting a month's salary out. She said, "There's just not any money and we've got to close." Okay. So that's what they did.

AED: How interesting. You know, I've asked people if they remember how long their school year was, and there's a varied answer, and I haven't known why.

NRH: I'm sure that's it because, you know, there was very little state aid, if any. But there was tax money. If some of the big ranchers paid their taxes you could go on. If they didn't, and sometimes they'd be in dispute, then you closed school. So it went as long as you could pay the teacher. And I remember, I got eighty dollars a month for teaching. I got ten dollars a month for being principal. I liked that: one teacher and I'm the principal. And seven and a half for being the custodian. I was cleaning up. Because there were teachers in Killeen, of course, I was—couldn't wait to tell them I had a job teaching. Killeen was paying eighty dollars a month for their teachers. But there was some jealousy

when I was getting eighty-seven. I mean, ninety-seven and a half, you see. That was kind of—they were overpaying me, which they were. (laughs) It was true. (both laugh)

AED: Doesn't sound like it today.

NRH: And, you know, back then—this was Palo Alto—Palo Alto was a two-teacher school. It was, what we say, through the gap. Must've been about three miles from our house to Palo Alto School. Killeen was four. But whenever school ended, the last day was a big deal. They usually had what we'd call a barbecue. Everybody in the area came and I'm telling you, if you didn't have it something was the matter. Probably the teacher got fired the next year. You know, if he didn't have that barbecue. (both laugh)

AED: So the teacher was sort of responsible for organizing the day's activities?

NRH: Oh, yes. Like I was telling you about the school board where I taught. Honest to goodness there were two of the school board members who were what they called cedar choppers. They worked where the cedar grew. If they chopped all of the available cedars, they'd move their camp somewhere else. Well, there were times I'd have to get them, all three of them, to sign my check each month. Sometimes I'd spend half a day looking. Where did they go? I had the right solution way back then. I didn't know school board was supposed to meet. All my year at Spanish Oak the school board never met. (laughs) I guess they met to hire me. But I went into the army from there, but we never met. And I found out that's where the problems are. If the school board meets, you've got problems, you see. I've told that to other school boards. (laughs) But really it was kind of loosey-goosey operation back then.

AED: But if they were unhappy with you, they would've met.

NRH: Oh, yeah, yeah.

AED: If something was wrong. What was the difference between being a teacher and being a principal? Would you teach also if you were the principal?

NRH: Back then there was one teacher. But even in your two-teacher schools. One person was designated as principal and taught full-time, and the principal was just to handle some of the paper work and the discipline.

AED: Anything's—right.

NRH: But a lot of times they tried to get husband and wife. For example, I know at Palo Alto for years, the teacher there and his wife both taught. And they must've been—they were teaching there when the war came. And I remember I had a cousin that taught in Brookhaven, man-and-wife operation. And there were very few places to stay, and they wanted you to stay in that community.

Sparta was a school district out on the reservation. I remember when I ran out of money after two years of college, and I was going everywhere to look for a job. I was only nineteen. I never did volunteer that information, but I did look too young to teach. But I went to Sparta—it had a store—and I asked about school. They were gonna have a vacancy. They told me, said, Well, there's a lady on the school board lives right down the street. I never heard of a lady school board member before. So I went down to the house and introduced myself and told her I was interested in the job. And she was nice. She said, "Come on, come in, and sit down." And the first question she asked me just floored me. She said, "Can you cook?" I was applying for a teaching job. And I said, "Oh, yeah." And I had, of course, when Mother worked, on weekends I did fix soup and things for my dad and I. So I said, "Well, I've always fixed soup for my dad and I." She said, "Well, we serve the children soup every morning." Well, that's the first time I'd ever heard of that, you know. Eating soup in school. We always went to the little store across the street from school and bought hamburgers. But I didn't get

the job. I don't know whether my soup recipe didn't work, but she never asked me anything about curriculum. She did ask me how old I was and had I been to college.

But, you know, those communities back in those different places were lost to the rest of the world. Because that was their own neighborhood. Everything was pretty much there. And gosh, the families met. They'd have a big meet at a house, and they'd play dominoes, and the ladies would quilt or gossip or do whatever they do. And you'd have one of those most every week. People were real close.

I can recall, you know, like—we used to have two ladies, two sisters, we called them old maids, that lived down the road from us. Great ladies, but they were well up in years. But now, if they went to town and there was a strange car parked at anybody's house, they'd call them and ask, Whose is that? Who's in the car? And had a party line. I remember—

AED: I was just going to ask if you had telephones.

NRH: Yes, we had telephones. It was one of those hanging on the wall. You had to crank it. And you would wait for the operator to come on. And let's see, we were 105G, and that was our phone. Eight people on the party line, which meant you had sometimes, especially if those two ladies were awake, you had trouble getting—but you could have a—I remember I had a brother that was in college, and of course he could call home occasionally, and you knew these ladies were listening, and every once in a while they'd come on the line and say, Lola, what did he say? You know, they couldn't understand. (both laugh)

AED: Repeat that, please.

NRH: Yeah, yeah, I didn't get that. Repeat that. (both laugh) But the telephone was a big part of everything, and that was a really a way of life. You take the telephone and—I can recall we had a Model T Ford. I can recall my mother sometimes'd buy two gallons of gas, and the guy seemed to be happy to sell it. You know, the tank was underneath the front seat, and he'd put two gallons in and, I don't know, it must've been fifteen cents a gallon. But even that way of life, people resented the change when they had to leave.

As I recall there were two or three suicides where people didn't want to leave their ranch. And they would—when they saw them coming and they had to leave, well, they took it real serious. They wanted to hold on to that way of life. 'Course they had no idea what other kind of life there'd be, but they were satisfied with the one they had.

AED: When you were growing up, your dad was farming and ranching at the time?

NRH: Um-hm, um-hm.

AED: And what kind of livestock did he keep?

NRH: We were diversified. Like, he had cattle and then goats and sheep. Like, we had one pasture that was just with goats in it. And another one just sheep. And then the cattle could run with all of them. And by being diversified, like—see, in those days with wool from sheep, we had Angora goats, which you sell mohair from. You see, now the popular goat is the Spanish goat. I never heard of that, it's for the meat. And, of course, the sheep is for wool. And of course the cattle—you tried to sell the offspring to keep them going. So we had all. And chickens, everybody had a bunch of chickens all running loose. Had to find the nests. And of course, I'm sure sometimes you found a nest that was six weeks old, and that's the reason the merchants—ever hear of candling an egg?

AED: No. Cattling?

NRH: Candle. Candle. It had a little box. It had an electric light in it and a little hole in it. You took the egg and you put it up to the hole and you could see whether it was—if it was still a good egg. Well then

you'd put the bad eggs over here. You didn't pay for those. You bought the good eggs. I know as a kid I worked in a grocery store, and that was one of my jobs, to candle eggs.

And then I also—I was in, I guess, high school then, and I also got to drive the delivery trucks. That was the thing closest to a pick up back then they had. But, you know, I'd put several boxes in, and I'd go through town, and I'd deliver the groceries and come back. And I thought it was a great job. (laughs) Really enjoyed it.

You know, back then nearly every school of any size, had twelve grades, they had an agricultural teacher. And agriculture teachers were a big part of the community. And the homemaking teacher was also a big part. They influenced—they had meetings and showed the ladies different things. And the agriculture teacher would come and visit if you had a kid in school, they'd come and visit, and when an animal got sick, to keep from calling the vet, you'd call the ag teacher 'cause he was free. Well, then he might tell you you'd better call the vet. (laughs) And there wasn't a vet, a real vet in Killeen, but there was a gentleman that was pretty good at it and they did call him, but he was not a veterinary, but he would come and recommend. Back then you—you worked horses, mules, really. And one of the real dangers was a mule being bitten by a rattlesnake. 'Cause if that happened it was very likely that they would die. Dogs were bitten by rattlesnakes real often, and they'd usually die. But if they were bitten in the head, sometimes, you know, you could feed them lard and that would 'cause them to sweat. Sometimes they said, back then, it sweated the poison out. But if they were bitten on the leg or body, it was just a matter of time. And I recall once that my dad was going to the field with his horses. The wheels go here, and here and there is vegetation in between rows. He had gone through a gate and parked and a rattlesnake bit one of the mules. So we went right away and got this man in town. First of all they called him on the phone, and he said, "Well you take a chicken and tear it right in half, in two, and put that on the wound until I get there." So they got a chicken, put that over the bite. When he got there, he looked and everything and then lanced the bite, you couldn't do much 'cause the mule's not going to stand for it. And then he said, "All right you go get a bucket of milk." We got the milk. The bite was just above what you call the ankle. And he placed that in the milk bucket. And, you know, I didn't know what was going on. (laughs) But the mule did live. And I don't know whether it was just accident or whether it didn't even hurt the bone. That enhanced that old boy's reputation quite a bit in the community. (both laugh) Chickens didn't think much of him. (laughs) But—but—

AED: But a mule was worth a lot more than a chicken.

NRH: That's true.

AED: Right. How many mules or horses did your dad keep?

NRH: Well, let's see, four as I remember. When the other people went to tractors, Dad never worried about that. He stayed with mules. He might have had six at one time. And, you know, like he'd work four real hard one day, and then he would change and work some of the others the next day. And like that. Uh-huh. But that was a big part of life. And, you know, I recall they had one picture show in Killeen. Just had shows on Friday and Saturday afternoon and Saturday night. And then Sunday afternoon and Sunday night. Two different shows. And now you talk about a place that drew the crowds. And they didn't care what was showing. It was just a movie. But that was big entertainment. Now they had some dances, but back then, as to dancing—the churches didn't go for dancing. I belong to the Methodist church, and I had Baptist friends that said, y'all are not against anything. But even the Methodists were not very much sold on dancing back then.

And 'course Killeen was a dry town. Now Belton sold beer, and we thought that was sin city, because they had—we called 'em beer joints. And of course my folks told me, Ever see you in a beer joint,

and (laughs) we're gonna disinherit you. And so, that is how—we grew—I grew up, never any beer in the house or anything. I did find out later on that some of the cousins would bring Dad up a pint of whiskey, and he kept it out in the barn, 'cause Mother would've kicked him if he had it in the house. (both laugh) And he would go every once in a while a take a swig of that, but nothing to excess.

Occasionally they would have a dance, but not real often.

Baseball. I mean Sunday afternoon was baseball time. I know Billye's dad would drive fifty miles to see a baseball game. And they would play baseball. And 'course Sunday night people went to church.

And of course Saturday people were in town late. I had cousins, they were all ladies, that had a big past time—see Killeen was really only two blocks long, really, the business section. They would park—try to get a parking place along the street, and you watched the people go by. These old songs about watching the people go by, they don't know what they're missing. 'Course, if you got a car load of ladies with you, they used to say something like, I've not seen that hat before. (both laugh) She wore that dress last week. Or, you know, wonder where she—and this was big entertainment, and of course my mother would've been there, too, except she was working in a store. But that was a big part of life.

Schools were important then, but they didn't have near the activities and they do now. Graduation was a big deal. Starting school and buying a kids' clothes was a real something.

AED: Now you said you didn't go to the Palo Alto School, you went to Killeen.

NRH: Killeen. Had to transfer. You could go to Killeen from Palo Alto for four and a half months without paying tuition. Then you had to pay tuition. I remember my folks scraped up nine dollars a month for me to go to school. That's tuition. And they did that all through my school years until I reached high school.

AED: So you would've had to go to Killeen.

NRH: So, when I reached high school, I didn't have to pay then.

AED: And you said, you mentioned that they went to a Methodist church.

NRH: Um-hm.

AED: Was that local? Or was that in Killeen?

NRH: No, it was right in Killeen. The one that's right across the street from the First National Bank now. In fact, I think it's the recreation building. They've built another sanctuary.

AED: You mentioned there was a church in Sugar Loaf.

NRH: In Brookhaven. It was a wooden church. It also had a tabernacle. Do you know what a tabernacle is? You know, open air, there's no sides. Back then revival meetings were really something. Like, you'd have a revival meeting at the Baptist church and some of the Methodists would go. But the revival was always two weeks during the summer. And boy, it was fire and brimstone.

AED: Was that in town? Or was that out in the country?

NRH: No, it—the one we went to was right there in town—it's right where the new church is built. That was always church property. But I mean, I had to go because you heard all this business about this fire and brimstone. And I was scared. The churches out in the country, like at the tabernacle in Brookhaven, now they didn't just have a revival there, they had Sunday services, and it drew people from Belton and different places. A lot of the times it was who the preacher was, because they'd heard of this one, or they wanted to hear this person preach.

AED: And when you went to church, would your whole family go to church?

NRH: Yes. My mother and dad would both go and—and I would. They'd place me in Sunday school.

AED: And your brothers also.

NRH: Yes. There's ten years difference between myself and my other brother. And so of course he had pretty well gone by the time I came along.

AED: Did your brothers go to the Palo Alto School? Since they were older? Or did they also go to Killeen?

NRH: No. I tell you what. One of my earliest memories is I remember my oldest brother going to college. And I remember when he got married. Mother and I went to Brownwood to the wedding, or something. You know, that's quite a treat to go from Killeen to Brownwood. You're talking, it took us about two days maybe. (both laugh)

But anyway, the other brother rode a horse to school. And that was quite a deal, too. And there were a lot of horses. You'd go up to school, and they might have fifteen, twenty horses tied to the posts and fences around the school. And some of them even came in a wagon. In fact, I recall the Williams family lived there, and there must've been five children. Now they would come in a wagon, and that is a very slow transportation. Later on, they were able to get a car, too. But, you know, education was important.

But the thing that—my brother would ride that horse and I'd be waiting for him and when I came home, I was really wanting to start to school. Not to go to school, but I wanted to ride a horse. I thought, (both laugh) If I can get that horse, that's as far as I want to go.

But he rode a horse until—I still recall one time we were in this Model T Ford. I was sitting in the front with Mother, and Bob, the brother, was sitting in back. And he must've been about a junior, and he'd come up with the idea, Mother, what would you think about me driving the car to school this year. And we could pick up so-and-so and so-and-so, and they could share in the gas? Well, she didn't answer him, but she didn't say no, and sure enough he got to drive the car to school.

Several years later the busses started service. But that bus business was really a boon to the people because things pretty well had to stop while taking kiddos to school. And if it's four miles, by the time you take them in, and then time to get home and turn your head and then go back and get them. So car pooling was pretty prominent back then. But there were some people that lived in real isolated areas. I know, down the road from us, it must've been around three miles. I was taking our youngest son out hunting, and I knew where a house had been and looked around because I'd been there quite often, but there's a road or trail, which we followed and found a place that must've been a beautiful place. Among a bunch of trees, on little hill, a little spring was coming out of the mountain and trickling down. Here's a long, big oak tree. And you know how they put steps on it. They nailed a two-by-four here and here and here. And they must've been twenty, thirty feet in the air where they had a playhouse. And it was still there, even though the camp had come and gone, but, of course everything was deteriorating. And I thought, You know, they didn't live three miles from us, and I didn't even know them. I never knew them and I didn't know who lived there, but it must've been a great place. I'll bet they hated to give it up, too.

But, that reminds me, I had built a tree house, too. So I pretty well played by myself because by then the Mexican families had gone. And I guess our closest neighbor must've been half a mile away. And, so I'd build different things. And I remember building my own tree house. And I built it and nailed it high up in a tree, and played in it. And after the war when the boys, our boys wanted to see. Where I was born and raised. We were living in Killeen, but I'd never taken them out there. So we went out to

the home place one time, and we were looking around, and I was trying to point this out and whatnot. And I recall looking up in that tree, and there was still some of those boards to my tree house. And that was about, almost fifty years after I'd built that. So I thought, I was a pretty good carpenter.

You know, one thing that was a real deal back then was storm cellars—storm cellars.

AED: You had one at your home?

NRH: Yes, we had one. And a lot of people used them to keep maybe their canned fruit or something in, or even put potatoes down there because it was cool.

AED: Sure, sure, store food.

NRH: Huh?

AED: Store food.

NRH: Yes, uh-huh. And, you know, you'd harvest your potatoes. And you'd just put them in a storm cellar.

AED: Give them air.

NRH: Air. They would deteriorate, but they stayed for a long time. But the storm houses for a lot of people was really for protection. The family that lived closest to us did not have a storm cellar. And I still recall being in bed at night, and it was thundering and lightning and could hear the neighbor's car start and soon would be at the storm house. And they'd come out. And I recall once the man hollerin' and says, "Doc, aren't you all coming down to the cellar?" And Dad says, "No, I don't think so." And he said, "Doc you're gonna get blown away sometime." Well, and I remember they had two boys, and they had a little girl. The girl would always be crying, every time. And they'd go down in the storm cellar. The family had a kerosene lamp. The father would usually sit on the steps looking at the clouds, before they closed the door, you know. And of course if it started raining or hailing they'd close the door. But that happened, not once or twice, but five or six times a year. I remember there were people really afraid of clouds. Billye's dad was always say he was not afraid, but he was always conscious of the weather condition. If there was a cloud, he was keeping an eye on it. Dad was pretty well, like, Well, you know, if it happens, it happens. I grew up that way. A storm doesn't mean a lot to me now.

AED: That's interesting. What was that family's name that lived—

NRH: Hilliards. In fact, Kyle Hilliard is an insurance agent in town. Hilliard Insurance Agency up on Second Street. And his brother, older brother, became a navigator for American Airlines for years until he retired. I've been amazed at some of those country schools. I know some people looked at them, looked down there nose at them, and one thing or another. But I've been amazed at what some of those people became.

AED: The whole spectrum, I'm sure.

NRH: Yeah. Doctors, dentists, lawyers. And, I recall as a teacher, I've often wondered about my students. I remember I had one student that I taught that became a lieutenant general in the army. I had another one that was on death row down in Huntsville. So, you've got the whole spectrum. And I'm sure that'll be true of any country school, you know.

AED: What drew you to teaching?

NRH: Beg your pardon.

AED: What drew you to teaching?

NRH: I guess maybe my brother who had done like me and run out of money and taught for a couple of years and then went back, and he became an engineer. And then I really did like my, well, my junior high principal. He was, I guess, just kinda like the guy I wanted to be. Because my folks were older, you might say, I thought they were real old when I came along. They seemed older than that. (both laugh)

But, you know, one of my memories is, I know that my mother—neither one of my folks finished high school. Now Dad could spell just practically any word you needed. He could spell it without anything. Mother and I couldn't spell anything. I remember I was in fourth grade and doing some English, and my mother helped me with my English paper, and I turned it in with all the confidence in the world. I still can see the grade—forty-four. Well, you know, the first thing, and Mother had asked me, said, "How'd it come out? That paper." Well, I didn't want to hurt her. I can still see—I took pencil and I rubbed that out so hard. In fact, I made perfect black square where you couldn't see and even on the back side I had rubbed it there. 'Cause I didn't want to hurt her. I never did ask her for any more help though. (both laugh) That took the deal. But, you know—and I'm sure that wasn't uncommon. They couldn't get help from their parents, you know it.

My brother was always a whiz in math. But I've heard him holler from his room and ask, Dad, how do you spell so-and-so. And he'd tell him.

But—and you know, back then it was not uncommon at all for kids to quit school, and then you went to work. In fact, a lot of time back then the parents would keep them out for an ungodly amount of time. Like school started in September, and then when the harvest usually—here's cotton, and here's corn and all that, and you'd stay out for that. So you just kinda came to school when there's nothing else to do on the farm. And there's still places in the United States where they turn out, who was telling me they harvest potatoes somewhere, they turn out all during October. Somewhere just the other day I heard that.

AED: Still happens.

NRH: Yeah. But, you know, some of this I hadn't thought of in years, but there was a dream. Everybody that moved off that Fort Hood reservation dreamed of the day when the war was over and the army left. They could come back. My mother had said, "When we come back, we're gonna put the house here, and we'll turn it like this. And then we'll move this house over here." She lived for ten years hoping that would happen. And so many of them were like that. We're going back. And you know they did, every one of them was told that, that if—when the war was over this could revert back. You know, a lot of forts, they've closed them, but they haven't gone back, let the people have them back. Maybe some of them wouldn't want them now.

AED: No.

NRH: You know, I recall that when the camp came, a lot of people said, This is gonna be great. We're gonna get to sell this land at a real high price. I know the fella that ran the Norman Brothers Department Store had a farm. And I recall him talking about the price of land. My gosh, this ought to bring seventy-five, eighty dollars an acre. But when the army came in, they had pretty much of a thumbnail sketch. They paid twenty-seven dollars an acre for cultivated land. They paid eleven dollars an acre for pastureland. But of course the problem with that was there were so many people who were depossessed of their place, they went looking for places. It drove the price up. For example, even back when the Korean War came along, they had changed. They gave us fifty-four dollars an acre for pastureland and ninety-five dollars an acre for the cultivated land. But we started looking around. You couldn't—four miles from town—you couldn't find any place twenty miles from town to sell for that price. So, like for example, my folks they just moved to town, and that was it. We didn't want them to

go out on a country farm anyway, 'cause they were too old.

AED: They were getting up in years.

NRH: Yeah. But that made—that put a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths. Because in other words, when they take my land, but I can't replace it.

AED: Can't afford to 'cause they don't pay enough.

NRH: Yeah. That's right. Um-hm. And, 'course, they tried, I guess they tried to be fair. They had civilians more or less as appraisers that would come and look at your land the first time, and what it was worth. And they had a process where you could go before them, but I never did find anybody that got it raised. And a lot of times they didn't realize that until they started taking the money and then start looking for a place and by then it's too late to protest it, you see.

AED: And the money didn't come, in many cases, until later.

NRH: Oh, yes, right, it was some time.

AED: A few years would pass.

NRH: Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

AED: They didn't have the means.

NRH: Yeah. There were—there were lots of horror stories. (laughs)

AED: Your dad did farming as well?

NRH: Beg your pardon?

AED: Your dad was farming as well.

NRH: Yes. We had, I think, 700 acres of pastureland and 110 acres of cultivated land. Now a lot of times we raised hay to feed the cattle. But then we raised—we had cotton and that was a money crop. I always tell the story that my dad, when he had made—evidently leased some land and one thing or another, and had quite a bit of cotton. In fact, he had had fifty-one bales, and he didn't sell it to the gin, he had it delivered back out to the farm. Cotton was forty-two cents a pound, and he was gonna get fifty. Well, that was back in 1929, I guess, it was when the Depression hit. He sold it for three cents a pound. Always kidded him and said Mother never let him forget that. Every time she got mad at him, she would say, "Well you remember the forty-two-cent cotton?" And she always had that hammer on his head. (laughs) And—but 'course that was long before the camp came.

AED: And did you also have a garden?

NRH: Oh, a garden was a big part of life. You'd have a garden maybe of two or three acres. And I recall that my dad always planted potatoes by the almanac. *Farmer's Almanac*, and read that thing and boy, that's how we did it. I don't know, you planted potatoes at one time and you planted beans and corn and another time—and, in fact, he farmed by the almanac and—boy, he believed.

AED: And it worked.

NRH: Yeah. He believed in it. And if he didn't plant at those time—he really was concerned about the future of the crops. I recall sometimes agriculture teachers would asking him, Why do you do this or that? Well, it's in the almanac. They have a saying, a cow has a cud.

AED: Um-hm.

NRH: You know, they chew this.

AED: Right.

NRH: Well, I recall one time Dad found what he thought was a cow's cud. Well, Mother and Dad were convinced the cow was gonna die because she'd lost her cud. (both laugh) One time the agriculture teacher was out at the house, and he started to tell Dad that there was no—Dad didn't listen. He said, "You know, don't tell me sonny, I been here fifty-some years," you know, "how long you been here?" He found out he was raised in town, he had to calm down. He had been to A&M for four years. But—you know, many of those things like that, really—it was a way of life, but it was a way of life.

AED: You don't deviate from that.

NRH: Yes. And superstition was real strong in those areas. For families, I guess, it had come up through generations. But you had those beliefs.

AED: And you trust them.

NRH: Oh, you bet, you didn't buck 'em.

AED: Where do you think your dad learned to speak Spanish?

NRH: Well, there were a number of Mexican families in the Killeen area, always had been. And evidently, he had been working with them, I guess. You know, before he became a farmer and was a young man. And then, when he had those families working. Because the families didn't speak English at all, not the wife or any of the children. The men spoke broken English sometimes. And I think he learned it more or less in—as a business, in self-defense. And—and I recall sitting around, people were helping him and saying—he'd say, "Well now, how do I say this?" And they'd tell him. And then, 'course he'd help them with their English and one thing or another.

AED: And would the children—did you have any interaction with them?

NRH: Oh, yes. In fact, that's all I had. In fact, when I was five years gonna start to school—my dad used to think it was smart—Mother said, he used to think it was smart to speak Spanish at the supper table—dinner table. 'Cause I'd pick up things, too, a little bit. And so they were concerned. Mother said, "Well you've taught him how to speak Spanish, and his English is suffering." So we had an aunt, Mother's aunt in town, taught English at the high school. So they sent me over there. I lived with her the whole summer before I started school, and she was supposed to do wash my mouth out with soap. And where I could master English a little better. But if you don't use Spanish, you forget it. I sure did. I know, when I first went to school, the kids would ask the teacher, Let Norman speak some Spanish. So I was the king of the walk. I'd stand up, 'course they didn't know what I was saying, and I probably didn't either, but I could just phrase it, and then I was supposed to tell them what I said. 'Course the teacher couldn't speak it either. But I did have it mastered enough, phrases, and I could say this and say that. And then after a while they quit asking, and I didn't speak it again until I was in the army. And I recall having some people in the company that I'd go and visit with them and speak Spanish. When they found out I could speak a little, I kinda had an exchange there.

But, you know, during my lifetime, I've had some real treasured friends who were Mexican people. In fact, down here, one of the closest friends I have is a Mexican man that lives across the street here. And he's—we call each other señor—mister. But for some reason when we first met, he called me señor, I called him señor, and so we just kept it. We've known each other for five or six years. But I feel real comfortable with the Mexican people and think a great deal of them. I think they have a beautiful language. And I think that they're great looking people. And so I've always been really close to them.

AED: I'm partial to the food. (both laugh)

NRH: Yes, yes. I recall these families would be across the street, and my dad would go over to plan the day's activities. And many times when we'd go the Mexican lady would ask me, "Tortilla and frijoles?" Well, you bet. So she would take the tortilla and put the frijoles in it and roll 'em up together, and Dad'd be sitting here on the floor talking to the men. And I'd come to sit between his legs, eating my tortillas and frijoles. And every once in a while the Mexican lady would ask me if I wanted some hot chocolate. That was a real deal to me. To be able to go over to their house and eat tortillas and frijoles.

AED: No, no.

NRH: Actually by the time I realized everything—we had a man, a single man, must've been about sixty-something years old. Leon Lareja. And for some reason he and Dad had become friends, and Dad gave him three acres of land, just gave it to him, through a wooded area, two hundred yards from our house. He had built a log cabin, and he had a little field where he grew feed, and I remember he had several head of horses, chickens running all around. It was off the mountain a little bit, and in a nice setting.

And I remember one time, I was in the cow pen—cottonseed is what you fed the cows. And it was a real precious commodity. Well, Dad was feeding the cows, and I was in the barn throwing the cottonseed out. That's the only time I remember my dad whipped me. He got a calf rope. Well, he was paddling me with that rope. I'm sure he was not gonna harm me. Leon came up and said, "Dockie, Dockie, why you whip Normie?" Well, Dad quit then, thank goodness. (laughs) I always had a soft place in my heart for Leon.

But Leon was real successful, and he'd go work for other people. And, I remember, he would eat with us. And I remember when he was eating with us two of the neighbors coming at different times and—what, what are you doing? And after he went away they would say, You let a Mexican eat with you. Dad said, "Well, he's hungry and we invited him."

But I recall, I must've been in the third grade, when Leon told Dad, "Well, I'm preparing to die." He said, "I know that my years are numbered." Seemed like he was about sixty-five. And he said, "I'm going back home," which was about fifty miles south of Mexico City. He sold his horses and his chickens, everything there. And told Dad, "I thank you for the land, I'm giving it back to you." You know, there was never any deed or anything, it was, It's yours, whatever you want. We carried him to town and put him on a bus. Very emotional. Between he and Dad. And Mother, too. And he left. We got two letters from him later on. Somebody had written for him because he couldn't write, and I guess it was a different dialect 'cause Dad couldn't make it out. Mother took it to the English teacher in town. Told her the story and asked her if she could read it. She couldn't read it either. We got another letter, but we never could make it out. That's the last letter we ever received. But it was a real treasured part of our life, this man and what he had contributed to us, how he had been there, and us watching him. Because he felt like he was king, owning three acres of land, had his own one-room log cabin.

I remember you walk in, the bed was over here, about six, eight inches from the ground. The stove was over here and had a pipe going out through the side of the cabin, and then different, I guess, boxes and things, where he kept his possessions. I've often wondered why he didn't get snake bit in there because a snake could've crawled in with no trouble.

Well, after he left the cabin stayed there, and I remember we played—we used it as a fort. And we played rubber guns there. And that was something else. We met, and we played rubber guns, and the best gun you could make was the thing. I 'member I had one that would shoot more than one rubber.

The first machine gun. (both laugh) Some group would be in that fort, another group would be outside the fort. And I guess a part of the remnants of that were still there when the camp came. I've been back since and of course there's nothing there, but those logs were live oak logs and of course they're not like cedar, doesn't last that long. First thing you know, the bark comes off.

But he added richness to my life.

(Mrs. Hall brings water)

AED: What did the Mexican fellows who lived on the property—what kind of work did they do for your dad?

NRH: Well, 'course they harvest the crops. Back then you had to shear the goats and the sheep by hand.

AED: That's what I was wondering, if they were involved in that.

NRH: Yes. They'd do that. Repairing the fences was a big thing. Of course, now there was planting the fields. And then of course back in those days you didn't let a weed grow in the field. You chopped them out. I look at some of these fields now, my dad would think the world was coming to an end because when you went to the corn crop, or the maize, there was just maize there, you know, no weeds.

You know, we didn't have a combine, I couldn't even spell combine then, but Dad used to grow maize. Now, maize is not corn like some of the Yankees think, it's kinda like grain. Well, he would plant three acres of that in a field by the house, and then we would have to go and harvest it. We'd grab the grain, took a butcher knife, and hit it, cut it off, and then you'd pile it in the middle of the rows. Well, 'course no gloves. And always by the afternoon of the first day, I had blisters on my hands so I wrapped a rag around the hand. Still used that butcher knife. Threw that head down on the ground. Well then, late in the afternoon then, you went back and picked it up off the ground and put it in sacks. By then there was plenty of chance for a snake to crawl in under the pile. So you can imagine how tedious it was. I was a sissy.

(Mrs. Hall brings coffee)

NRH: I was very careful. I'd move all the pile to make sure there wasn't a snake. And occasionally you'd find a snake that had crawled in. There were copperheads and rattlesnakes back then. Well, and I'd even hire out to one of the neighbors, and I'd work, and do the same thing for them. But I hated it. I had rather pick cotton. I'd rather gather corn.

Well, I always tell the story about Dad—when I went to college—I didn't want to go to college. I didn't know you had a choice, my mother just really sent me. So I went to college, and I didn't like it, so when school was out I packed my footlocker, and I was coming home to stay. I have embellished this some, but I tell a story—there was a fourteen-acre field out on the other side of our house. And when I topped the rise, not only was a three-acre field planted, but that fourteen-acre field was planted in maize. So when I got there, I told them, I said, "I can just stay overnight, I'm going back to summer school in the morning." (both laugh) I got a college degree 'cause I didn't want to head maize. (laughs)

AED: So the farming-ranching life did not appeal to you as a career?

NRH: Well, no, but the ranching did.

AED: It did.

NRH: Yes, it was very fascinating to me. And I realize that you have to have both, maybe, to make a combination. In fact, when our kids were growing up, the oldest boy was real fascinated with ranching, so we bought 411 acres outside of Killeen. In fact, Skipcha Mountain is named after our

two sons, we called it Skipcha Ranch. Skip is the oldest boy and Charlie is the youngest one. Put them together and it's Skipcha. And people ask me if that's an Indian word and I say, "Yeah, two of 'em." But Skip was always fascinated. And when we sold that ranch, we bought a ranch in West Texas. He lives on it today.

AED: So he's got it in his blood.

NRH: Yes. He's got it. I know back in those days, you know, if you had a horse, you were pretty much top of the world, and he felt the same way.

AED: So you talked about working the fields some, and what other kinds of chores did you have as a child? As opposed to maybe chores you had when you were a little older.

NRH: Well, as a child, for example, I gathered up the eggs. And we had boxes here, and you had hidden nests, 'cause all the chickens were running loose—no pens.

AED: Did you have turkeys also?

NRH: Yeah, we had turkeys. And we had geese. We had fourteen geese. But for some reason they couldn't fly much. Every morning about ten o'clock they'd walk out in the field and take off and fly to a pond, which must've been two or three hundred yards, and land. And they'd walk back. We never understood. (laughs) They did that for years. In fact, I guess we left them there when the camp came. But that was unusual, to have geese. We didn't have any ducks. But of course we had turkeys, and turkeys were a big part of the economy.

We didn't have hunting then.

AED: I was gonna ask, did you hunt at all?

NRH: No. Of course there was bird hunting, but you didn't think about charging for that. In fact, people went on your property without asking. Almost anyone would hunt without permission, and you didn't think anything about it. Now, you know, they charge for almost any type of hunting.

But I guess I gathered up the eggs, and Mother had me sweep the porch sometimes, as a real young child. They never made me learn to milk, and I didn't volunteer, but, 'course that's gonna come along—no matter what happens, you gotta milk. But then 'course, as I grew older, I worked in the fields. And, like heading the maize, and we chopped the grass out of cotton, we chopped the grass out of everything except wheat. But I recall my dad and Johnson grass. You know what Johnson grass is?

AED: I do.

NRH: They didn't have much Johnson grass. And I recall once in a while Dad would find Johnson grass growing out in the field. He would go with a tow sack and a pick, get down on his knees and he would get the roots of the Johnson grass, put 'em in sack, take 'em back and burn 'em. Because you didn't want Johnson grass.

AED: 'Cause once it's in there, that's it.

NRH: Yes, it stays there. Now, it's I guess a staple crop. (laughs)

And then, it wasn't long until I was probably in high school, I started working in town at a store, you know, on Saturdays, which I enjoyed. Come to think of it, I don't guess I was very work prone 'cause that's all I did.

AED: Did your family have dogs?

NRH: Oh, boy. That was my passion, dogs. First of all we had dogs to protect us against snakes. I recall once—with no air conditioning, no coolers, no nothing—summer you moved your bedroom on the porch or out in the yard in the breeze. We had a bed, but up on boxes or something, and we were sleeping in the yard—on this bed. And we were awakened by the rattlesnake noise (imitates a rattling noise) you know how they do. Well, 'course we didn't have a flashlight. We were in this bed. You don't want to step off. 'Cause, you know, you might step on a snake. The dogs would bark at it. Mother heard it from inside the house. She, at length, came to the porch, and shined the light where Dad could see. So he got to the porch, got the light, and the dog had the snake treed by the yard fence. We thought he had crawled through the yard on the way to water. Then Mother went and got the shotgun, and Dad shot the snake. But the dogs alerted us, kept the snake there. And many times they would do that sort of thing. And then dogs were for pleasure, too, because I had them all named. And one time I had a collie dog who had pups, 'cause boy, I could really love those pups and work them and hated to give them away. They'd have to make me give them away. You can't keep 'em all. You've got to—and I wanted to make sure they had a good home. Almost had them take a vow, you know it. (both laugh)

For some reason we never had cats. I don't know why. 'Cause our son out at the ranch at Junction, he looked around in the bunkhouse and the barn area, he said there must've been ten, fifteen cats. The previous owner had been feeding them. So one the neighbors drove up one time, said, "Well, how you getting along?" Skip said, "Well fine, but I'm gonna get rid of some of these cats." He said, "Well, maybe that's a good idea. The people that owned the ranch before you did kept them to protect against rattlesnakes." So he said, "Ooh, get some more." (both laugh) So he buys a hundred-pound sacks of cat food and feeds 'em. Because, you know, they are—

AED: They do. They know how to handle snakes. And rodents.

NRH: Yes. So they're very good. Yes. Um-hm.

Yeah, I recall back then, of course, like I told you, Killeen was a dry town. But my cousins and my dad had Mustang grapes out in a pasture. They'd go pull Mustang grapes, and usually without Mother knowing it, either in the smokehouse or out in the barn, would start the process of making wine. And they'd make it, and they'd bottle it. And I thought it was grape juice. I thought I really liked it. But the Mustang grapes attracted people. They would come and ask to pick your Mustang grapes, and that was what they were gonna do, make wine out of it. And—so—

AED: You had grandparents living not too far from you, or were they deceased?

NRH: No, they had—I think maybe I was two years old when my grandmother passed away. But now my mother's parents, her grandmother had already passed away, but her dad had married again, and they lived in Anson. So we made trips out there, and I saw them very seldom.

AED: But you had aunts and uncles, cousins?

NRH: Oh, yes. My dad's seven brothers and sisters lived in the area. And—

AED: So did you see them a lot, say holidays or birthdays or special occasions?

NRH: Well, yes, like, one of the sisters lived on the way to town, it was four miles to town. She had three daughters. And so they were real close, we always stopped by when we were going to town. And then another sister lived on the other side of Killeen, which wasn't very far, we always saw them at church. And many times on Saturday. Now one of the brothers, two of the brothers I guess, lived in Temple. But here again, the families got together pretty often. And then one of the other brothers, I believe lived out in Stephenville or something like that, but they would always come, several times a

year. They'd come and spend the weekend or night. We seldom ever—you know, like, my brothers are both gone, but Billye has some relatives who live in Killeen, but we very seldom see them.

AED: And I was going to ask about how your family celebrated holidays like Christmas in particular.

NRH: Well, I guess as far as our family, Thanksgiving was always the biggie, I guess, because there was more or less a dinner and a get-together. Christmas not so much because families, like if they had children, they wanted to stay at home and have their own tree and so—but many times, maybe—they would come New Year's or something. And I guess Christmas and Thanksgiving would be the biggies. New Year's didn't mean much.

July the Fourth, Killeen didn't celebrate much, but Belton did. And I would often go with the Hilliard family who lived—I'd go with them to Belton because they always had a carnival. And, you know, July—the parade. July the Fourth was a big deal. But my folks would stay at home and work.

You know, that's one thing, I do not ever remember my family taking a vacation except when they were both in their seventies. And then they just went to one of the grandson's wedding in California, went up there and stayed. But—

AED: That was very uncommon if you were living the rural life. You couldn't leave.

NRH: That's right. Well, you know, who's gonna milk the cows? And, you know, another thing I recall, I do not ever remember us locking a door. I doubt that we could've found a key to the house. (both laugh) And, you never thought anything about it, you would just go off and—I know several times my mother would go visit her dad, when he was ill, and my dad would stay at home. But we never locked house, and you never worried about it. I heard somebody talking one time, they was talking about being poor, and they said they were really poor. They said, Well how poor? Well, somebody broke in their house one time, and they didn't take anything. So you gotta be pretty poor. (both laugh) And some of us living out in the country were about like that.

But, like the other holidays, they were just workdays.

Now, of course, they were awfully careful to carry me to church. I remember when I went away to college, I don't know whether they went to church again or not. (laughs) They're indoctrinating me. And, you know, we went to church, and we went to Sunday school and—

AED: Big part of your life—

NRH: Big part of it. And—but the holidays—like Belton always had a big July the Fourth. I don't remember Temple having anything. I guess they went to Belton, it was nine miles away.

AED: Wasn't Belton the county seat then, too?

NRH: It was the county seat, and it was the biggie. You know, they say that the railroads came to Belton back in those early days and wanted to lay out some tracks and one thing and another, and Belton wouldn't do it. So they just moved to Temple and made their own town and of course made a much larger town.

AED: It became very big. You said your mother worked. She clerked at some different stores in town.

NRH: She worked at Norman Brothers Dry Goods Store.

AED: Okay, just that one. And that's the one where you worked as well.

NRH: Well, they had everything. To me it was a huge store, big store, open. One side of it was the dry goods store. Sold everything—ladies dresses, cloth, thread, spools, hats, everything. Two brothers, one of

them ran the dry goods, and the other, the grocery. I worked on the grocery side, and Mother worked as a clerk on the dry goods side.

AED: Did she work there five days a week?

NRH: Well, at times she did, but I guess in the later years she really—well during the camp she did, but before that she'd worked on weekends.

AED: So Saturdays, basically.

NRH: Yes. Uh-huh. Maybe sometime if they had a sale Friday, something like that.

AED: 'Cause I was thinking she had her hands full if she was doing that and doing everything she needed to do.

NRH: Um-hm. That's true. Yeah. But back then, they thought they was supposed to be busy.

AED: 'Cause she had such a strong association with the town, did she buy soap or did she make soap?

NRH: Well, in the early days we made the lye soap out in the wash pot. Laundry day was a big day, and you hung your clothes on a barbed-wire fence. You didn't have a clothesline—well, we had clothesline, but it wouldn't hold all the cloth. But you could drive by a farm house then and gosh, you could see forty pieces of clothing hanging on the fence, which was nothing uncommon.

AED: Would she make your clothes, or did she buy clothes?

NRH: She made practically all of her clothes and made my shirts and even my shorts sometimes. But most of those things she made. She was a good seamstress and did well. Quilted. The ladies would quilt when they had meetings.

AED: And she canned?

NRH: Oh, yes.

AED: And did you help with that?

NRH: Well, I remember back then, I guess what they call the Depression years, I remember the pressure cooker came out. Are you familiar with the pressure cooker? That's the first time we could can. Well, I remember we canned chicken. And there were people that owned a pressure cooker that would come to your home and would help you can, and they got half of what you canned. Corn was big. I don't eat corn today because I ate my share back when. And, you know, you picked the ears, and you shuck 'em, and then you cut the top off, and then, however you get the rest of it. And Lord, that corn—they way we had the corn, we could've fed Fort Hood. And we canned beans. Practically anything in the garden, and it was a big deal because—

You know, something else that I thought was unusual, you're not old enough to remember, but maybe you've read about it—when Roosevelt came in, and there was a lot of overproduction. What they had to do was plowed up cotton, they did these things to cut down on production. Well, another thing—they had too many animals. They told my dad, If you allow these people to bring all their stock, and this was a regional area. Everybody on the north side of Killeen brought their stock that wanted to sell it to the government to our ranch. We didn't know what was going to happen, but they had a man that would come and offer you a price, and there was a man with a .22 rifle turned up there. And he would say, "Okay, here's this Hereford, give you three dollars." Guy'd say, "Okay." Pow. (imitates a gun shot) Shot 'em right between the eyes and they fell.

AED: And this happened on your property?

NRH: Yes. (laughs) And if the animal was a milk cow they gave six dollars. Pow. (imitates a gun shot) Well, when the day was over, they'd killed over a hundred head of stock, and they were laying dead on our land. The government had now hired somebody, and they drug 'em off up to a canyon. Stacked them altogether, Lord, there's a big long pile. Then they took gasoline and just saturated them all over. Now anybody could have any of the meat they wanted, but they couldn't sell it. Well, there were poor people there that were cutting the hindquarters and other parts of beef, but that was just a drop in the bucket. Because there was no refrigeration. As I said, they saturated this with gasoline, and I remember those fires burned for days, because they would come back, oh, after two or three days, put more gasoline on, burn 'em again. But it just, literally destroyed that canyon. For years after that all you could see was burnt bones and rocks and no grass would grow there, but you know, that was a way life for those people. They had that production. Three dollars meant a whole lot.

AED: At that time.

NRH: At that time. You give me three dollars for this animal. I don't have to feed it anymore and we'll do without this.

AED: There wasn't any cash available.

NRH: Yes. Milk cows were always big—had five or six. But they'd hear these stories about somebody over here had a milk cow that'd give three gallons of milk—a day. And here we had this one giving just three quarts. So my dad would go buy this one. Bring it back home. Well, sure enough it'd give three gallons there for about a week, then after that, the production would decline to three quarts. My folks couldn't understand what was the matter. 'Course when I took agriculture, I found out. My dad would take a coffee can and feed the can cottonseed cake or cottonseed. And they'd go out in the pasture and eat grass. The place they had come from had probably been having a gallon or two gallons of cottonseed. We were just starving the cows to death now. (laughs) They couldn't produce milk on nothing. And if it—like if it were spring of course when the green grass was growing, well it worked out pretty good, but the rest of the time they couldn't do it. I was never able to convince my folks, (laughs) you've got to feed these cows if you're gonna get milk. "Well, I don't know about that, that's pretty expensive. You can't just put that money in a cow." (laughs) So, you know, we had a whole flock of cows that were low producers. But the agriculture teacher could have a field day out at our place, (laughs) if he didn't get shot. (both laugh)

AED: If your dad would listen to what he had to say. (laughs) I was thinking maybe, 'cause your mother had worked in town, that she might have done fewer of the things that you expect a farm family to do, like making soap, like maybe buying certain food products instead of canning your own, but it doesn't sound like that was the case.

NRH: No, I guess it was the days of the Depression that we tried to be self-sustaining. You had to take every opportunity to can. And back in those days, I've heard Mother and Dad say, Well, you know, we're not poor. We've got almost eight hundred acres of land, but we don't have any money. In other words the cash flow wasn't there.

Now another thing, you know, people in town had wood rights. Are you familiar with this?

AED: I don't think that I am.

NRH: Like people in Killeen. If you'll notice in Killeen, there're not many trees around until you get to the hills. Well, we were on the hills. We had our fields below the hills, but the rest of the ranch was up on top. Post oak grows, it's about a little bit bigger than my arm, and it just grows, just all over. Well, way back in the old days, if a person owned something in town, they might own ten acres of wood rights on our mountain.

AED: Oh, okay.

NRH: Now that meant they didn't own the land—but we couldn't sell it, but they could get the wood from it. So, there may be ten people come in from town up to our place, they had wood rights up on the mountain. But they'd go cut their wood, cut it and haul it off. And this constituted wood rights. And I recall, those who didn't have wood rights and wanted wood would give seventy-five cents for a load of wood. I mean, as high as they could stack it. There was another neighbor who lived nearby. He wanted stumps, because Dad would sell him a wagonload of stumps for a quarter. And he'd buy stumps where these other people—

AED: And so would that include cedar choppers? Or is it different?

NRH: We didn't have that many cedars. It has come about recently in that area. We had some. You could get a Christmas tree. Seemed like the cedars then maybe grew out in a field that had been abandoned, but we didn't have many, as I recall, on top of the mountain. Some of the stumps were live oaks. But most of it would be the post oaks.

AED: They drop, yeah.

NRH: Drop, and whereas the live oaks push the new leaves through the old leaves—maybe can't even tell when the whole thing happens.

AED: You said earlier that you didn't have any refrigeration.

NRH: Unh-uh.

AED: None at all?

NRH: No, not until later. Do you know what a milk cooler is?

AED: I do know, well, I've heard about them.

NRH: You know, they were made out of tin. They came up about six inches, and there was a trough that held water. And inside of that there was a deal made out of metal, two or three shelves, and on top of that was another pan of water. You put a sheet all the way around, and then you put water in the top and water in the bottom and water just kept blowing back and forth. It kept the inside cool. It was a cooler. You kept milk and anything like butter and vegetables. It didn't preserve it long. But it helped.

AED: It helped.

NRH: Yes. And of course then, if you had milk and could let it go to clabber, which you could skim the cream off of the top and maybe sell the cream. And the clabber, a lot of people like clabber—cornbread and clabber, and it was a meal. Or you fed it to the animals. But I recall, we got real modern once, and this was probably while I was in high school. You could buy an icebox, and an ice man came around. This was a big part of life. You could get twenty-five pounds of ice. He came every other day. Or you could get fifty pounds if you were pretty well-off in the money. It was a common occurrence for the lady to meet the ice man and saying, There's a chip off of that twenty-five-pound block of ice, (laughs) I want the chip. But then the box was insulated and did preserve food for a while, much longer than the cooler. I finished college and came home and left for the army right away, they were still using an icebox. I'm sure other people maybe in town might've had a refrigerator.

AED: But they were using an icebox still.

NRH: Yes, but they were using an icebox, and that was quite common out in the country because the ice man cometh, you know, he—and it was just like the mail. Incidentally, the mailman was a big part of

the community because he brought the gossip. Did you hear about so-and-so, and something or other. You know, sometimes it took the mailman all day to get around, (both laugh) because—we used to have a mailman, and when he drove by a corn field, he would stop and get out, and get roast ears. And if he came by some other kind of peach crop, he'd stop and get peaches. Nobody thought anything about it. His name was Brewster. Everybody accepted it. That was part of life—Brewster'd been here, he'd picked the corn on that row. He didn't ask. He wouldn't ask.

AED: Just part of the job.

NRH: Yeah. You want your mail? (laughs)

AED: Did he bring the mail to the house?

NRH: No. We had a mailbox. And of course some people's the mailbox might've been half mile or two miles from the house. Ours happened to be just outside the front gate.

AED: Okay, so it was close.

NRH: It was close, yes. And, you know, you usually kept a fruit jar lid in the mailbox, and if you had something that had postage due, he put you a note in the box and the next day you put three pennies, or whatever, in the fruit jar. It was strictly a—and boy, if you didn't, you didn't get your mail maybe for two weeks. (both laugh) But then, there's three cents due on postage, if you had a route of a hundred people that could count up.

AED: Sure. Wow. And did other people come to the house selling things? Other peddlers?

NRH: Oh, you bet. (laughs) Rawleigh man and Watkins man. Are you familiar with those terms?

AED: I've heard the terms.

NRH: They would come, I remember even back when they came in a buggy. And they would even be selling fruit trees. They had anything—anything you needed in the house, in the kitchen. They usually had that in their drummer's case. And then later on they came in cars, and they were still coming, when the camp came. These people—

AED: What did the Rawleigh man sell? What kind of products?

NRH: Just anything that you might need in the house. Like instead of the wife going to town or having to go to town to get a can of pepper, he had that. Like—I remember Dad bought a bunch of peach trees one time and set 'em out. They worked real fine. And I remember this guy had a—had a picture, I can still see it. It was the prettiest bunch of grapes I've ever seen in my life. Of course it never worked for us, (both laugh) but the peaches worked out real well. And—

AED: And the Watkins? Was it the same kind of thing?

NRH: Watkins. Same thing. Same thing, just different—different name.

You know, another thing kids used to do then, they used to go possum hunting. Are you familiar with that?

AED: Yeah?

NRH: You know, possums were quite prickly. We didn't have many coons in our area. They did in other areas. But we had possums, and skunks. But for possums you'd go out with your dogs, find a possum, and you skinned the animal and you'd sell the hide for twenty-five or thirty cents, you know, you were really in business then, you know. You had to skin them and then you had to stretch them, you

know, and let them dry and all that business. And there were people in town, usually a feed store, would buy hides. And there was a certain season that you hunted because after that time of year the hair slips out. And a lot of kids made their spending money doing hunting season.

AED: Doing that. Interesting.

NRH: Yes.

AED: Did you family have hogs?

NRH: Yes. Oh, yes. In fact, we had a smokehouse, and a big deal was making sausage, and another was preparing meat to be hung in the smokehouse. I don't know how they cured, I've never figured that out, (laughs) but this was a source of meat for a lot of the times during the year. The ham.

AED: They must've been smoked at some point or soaked in some kind of brine or something?

NRH: Brine, I think, perhaps, and then hung. Smoked, of course, was always the—you called it smokehouse, you know. So—

AED: And so would they build a fire within the smokehouse, or were they just storing them after they'd been—

NRH: No, I think they usually had a smaller place where you could have the fire in the bottom of a pot for smoke and once they had spent there time there, they were taken out and put in the smokehouse.

You know, fire was always a real concern in rural areas. I recall the house above us, it must've been half, three-quarters of a mile away, but you could see it when it caught fire. And of course the neighbors always responded to this. I remember we drove up, the man came out of—on the porch, must've been six feet above the ground. He came out of the house, had twenty dishes, just had 'em. He walked out to the porch, just pitched 'em out. I guess he broke every one of them, but, you know, he was just beside himself. He was just trying to save anything you could. And—but gosh it wiped families out when that happens, 'cause that's everything they had.

AED: At that point was there a volunteer fire department?

NRH: (shakes head)

AED: Nothing. You were on your own?

NRH: In the town there was, but—

AED: But not out in the rural areas.

NRH: Nothing. Nothing. Nobody to call. You could, you know, you were just there.

AED: What about medical care? What did you do?

NRH: Well, I still remember there were two doctors in Killeen, and it almost caused a revolution when they said they were going to start charging a dollar for every time you came to see the doctor. And they said, Now this is beyond all reason. A dollar for wanting to go in and talking to the doctor. (laughs) Usually it had been free, you know. Now, like when women had babies, the doctor would come to the house, but both of the doctors that were in Killeen owned drugstores. And they were there for doctor visits.

AED: So that's how they made their money, not from people coming to visit.

NRH: That's true. That's true. And, for example, usually had soda fountains in the drugstore, and that was a big part of town. And that was great, but the doctors were real pillars in the community. And I

remember when the third doctor came to Killeen. I guess I was in high school. And they wondered if there'd be enough to keep the three going. In fact, when the camp came, I don't think there was but the three doctors then. And of course, then when the population exploded it increased, but medical care was—it was just in town.

Now, to go to the hospital, you went not to Belton, you had to go to Temple. They still had King's Daughters and Scott and White, that had been there for years. And, but Lord, you couldn't be very sick or you wouldn't make it over there.

AED: That was quite a hike.

NRH: Yes, right. I—my dad tells me the story—we were what—from the way, I guess, where we lived, we lived northeast of Killeen, we were sixteen miles from Belton. When they used to go to Belton, it was a day's trip in a wagon. You went there, and they had wagon yards. You carried a mattress and some springs usually. You put that out on the ground and you had a—you built a little fire and—then you did your shopping the next day. The third day you took the sixteen-mile trip back home. It's three days. And that was sixteen miles. And that didn't happen while I was there, you know, 'cause they already had Model Ts when I came along, but it's kinda like anything else, people had Model Ts, people still went in wagons. And it's like, when I was in school, some people would come to school in wagons, some come in on bicycles, lot of 'em on horses, and a few in cars, not many.

AED: So you traveled to Belton, or you said you went with your mother to Anson—when's the first time you went to Dallas or Austin or a big town? Temple was pretty big, too.

NRH: Well, I went to Belton for the county seat. I remember I had an uncle that was—had accidentally shot himself putting a .22 rifle in the car, and he passed away, but we drove to Temple to see him, and that was the first time I'd seen Temple.

AED: How old were you then do you think?

NRH: Oh, five maybe, something like that. But now the first time I went to Dallas, I was a sophomore in high school. Went to the Texas Centennial. I thought, What a world is outside of Killeen. Where'd they come along in developing this thing? But to see those things was really an eye opener. I guess then after that I went to San Antonio.

I guess the first time I went out of state I was in the army. I went to Georgia for basic training. Billye and I married when I finished my OCS, and we were a couple of country kids going to Los Angeles. Boy, what a deal that was!

I recall out there one time we were going—stayed at an apartment and came in late one night, and I parked on the left-hand side of the street. Next morning the manager told me, "The police were here this morning, said that you had parked on the wrong side of the street." And he said, "But I told them you were from Texas," and they said, Well, that'll be all right. (laughs) I swear to God that's true. I didn't realize they took it so seriously about where you parked. In Killeen they didn't care.

In Killeen though, I told you it was really two blocks long. It was longer than that, but I meant the big part. They had a piece of concrete that was about this size, it must've been eight inches high. They put that out in the middle of the street. There were three of those markers. One at this end of the block, one at the middle, and one at the other end. Big entertainment for the kids—they didn't drive very far, driving around, turning right there, and people would even criticize, Wow, look at them out there, burning up gas, what can they see? (laughs) And sometimes they'd do that for hours. Just for something to do. And those, those three concrete blocks were the big drive.

And I recall Killeen very early when it didn't have paving. I was pretty young when they paved the streets.

AED: I was gonna ask, was the road to Killeen from your house a paved road?

NRH: No, no.

AED: It was gravel? Dirt?

NRH: Gravel. And, in fact, part of it was not graveled. I recall once when it rained. We had rain for several weeks. And we lived a mile from the paved road. And so, I remember Mother was the driver, two neighbors and Dad had cut cedar limbs. And they walked ahead and put the cedar limbs in the ruts, and she came along in the car and sometimes, she'd have to back up and they'd have to put more cedar in the road. It must've taken a half a day to go that mile to get to the gravel road. And then 'course you had to dread coming back. But once she got to the gravel road she could go on to town. It was gravel then all the way to town. And, I remember our road was gravel, when I was in junior high because the school bus would come.

AED: And how far were you from Killeen? Four miles, I think you'd said that.

NRH: Yes, four miles.

AED: And you said your dad had peach trees, did he have any other fruit growing?

NRH: Plum. Peach and plum. Never able to grow pears or apples. We made kind of a halfway effort, but peaches and plums were the main crop. And you canned those, you know.

AED: And he had cotton. And where would he—did he take it to Killeen to gin it?

NRH: Killeen had three cotton gins at one time.

AED: So there weren't any in Palo Alto? Sugar Loaf? Or they were gone by then?

NRH: Yes, they were gone by then. And to drive town, it was an all-day trip to take a load of cotton to the gin, we'd usually take the cottonseed back home. You know, you could sell the cottonseed or you could keep it. We always kept it. And doled it out to the milk cows (both laugh) in quart buckets!

AED: Seed by seed.

NRH: Yes, right. We didn't want to waste any, you know. (laughs)

AED: And do you recall anything about politics? I know you were a child, but do recall what your parents—where they stood on things?

NRH: Oh, yes. I tell you the main person they were interested in was the road commissioner, because you needed that road graveled and maintained. I can recall any number of times the road commissioner would come and sit with Dad sometimes a half a day out by the mailbox planning, How can we get these roads to work? And the sheriff was another one that was quite interesting, because that's all the law we had out in that particular area. And we weren't so concerned with like the county attorney or district attorney. The judge always. And then, of course, they were concerned with the governor.

The radio really changed things. I can remember when the first radio came and that was—boy, that was living. We got one probably when I was in junior high. Had to have an aerial, couldn't just plug it in, 'cause it had a battery, and then when the batteries ran out, if you didn't have enough money to purchase a new one you were cut off from the world. But the radio changed things considerably because you heard the news. You think television was a major increase to the point—but radio—because you heard all these political speeches. You heard these advertisements.

Another thing that was a big deal was—they always had political rallies, where any candidate would

come and speak. They'd speak all day long. Or sometimes they would only have ten minutes. I remember the first time I heard a young man, he was running for county attorney. And then they built a big platform out in the middle of the street where people could come and these people speak. No microphone, no anything. I still remember him speaking, and he had a good message, but his leg was trembling, shaking. He was so nervous, you know. And, you know, when he was talking he'd hold his notes. And that impressed me. You know, by george, if he can do that maybe I could sometime. He even become county and district attorney and finally judge and was very successful.

AED: Oh, really.

NRH: Yes. You know, this is aside from this, but when I was in college I was just an old country boy, had come from that school with 325 people enrolled in the first through the eleventh grade then. And as an old country boy, and I was taking these courses, boy, English and math and all that was eating me alive. But there was a course, speech, I needed some grade points—by george, I can talk, I'll take speech, so I took speech. I still remember that first time—there must've been twenty in the class—the first time they called on me to speak, they'd given us an assignment, and I still remember this lady teaching the course. I can still tell you the color of the shoes she had on. I can tell you what her dress looked like. She had this ribbon thing in her hair. It wasn't not just a ribbon but one of those things that looked like a handkerchief tied there somewhere, I still remember that. And I got up and made my speech, and I remember she said, "Well, thank you, Mr. Hall, I don't think you'll ever make a public speaker, but I appreciate you trying." So I told everybody I've been trying to prove her right for forty years. (laughs)

AED: She gave you a mission.

NRH: She gave me a mission there with that statement. And, you know, the funny thing, I didn't resent it, I just took it, I'll show her. I thought, I think I can beat that.

AED: Turn that around.

NRH: Yes. Yes.

AED: And you said your parents were interested in the governor. What—what was their persuasion?

NRH: Well, of course, my dad was what you might call a yellow-dog Democrat. It didn't make any difference if they nominated Hitler, if he was the party nominee, then that's who you stood by. Boy, he would've shot this guy from Vermont. (laughs) And it was a case where the gentleman down the road was kind of an independent and occasionally he would be for a different candidate. This was always a lot of entertainment to hear them talk and argue because they would sit out on the front porch or on the steps, and they would talk. And I can remember Dad saying, "Now Gid, now you know better than that." And then McCorcle would say, "Doc, you've been misinformed." If was very friendly and polite, but it was strictly business. But real interested in the governor, although that didn't have a lot of influence on the farm families except that it was entertainment. But now the sheriff and the road commissioner, that's a way of life, they had an influence on you.

AED: Lots of control right there.

NRH: You bet.

AED: Right up to your front porch.

NRH: You put your hand on that. Um-hm. Yes.

AED: You talked about the radio. It was a big part of your life. Did you listen to the radio—

NRH: Every night. My dad sat by a kerosene lamp in a rocking chair reading Western stories. Western story magazines cost ten cents then. And they would exchange with the neighbors. He read the newspaper from cover to cover every day.

AED: The Killeen paper?

NRH: No, Killeen didn't have a paper then, they finally got one all right, but he read the *Temple Daily Telegram*. It came every day. But, you know, they messed us up, because they always took Labor Day and Christmas off, and they'd send a message, we let these people go home, we're not publishing a paper.

Baseball scores were always in the paper. This was a big part of my life, keeping up with the Saint Louis Cardinals. With Dizzy Dean and Pepper Martin and some of the players. I really did check their activities.

But the radio kinda brought the world to you. Soap operas are—they weren't near what they are now, but there were different things like that. News was what really interested my dad. And there would be plays or things like that. My dad sat in his rocking chair, and there was a straight-back chair nearby. And I would sit on my knees leaning up on this table and I could control the radio right there. But my ear was right up against the radio. And I'd sit there every night until they made me go to bed. I remember they used to have a program called "Inner Sanctum," and it was a horror deal, you know, scary. And it opened by a creaking door and, Lord, you could hear that thing creaking and it just ripped down your spine. (laughs) And I thought, I'll go to bed, and I never will go to sleep. But "Inner Sanctum," and the neighbor boy always listened to it and we would exchange our views, What'd you think of that story? And it—it really did open a new adventure—see before that it had been the newspaper, that was the only connection with the outside world. And even when you went to town, there was not a lot of outside dealing with the world. I mean it was just your little world in Killeen. And I can see in my lifetime, well how the newspaper influenced. And here came the radio and then, of course, then when TV came, it was really something. I don't know what they'll do next, but they've come pretty far.

AED: What other kinds of things did you do for recreation? You talked about baseball.

NRH: Rubber guns. Playing rubber guns.

AED: Were there other organized—not organized sports, like basketball, tennis?

NRH: Killeen never had a gym. We played—we had basketball just out on a dirt court. Nobody would come and play us. (laughs) They had gyms. Basketball was not very important. Baseball was, and football. And, for example, another thing we would do, like I told you about the rubber guns—and swimming in the summer. We'd find a pond or go to the river.

AED: What river did you go to?

NRH: Cowhouse. I remember they had a swing there off a big tree, and you could swing out and turn loose and fall in the water and swim back to the river bank.

Fish. We fished quite a bit there. You'd go to the river. And had different—we used to call them tanks. But now, nobody knows what we were talking about. There're ponds nowadays. And people would have ponds on nearly every farm and ranch and you could go there and a lot of them had been stocked with fish.

We used to try to find a grove of trees and climb the tree and see how far we could go without getting to the ground. And sometimes you could fall and break an arm.

AED: Do you have any toys you remember playing with?

NRH: Oh, goodness yeah. You bet. 'Scuse me just a minute.

(interruption in taping)

NRH: We always had ample toys. Trucks and cars are what I really liked. We would go out in the dirt, we didn't have lawns, you know, just dirt, make you a path.

AED: Were they made of wood?

NRH: No, they were metal or tin or whatever. I remember I had one toy that was really fine. Sandy Andy, they called it. It was a deal like, kinda like you put sand in this little funnel and there was a little car under there and then when you moved the lever it would fill that car up and when it got so heavy it would go down this little shoot and dump it either in a truck or a little car. And I played with that for several years. That was the closest thing to anything mechanical. So—but, I guess cars and guns, toy guns were my favorite.

In fact it was quite the deal. We'd try to make a—a rubber gun, usually a clothespin on a piece of wood. I don't know who made it—but it looked just like a regular pistol and then it had been shoe polished. You used shoe polish to make it black, you know. And had a scabbard. Had a scabbard like we would see in the cowboy movie. And then you'd reenact the movie for a whole week and then you'd go see another one (both laugh) and here we go again. Usually there's an argument about, No, I'm gonna be Tom Mix. Well, no I'm gonna be Tom Mix, you know it, so—

AED: How funny.

NRH: Yes. I was kidding a friend and he was doing some carpenter work for me and he had a ball cap that had a number three on the front of it, and he'd worn it several days, and I told him the other day, "I don't want a number three carpenter doing any work for me, I want to try to find a number one." So he took a piece of paper and wrote number one on it and paper clipped it on his cap.

(Mrs. Hall speaks)

NRH: Someone in Amarillo that what? What is this? We rode the same school bus together.

(interruption in taping)

AED: I was gonna ask if your wife was from the area also. How you met.

NRH: She—there used to be a mountain near Killeen, they've torn the hill for rock and gravel, called Miller Mountain. That was on her granddad's farm. And she and her folks lived there for a while, and we rode the bus. Now she makes a wild statement, says that she didn't know what I looked like for two years because I was always in the back of the bus fighting and on the bottom. (both laugh) So—

AED: That does not bode well for you.

NRH: (laughs) Yeah, right. But—so we rode the same school bus together. And there is four years difference in our ages.

AED: That's so neat.

NRH: Yeah. So we've had a great life together. Yeah.

AED: Let's see, I was asking you about—we talked about toys a little bit—do you remember games? Childhood games you might've played in the schoolyard or at home.

NRH: Oh, yes. You know, at Killeen they had a playground, which was unusual for us. Had seesaws, swings, and kind of a merry-go-round, and you rode on it as it went around, and then another one where you held onto the bar, and several people could swing out and around. Baseball was always a big thing in school, and we played football. Touch football in the season of the year. And I guess baseball carried out into the country life. But school then had recess, not PE—recess. And you'd have recess, and of course you were supposed to go out and play.

AED: Get hot.

NRH: Get hot! (both laugh) And run around, run around. We did that.

AED: So you'd come back in and settle down, right?

NRH: Yeah, come back in, right.

AED: Exactly. It's funny. I'm sort of winding down with specific questions that I have for you. If you can think of anything else—I tried to jog your memory on a bunch of things. I'd like to sort of wind up, if I can, with a question about some of your fondest memories of your family or your parents or just time that you had there. How it's affected your life as you became an adult. Things like that.

NRH: Well, I always felt like my parents really loved me, you know, there was a great deal of love there. And I didn't realize until years later how much they had sacrificed to send me to school. I told you I didn't want to go to college, but I didn't think I had a choice. Didn't find out until I was a sophomore that you didn't have to go, but by then I was committed. But when I did go to school, I fell in with what they do, and I'm sure I was spending quite a bit of money. You know, going to shows, doing this and that. If a new coat came out the kids would buy it, and I wanted to buy a coat, too. You know, I recall one time I came home, and I was in my freshman year, and I had a cousin that was the bookkeeper for the big store, the department store. And I highwayed it home. I would usually get there Friday afternoon—late in the afternoon. And he told me one time, said, "Norm, come on over I want to show you something." And then, in Killeen, right in town, like I told you about these three blocks, and not fifty yards away was the stock pens, where you loaded cattle. And he walked up there and said, "You see that milk cow over there?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Look familiar?" And I said, "No." He said, "Well, it should." I still get emotional when I think about this. He said, "The last time you asked for money your dad sold that milk cow." Said, "They only have one left, you've gone through four." Boy that was hard—so I went back to college. Got a job in a dining hall. Worked for the rest of the time I was in school. Really made an impression on me. And here again, I saw the sacrifice. They never said a word. They just did it. I thought with them never having finished school, they wanted to make sure that I did. And—so those are some real treasured memories. They hurt, but they're treasured.

AED: Just knowing—what they gave.

NRH: Giving me direction for my life.

AED: Yeah, that's pretty hard stuff.

NRH: But, you know, just the things we did together. They always tried to make sure that if there was an event at school that I wanted to be at, they'd get me there. And like Mother had to do the driving because Dad didn't.

AED: Did he wear glasses?

NRH: Yes. You could buy them for a quarter, you know. (laughs) He never—I'm sure, he never had an eye test, he never had anything like that. I still remember, if he lost his glasses, everything stopped until

we found—everybody went to looking for them. Nothing moved until he found them. (laughs) Mother wore glasses, too. From the time I remember. But Dad did not wear his except to read until he was about eighty, eighty-five.

But, you know, I recall one time, I guess I was—I was in college. And wanted a car. Well of course I couldn't afford a car, but you could buy a car that looked like it had been a car, but they had built a bed on it which puts it kind of like a pickup truck, out of wood. And even the seat, it was wood like a little bench and you could sit there and drive. You could buy that car for twenty-five dollars. Now that was a deal. And I thought I was moving up. And I knew I wasn't going to have any dates in it. (both laugh) Even Billye wouldn't go with me. But I still remember I placed two wires together and put a clothespin on them, and that was the switch. Well, you know, I'd drive that to town and of course by then the kids thought that was great, you've got a stripped down car. We'd go fishing in it and do those different things. But I remember one time that I was coming home when I ran out of gas about two or three hundred yards from the house and just pulled over to the side of the road and walked home to get some gas. But Mother and Dad weren't there, but a friend was with me from town, and so we were in the house. And in a little bit we heard this horn honking. Well, that was uncommon. Went outside and here Mother was pushing my car and had my dad in my car guiding the car. But, when she started honking, he thought somebody wanted to pass and of course they weren't going very fast. He just stepped out. (laughs) Here the car is—she's pushing it and there's nobody in it driving it. (both laugh) And he just wasn't mechanically inclined. If somebody wanted to go around they could do it, he just wanted to be out of the car. And so she really lit into him about that, "What are you doing? I was just honking." He said, "Well, I didn't know, I thought somebody—." She said, "Well that's not the way for them to get around."

AED: Well they sound like a real pair.

NRH: Oh, yeah, yeah, right. (laughs) But, you know, it's been great. I appreciate my heritage out on the reservation. I gained something there and it was—it was something to give me some memories and some direction. And, you know, I feel like that it's probably the reason I worked pretty hard. You know, first of all I knew my folks wanted me to be successful. And, you know, just to try to prove to them that I could be was my inspiration.

Another thing, I always had—my brother just older than I, was ten years difference, he always thought I was lazy. He was probably right, (both laugh) but I wouldn't give into it. But, you know, he had a college degree, and he could always drive fine cars and all that. Here again and part of that was probably, you know, kind of egotism, I wanting to show him. I'll show you, you know. But I know he had retired from engineering and then went to ranching, and I guess later on he went back to teaching again. But he became president of the student council association in Texas, and he was real proud of that. Well, I became president of the American Association of School Administrators. (both laugh) So there wasn't any conversation there. We just both—we just forgot that, you know. We didn't discuss that.

AED: What did your brother end up doing?

NRH: Well he had gone to college and finished two years of college. And then he married a girl there in the college town whose father was in the construction business. And so he went to work there, and then finally when his father-in-law retired, he took over. And so he lived for years in Stephenville and then in Ranger.

AED: And you went to A&M, correct?

NRH: Um-hm.

AED: And your older brothers?

NRH: My brother just older than me had gone to A&M and finished an engineering degree. The other brother went to John Tarleton for two years and then married.

And we still keep contact with most of our people in Killeen, although we're not there very much. Billye's mother still lives in Killeen. She's actually at the Rosewood Nursing Home. She's ninety-seven, be ninety-eight in September.

AED: That's great. That's amazing.

NRH: Yeah. Yeah. Right. Um-hm.

AED: Where did her mother grow up?

NRH: My mother?

AED: Her mother?

NRH: Oh, her mother grew up in the Killeen area, right there. Right by Miller Mountain. She grew up there. And her dad also grew up in Killeen. Her dad's people were named Cox, and they've got a long history. They tell the story, her father could see, from where he lived, the back yard of his mother's place. And she was out mowing the yard with a push mower, she must've been—I don't know maybe ninety. So he went down there and said, "Mother, you don't need to be doing this. You sit down and let me push the mower." 'Course he wasn't in shape and in two or three rounds he was breathing hard. And his mother got off the porch and said, "Son, you sit down. I'll finish this." (both laugh) It really did make a point there. You know, she lived to be ninety-nine, and they were gonna have a big celebration in Killeen for her hundredth birthday. 'Course she and her husband had run one of the hotels in Killeen, years ago. And then they had run a little restaurant there right on Main Street at one time. But they were gonna have a big celebration. And, you know, she died four months before she became a hundred. (laughs) But she was a real happy person and was a real delight to know. I can recall back in their store, it was not far from the movie. Folks would give me a quarter, you could go to the show for a dime, then you could buy a hamburger for a dime and a red soda water for a nickel. Now that's living, girl. Ever hear of that?

AED: And all it took was one quarter.

NRH: Yeah, one quarter to do it all. You know, I remember walking across the street in Killeen, I was in high school I guess, they had the first nickelodeon. And it was playing the song the music goes round and round and comes out here. I thought, Boy the world is really taking off here. When or how—when's this gonna stop, you know. (laughs) But I remember the place, even where I was in the street when I heard that.

AED: When do you think that was? What year do you think that was?

NRH: Oh, that was probably '37 maybe. 'Cause I graduated from high school in '39, and then I went to college two years and then went to teaching, and it was while I was teaching that the war broke out. I was only seventeen when I went to teaching. So when the war broke I had just turned eighteen. So I went ahead and finished that year of teaching and then went in the army.

AED: How long were you in the army?

NRH: Four years and thirty-seven days and so many hours. Part of that time I had—was back at A&M and took ROTC and was going to school, but I was still in the army. And then I went through—went to OCS in Fort Benning and then got a commission and then went on to my tour of duty.

AED: And where did you serve?

NRH: I never did go overseas. I stayed here in the states. I was an instructor. And I was injured. I was in the glider troops. Are you familiar with the gliders?

AED: Um-hm.

NRH: You know, helicopters put them out of the business. We were practicing landing and I jumped out and hung a leg and so—yeah, that took care of that. I have been drawing a pension ever since. As I say, I sold the army a leg.

AED: I'll bet you were a fine instructor, though. (NRH laughs)

NRH: I always enjoyed that.

AED: They were lucky to have you.

NRH: Um-hm. Yeah.

AED: And you were married after you came back?

NRH: Well, actually I married—when I went in the army, right after I got my degree, we married. And so, from the time I got out of A&M, we were married. Now, I guess we've been married, must be fifty-seven, fifty-eight years.

AED: I don't think I've known anybody that long. (both laugh) In fact, I know I haven't. (both laugh)

NRH: But sometimes she thinks she doesn't know me. But we've had—we've had a great life. We had two great boys, and they've always been a real pleasure. And then we've been able to travel quite a bit. She likes to travel. She's happiest when she's planning a trip. And so we've been all over the world and enjoyed it.

AED: That's very lucky.

NRH: Yeah. And she's usually planned these trips, and I just kinda tag along. So I've planned one now that she's kinda has some reservations about. I want to go to Peru and see the Inca ruins, you know, and then float down the Amazon for four days. She's not sure she wants to go, but she says, Well, she owes me that. I'm sure I'll have to take her to Bora Bora when we get back. (laughs)

AED: Wow. What a tradeoff. (laughs)

NRH: Yeah, right. (laughs) But it's been a great life.

AED: You've both worked hard to enjoy it.

NRH: Yeah. And we appreciate our heritage. And, we saw a sign one time that had a bunch a pictures and flowers and sea shores and other beautiful sites. It had a little sign right in the middle of it that said take time. So we've always tried to live by that.

AED: Very wise.

NRH: Yeah.

AED: Hard to remember to do it.

NRH: Yes, right. I have problems now, like she tells me I've retired two or three times, but I tell her you've got to have reason to get up in the morning. You know, you need something to do.

AED: As long as you're able.

NRH: Yes, I've retired a couple a times, played golf and fished. That got old and so went back to work. So I don't mind, I enjoy the work. And it causes quite bit of traveling with the nine charters we have, we have to go on the road to, meet with those teachers and meet with the advisory boards and one thing or another, so we get to where we long to be here rather than on the road.

AED: That's a good balance.

NRH: Yes.

Weldon Hicks

Date of birth: 23 July 1928
Community affiliated with: Reese's Creek
Interviewed by Marie E. Blake

MEB: This is Marie E. Blake. Today is Friday, August 24, 2001. I'm interviewing for the first time Mr. Weldon Hicks. This interview is taking place in Mr. Hick's [in his office at the First Baptist Church of Trimmier, Killeen, Texas]. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

Okay, we're on.

WH: Okay, I was born in Bell County, over in the east part around Killeen in a community called Hay Branch. We lived there until we were—until I was about five years old, four years old, I guess. Four or five years old, anyway, at that time, we moved south of Killeen out to what is now Highway 195 to the—about eight miles south of Killeen to the community of Reese's Creek where my dad bought a place. And which later turned out to be the very last place that Fort Hood took during that 1940 to '42 expansion, whenever that was. I can't remember exactly, but we moved—we had to move out of there in about, in the winter of 1942, I believe, is when we—the government bought our land and we were to vacate that land. The place that we moved from still borders on the south of Highway 195, borders Joe Gibbs's property that—where our place joined his place, and so that's as far south as they took the reservation at that time. Lying west of [Highway] 195 and south, okay?

We moved to that community and lived there from the time that I was—I don't know, five or six, until the government came and bought that property in '41 or '42, somewhere along there. And so we vacated there and left that area, moved back further to the west and rented a place for a while. My folks farmed and ranched, and so we rented a place in there, and moved. And so we moved everything off the property. They gave us the option of moving barns, house, barns, what have you. Our house burned in 1939 and so we had built a new house on the property. It was just like two years old or so. And so we moved that house into Killeen. And it still stands on the corner of Brewster and uh, I can't even remember the name of that street. But anyway, it still stands in Killeen. So anyway, we tore down barns and moved everything, that was just about everything that was on the land at that time we vacated.

MEB: Was it typical for the government to let people take stuff like that? Did your neighbors do that as well, or was that kind of uncommon?

WH: Had an option. They gave you an option, and it was not anything to do with money. It was whether you wanted the outbuildings, or whether you wanted whatever was there or not. They gave you the option to take it, but there was a deadline which you had to make. It couldn't go past a certain time. You had to have it cleared because—'cause they were coming to clear whatever was left. And so they did that. But they gave everyone an option to do that.

MEB: Do you mind if I ask when you were born?

WH: July 23, 1928.

MEB: Okay. And can you tell me maybe a little more about your family—your parents and their names, and maybe your siblings, and—

WH: Okay. My father's name was Ellis Hicks. He was born in and around Nolanville, and he was born in 1900. And he had four brothers and four sisters, okay? They grew up around the Nolanville area. Part of his family as they grew older left Killeen, and some of them went to West Texas, some of them went to the Dallas area, some of them just kind of scattered, but still part of them remain in the Killeen area. My mother was Nola Hicks—Nola Cox was born over in the Hay Branch area, but a little bit north of there in an area they called Wheat Branch. It was just another community. And she grew up in that area. They both went to Hay Branch School as they were growing up. She had two brothers, and they grew up there and in the—her, I guess high school days, they moved into Killeen. So she had moved into Killeen and lived in Killeen. They moved in off the farm. So that's—

And most of our immediate ancestors are right around this area. Now my grandfather on my dad's side came from Missouri early on. I know very little about his background. Yeah, we have a book or two, but—about family background, but that's where they came from. My mom's folks, my mother's folks originated from this area. Her father was in—up in North Texas, a little part of his life, but came into this area and settled here. He was almost a hundred when he died, so he had been here a long time.

MEB: Great. Did you have any siblings when you were growing up?

WH: Have no brothers or sisters. I was an only child.

MEB: Okay, so did that mean you had to do all the chores? (laughs)

WH: I had to do all the chores. (both laugh) That's right.

MEB: So, what kind of chores would you do when you were young at home?

WH: When I was young, well, we farmed and ranched and we did a lot of stuff in the field in the summertime. We grew—in those days, Killeen area was noted for cotton. Lots of farmers grew cotton. Cotton, corn, and feed stuff like maize and that kind of thing was what they grew in those days. And so that mainly was what we were involved in. And like I say, we had cows and horses, and, you know, livestock.

MEB: Was that for—well, I guess I should ask how big was the farm?

WH: Uh, 200 and, I believe, 242 acres or—a number, I can't remember. It was not a big farm at all. But that's about what farms were in this country, a little over 200 acres, maybe 300 acres at the most for most families. Really just enough to kind of make a living off, you know.

MEB: So did you guys produce a lot of surplus for the market?

WH: Yes we did, yes we did. My mother had chickens and turkeys and all kinds of things. So we produced surplus for the market. So she sold eggs and chickens and we sold livestock, also, cows, calves, and what have you. So that was part of the life we lived.

MEB: Did you guys raise any sheep or goats?

WH: Yes we did. We had sheep and goats also. That one time we had sheep and goats, but mainly it was sheep more than goats.

MEB: So you said the community you live in was Reese's Creek.

WH: Reese's Creek.

MEB: What was there at Reese's Creek?

WH: Reese's Creek was just a kind of a settlement. I suppose in earlier days it had been more than that. There was a church in that area. There was a Methodist church in that area. I think Reese's Creek Methodist Church was the name of it. It was on Old Reese's Creek Road now. But the community was made up of a school, there was no—during my recollection, there was no store or any kind of, you know, gathering place like that. It was just kind of a community where there was a school and a church and that was about it.

MEB: How many—how far, how many grades were at the school?

WH: Okay. When I started to school at Reese's Creek, grades one through eleven. Now that did not continue. I think they discontinued that probably the second year that I was in school. But it—then it just went through one through six.

MEB: So did students, if they wanted to go on for school, where did they go?

WH: Go to—we went to Killeen, went to Killeen. At that time Killeen just had one school. (laughs)

MEB: Okay, um, so you said there was no store in Reese's Creek.

WH: No store, no—hey, there may have been a store or some kind of a trading post thing at sometime. I don't know. I've never heard the story, but it was just kind of a community where people gathered. The social stuff was either at the church or at the schoolhouse. That's where the gatherings were mainly.

MEB: So where did people go to buy necessities or to sell, like farm surplus?

WH: Went to Killeen. Saturday afternoon was the time they went to Killeen to buy their supplies and to sell their produce, and do whatever they needed to do. Usually took their cotton off usually Saturday morning or early Saturday afternoon as they went to the gin, and those kinds of things.

MEB: After you—your family moved to Reese's Creek from Hay Branch, did you go—did you have any family left in Hay Branch, did you ever go back and visit?

WH: Oh, yeah. We had—I had some uncles that lived in that area and we would go back and visit, back and forth. Really wasn't that far, by today's standards, was about twenty minutes. So, you know, took a little longer then.

MEB: Oh, yeah. (both laugh) How did you get there when you went to visit?

WH: Car. We always had a—my recollection of family life, we always had a car. My mother and dad when they married had a, I think they had a buggy, but they shortly after that, they bought a car. But we had a car all of my growing up.

MEB: So what was Hay Branch like?

WH: Hay Branch was just another one of those communities where there was a church and a school, and just a community gathering. And those two entities was where community life took place. Just another gathering place, like Reese's Creek was.

MEB: And you said you had family in Nolanville as well?

WH: Had some uncles that lived around Nolanville. I think we had—never had anyone who lived in the

little hamlet of Nolanville, but had an uncle that lived right near there. At one time my grandfather, my dad's father, lived right near Nolanville. Families would buy a plot of land and as they prospered, they'd buy more land that joined them and sometimes. And then they'd buy another plot somewhere else, down the road, you know, so that's kind of the way that he did. He bought joining property and then he bought the property across the road. So they increased their productivity that way.

MEB: So was Nolanville at that time, a bigger town?

WH: It was—at one time it was larger than it is, much larger than it is now. It's just barely a hamlet right now. But at one time it was a larger place than it is now. They would—there were some families there that knew each other in softball, and marbles. Those kinds of games were things that they did on Saturday afternoon, you know. They would gather together in Nolanville and play and have fun. It was kind of the way. But it was, you know, there was more activity there than there is now.

MEB: Did you ever do any business there instead of Killeen?

WH: Yes, people did some business there. But the main business, like if you needed certain things, you had to come to Killeen. Killeen kind of—Killeen is where the railhead was. It's where the people, business people kind of gathered. However there was a bank at one time in Nolanville, and there was some other, a lot more businesses than there is now.

MEB: So, talking about your family's farm again—so you said you grew a lot of cotton and corn and maize and stuff like that, what about gardens or things that you grew for home consumption?

WH: Yes, always had a garden. Put up—my parents always put up a lot of stuff out of the garden, canned beans and all the stuff that you can out of a garden every year. That was a pretty important factor because it kind of padded you over through the winter. And that was always an important thing.

MEB: So during the Depression, did you guys feel that very keenly, or were you able to make it through okay, or—

WH: We were blessed. We made it through fine. We were so poor, we didn't know it. (laughs) We were like everyone else. No, you know, there was—yes, we felt the impact of the Depression. It was very much a reality in this area like every other area. But a lot of people had it a lot worse than we did. We always had a place to stay, and we always had something to eat, and we always had enough clothes to wear. That was provided through the grace of God, on our own. So we were blessed, we really were. You know, it seemed like everyone is in the same condition, and no one really complained about it. No one ever, you know, just—we just took it for granted and went on, do the best we could. Yes, we were affected by it.

MEB: So did your family own their farm, or were they tenants, or?

WH: My family owned their farm. We were fortunate enough to own our farm. Now we were in the process of buying. We lived in Hay Branch, we lived on my uncle's place, we did not own that place. But when we moved to Reese's Creek, we were fortunate enough to be able to buy that land. I have no earthly idea what we paid for it, like twenty-five dollars an acre, probably something like that. And it doesn't seem like very much, but yet in those days, and the capability of making money, you know, when you work for like two dollars a day, it takes a long time to save enough money to do very much. But yes, we were blessed to be able to own our place at Reese's Creek. And of course, from that, then with what the government paid us for that land, that was another situation. There were a lot of people that were unhappy with what they received from the government, but—and there was a lot of arbitration methods you could go about, but it was all lengthy. Took time to process. And if you paid twenty-five dollars an acre, and you got forty-three dollars an acre, I mean, you really couldn't

complain too much about that. And so that's kind of the way it went with us. I think we received forty-three or forty-five, something like that, dollars an acre for that land that they—that the government took from us. So hey, it was a blessing, you know. Was a blessing. Lot of people weren't happy with it, like I say, (laughs) but that's the way people are.

MEB: So how did your family feel about having to leave, to leave their farm?

WH: Well, you know, it's always a—kind of a—there's a lot of sides to it. There's an emotional side to it, and you work through that, and you come to the reality part of it and you deal with that, realizing that, hey, this is going to happen and we just have to get ready for it. And so I think our folks dealt with it pretty well. We, yeah, we went through the emotional part of it. This is where we planned to be for a long time. But you just have to deal with the reality part of it and decide—and I guess one of the deciding, one of the hard deciding things is, hey are you going to take what they're offering you for the land? What can you do with what they're offering you at the present time? Can you go to another location? And so, my dad decided we were going to be happy with what we get, and we're not going to try to create a problem, you know, going through the arbitration kind of thing. So other than, I think, other than the initial reaction of, you know, you get through that, I think everything went really fine with us.

MEB: Did any of your other family members lose land to Fort Hood?

WH: No, no. No, we didn't have anyone that were—any other people who were living on land that was taken by the government.

MEB: So it sounds like you had a lot of family in the area, and that there was a lot of help amongst family members?

WH: Yes, we had a lot of help from our family members. The house that burned, not only did our immediate family help us—my two uncles who were my mother's brothers were both carpenters, and so they were extremely helpful. But not only that, the whole neighborhood, the folks in the community came and they'd work a day or they'd work two days, or they'd work something and help us rebuild. We built, we rebuilt a house in just a very, very short time. So we had a lot of help, a lot of support from folks. And I remember my dad saying that there were times when people would come and say, I know you need money, and let me give you this. So there's been times when, you know, they were very, very—people were very, very good to us.

MEB: So was Reese's Creek a very tight-knit community then?

WH: It wasn't—I wouldn't say that it was really tight, but it was a very—people were very sympathetic toward you, people that had problems. And I would say most of the people were very kind, and they wanted to help all they could to do all they could to help people. Yeah, I'd say they were very helpful. As far as—there was a, we had a lot of people of different nationalities. We had a lot of German people living in and around us who were the best neighbors we could ever have. We had a lot of other folks that were all kinds of nationalities that were very, very helpful.

MEB: Can you think of what some of those other groups were?

WH: Names of the families?

MEB: Either that or what other kinds of nationalities?

WH: Oh, uh, no I really don't. I don't even remember. I do know—I do remember the German families very much. They lived back toward the east of us, and—Schorns, and the Saegerts, and those folks. Schultz, they were very helpful, very friendly folks, and very warm folks in those days. Very outgoing.

MEB: So when your family was on the farm there, did anybody ever have any outside jobs in addition to farm work?

WH: Yes, my dad had an outside job. Matter of fact, he worked at Fort Hood for a number of years. He went to work at Fort Hood once we moved to another location. The farm was not as large as the one they had. He had a little more time, even though we continued to ranch and farm. But he worked at Fort Hood for a number of years. He worked out at—it was during the construction years, and there was a lot of carpentry stuff going on, and he helped there. My mother also worked at Fort Hood for twenty-six years. She started at the quartermaster laundry at Fort Hood, worked there a number of years, and finally I think she transferred to qualification, where they qualify clothing as to whether it's salvage or it's repairable or whatever. So she worked, I said twenty-five, I think it's twenty-six years out there. So yes, both of them worked for a long period of time.

MEB: Let's see, so you said Reese's Creek had a church and a school, and those were the community center. Was the church very active?

WH: The church was a little Methodist church that had been very active. During my days, it was not as active as it had been. Yes, they had Sunday services, Sunday morning services, and that was about all until summer and revival times, and that kind of thing. And that—during our days there, that was about it. The little church finally closed before the reservation came. Now it wasn't taken—excuse me, yes it was taken, too. I'm sorry, yes it was taken by the reservation. It's just right on the edge. I mean the road separates it, you know. So, yes it was taken, too. But it was still active when we moved to the community. It was still active and we went to church there for quite some time. Sure did.

MEB: So, I've heard a lot of stories about small communities—like when it comes time for revivals and things like that, being sort of non-denominational. Did—was there that kind of church activity there?

WH: I think so. I think you could say that was—even though it was a Methodist church, and there was a—as far as I remember, a Methodist preacher that most times spoke there, it was never one of those where it was used full-time, and Methodists met one Sunday, and Baptists one Sunday, and someone else other Sundays. But it was kind of a community church. And people of the community went there.

MEB: So was the minister there full-time, or did he come around on Sundays, or—

WH: I can't tell you. I don't remember that. I do not remember. If I remember correctly, they had Sunday school every Sunday. But I don't know that he came every Sunday. It could have been a part-time church kind of situation. But I do remember that they had Sunday school every Sunday. And seems to me like—I don't know, that's foggy, I can't remember. I can't recall that.

MEB: So what other kind of community activities were there?

WH: As far as community, school and church and that was about it. People gathered, or people visited one another more, I suppose than we do today, much more. People were friendly, would have you to their house, would have, you know, numbers of people to their house. Didn't do that all the time, but they did occasionally. Other than that, that's about the activity.

MEB: Maybe you could tell me a little bit more about your farm. I was thinking about things like, did you have—

Okay, so maybe you can tell me about your grandfather's place, then.

WH: Okay, my grandfather, as I come into recollection of my grandfather, he lived on a big, white, two-story house on the corner of Tenth and Avenue A in Killeen. And that's where Henderson's Restaurant is located today. He had a little barn on the west side of his property where he kept a cow. He had

chickens, he had bees in his back yard. He had a big garden every year. They canned and put up a lot of vegetables out of their garden. He had a really pretty neat little place. He had a little shop in the back of it, even though that wasn't his primary shop. But he had a blacksmith shop and a gristmill down in Killeen, and that was his business and that's where he made his living. In later years, he sold the property downtown and he moved to—he moved what was left of his equipment and tools to his house and he sharpened lawn mowers, and worked on lawn mowers, and sharpened anything that needed sharpening for folks. And so that's the kind of the livelihood that he had. My grandmother was part Indian. She was a little lady, but she was part Indian. She was a rather quiet person, but very industrious, very busy, did a lot of stuff around the house.

MEB: So was there—did she practice any Indian cultural things or—

WH: No, no, none whatsoever. Matter of fact, she didn't even tell us much about her family. I did know her mother. I was there the day her mother died. But she didn't—there's not a whole lot I remember about her family.

MEB: And what were your grandparents' names?

WH: Hugh Martin Cox and Frances Adeline Brumbelow Cox.

MEB: Okay. One other question I had thought of to ask you just before this is about your family's farm. If you could maybe tell me a little bit more about what it looked like—the house, the outbuildings. You know, did it have indoor plumbing, electricity, telephone, things like that?

WH: Okay. Let's start with the house. Or let's deal with the house out at Reese's Creek, okay? When we moved to Reese's Creek, the house we moved into was a big house that was typical of, probably, maybe late 1800s, maybe early 1900s. Had a bedroom—bedrooms across the front and a living room. Had a fireplace at the north end with a porch all the way across the front of the house. The rest of the house joined it and made a T. Behind that was a dining room and a kitchen, and another bedroom along the south side. The house stood up off the ground in the front, about two feet, and the land kind of—the, where it was built was kind of downhill situation, and at the back of it, it was off the ground about four feet. I remember as a child, I could walk under the back of the house. It was kind of boarded in, especially on the north, and I could walk under the back of the house and that's where you kept certain things, hoes and rakes and shovels and things. But it was a pretty good storage area.

When we moved to that area, we had a telephone, all right. We had a typical rural telephone. We maintained the line and there was a central office in Killeen, and we were on the Killeen system. But that was a situation that you had to maintain all the time. We did not have any indoor plumbing. We did not even have running water to the house. We had a windmill and a storage tank that provided us water. And it was about, I guess a hundred yards from the house. We carried water, and we—from the windmill and, or from the tank into the house. No indoor plumbing. We had an outdoor toilet outside at the back. And that's just the normal way folks operate.

Let me see, what else? We had no electricity. Coal oil lamps, we got an Aladdin lamp and we thought that was the finest thing we ever had. And so life was pretty simple. We just used those simple things and that's kind of the way it was.

Washing was done around a wash pot outside. My mother heated water outside in a wash pot and had a couple of tubs that she washed in, and rinsed in with a rub board during those days. Later we got a washing machine, but it was not until much later than that.

Ice, we had a—if you had ice, you had to either go into town and buy ice, and about 1944—no, excuse me, about 1939, let me back up. About 1939, they started an ice route. There was a group of

folks that started delivering ice and you could buy ice. A twenty-five-pound block of ice would last you about three or four days, and you'd put it in an icebox. We had an icebox. Matter of fact, I still have it.

MEB: Great!

WH: Icebox, and put the ice in the top of it and put your food in the bottom of it, and it would keep it fairly cool. So we thought that was great. So life was kind of, you know, you didn't have a lot of conveniences. You just had to make with what you had and go from there.

MEB: So what kind of household chores did your mom do? And considering you didn't have any sisters, did you end up helping her with them?

WH: I helped Mom a little bit. Not a whole lot, but a little bit. I helped—one of my things was washing dishes. I learned early on how to wash dishes. (laughs) How to do those things. We had a wood stove. It was my job to—as I got a little bit older, to chop wood, and to bring it in. We had a wood stove to cook with, and we had a wood stove to heat with. So we had—we consumed a lot of wood each winter. Didn't have a chainsaw, but had an axe and that was it. So we—my dad and I both chopped wood, and we'd have to haul wood from the pasture where—I mean down in the woodlands where we'd chop wood, and bring it to the house. It's always something to do. You had chores to do. But I did a lot of chores outside. I fed the livestock, and watered the livestock, made sure they had water. And cared for a lot of the outside stuff.

MEB: So what kind of outbuildings did you have at the farm?

WH: We had a barn for our livestock, and to store feed and hay and corn and the maize and all the stuff that went—that we grew. Had a pretty good-sized barn. Typical barns in those days had a kind of a shed on one side of them, normally on the south side to knock the north wind, especially in the wintertime, off the livestock. And then on the other side of that, attached to it, we had a cow pen where we milked the cows and fed them, and took care of the calves, and what have you. So we had—that was kind of a together unit usually. Have a pretty good-sized barn with a loft in it for storing hay. And the downstairs—the lower elevation would be for storing other feed stuff, corn and what have you. And then the sheds would be for taking care of the animals. And there were feed troughs and water trough, and that kind of thing.

MEB: So this house that you moved to in Reese's Creek, did your family build that house, or was that already there?

WH: When we moved to Reese's Creek, the house was already there. The old, old house was already there. The one that burned was already there. Yeah, it was a—and like I say, I have no idea how old it was. I said early probably late 1800s, possible. It was that kind of vintage, the way that they normally built houses in those days with the long front porch with the fireplace at the end, and then bedrooms in the front. Living room in front, and kitchen in the back.

MEB: And the well that you guys had there, was that a drilled well or—

WH: This one was a drilled well. It sure was. It was a drilled well. And it was about two hundred feet deep. So we had pretty good water supply. Matter of fact, we—windmills typically gave a great deal of problem. Once a year or more you had to pull the rod that goes down in the pipe and pumps the water, the sucker rod, out of the well and replace the leathers on the end of that piston that pumps the water. So that's just typical. That's just maintenance (both laugh) in those days. But you'd have to do that, maybe once every two years at the—if it went that long, that was a long period. So that's just kind of well maintenance. But we had a good well. Really had a good well. Water tasted pretty good. It had a

little bit of a taste to it, but tasted pretty good. It was pretty good water. Supplied water for us, livestock, and for us to be able to use.

MEB: In terms of livestock, you said that you always had a car, so you weren't relying on a horse and carriage. Did you guys have a tractor, or did you use stock for working land, too?

WH: We used stock for working land. We used horses for working land. We had four horses—well, we had a mule and three horses. But we used those for working the land, for breaking the land, for planting, and for cultivating, and for all of that. We used livestock. We did get a tractor later in—while I was still at home, but it was not until later that we had a tractor.

MEB: One of the things we always like to ask folks we interview, is what—some of your favorite memories, or, of living out on these lands.

WH: Uh, probably one of my favorite memories is storms that came. I can remember we had just built this new house, and this was something very special for us because we'd never had a new house, and it came a storm one day. It was on a—seems to me like it was on a Saturday. We were all at home, and it had almost stopped raining, and we walked out on the front porch, just to see what the cloud was doing. We thought it had passed. And lightning struck right, just right out in the field, right near the house. And I guess it's the first time I had ever been around—I mean, I had ever seen a place where lightning had struck, you know. Struck and knocked a hole in the ground about—I guess about six or eight feet in diameter, and just made a hole in the center of that. It just made a little hole that went, I'm not sure how deep, just went right on down. So it was very impressive to me as a kid, you know, to see that kind of thing happen. We had a storm house. When storms came we, like everyone else in those days, we went to the storm house.

So those are kind of some of the things that, you know—I guess the, one of the things that really, one of the big things that really impressed my life or—I wouldn't say impressed, but, caused me to begin to think. I guess I was about eight, nine years old, maybe ten, when our house burned. And that was a traumatic kind of thing for me. As a kid, having—this was in January 1939, and having gone through—we'd had Christmas and then everything we had burned up. And so it was kind of a—for a ten-year-old, it was pretty traumatic kind of thing.

MEB: What happened to cause the house to burn down?

WH: Probably the old chimney, more than likely. It's the only thing we could ever figure out. Just probably it was faulty enough that embers, you know, collect between the house and chimney, and set it on fire, probably.

MEB: Did anybody get hurt?

WH: No, no one there. We were not there.

MEB: That's good.

WH: We had gone, at one of those Saturday afternoons. We had gone to town to—gone into Killeen to buy groceries and stuff, and so it burned, or caught on fire while we were gone. And it was almost gone when we got home.

MEB: Was there anything like a fire department or anything like that?

WH: No, Killeen had a fire department, and that was it, and it was one truck. (laughs) But the neighbors came, of course. You have very limited resources to fight a fire. You have a tank with a—probably two hundred gallons of water and no pressure, you know, gravity. So, you're not going to put out much fire. They did what they could do. But it was already too late to get anything out of it when they

discovered it, when they got there.

MEB: So were the neighbors trying to put the house out when you came home?

WH: Oh, yeah, there were neighbors there. They had tried to do what they could do, but you know, there was just nothing they could do.

MEB: Hmmm. That's a shame.

WH: Anyway, that's jut one of those things. And when you're eight or ten years old, those kinds of things are pretty impressive. They make a pretty good impression. You don't forget them.

MEB: So are there any other things that you remember particularly about living out in Reese's Creek in those days?

WH: No, I don't think so. We worked hard and were blessed, and you know, had everything we needed. Enjoyed the people there, and grew up with kids in the community. We went to school together, and worked together.

MEB: What was it like going to school at Reese's Creek?

WH: Well, it was different. Of course there was no lunchroom. You took your own lunch, and we had the teachers, taught several grades in one room. And so that was a little different situation. But the teachers were very dedicated. They were committed to helping young people learn, and helping them to get an education. And so there was a lot of plusses and minuses here. But when it came down to dedication and caring for young people, not only about their education, but about caring for them in spiritual ways, and ways that were really meaningful, just made up for a lot of other things.

MEB: So was it difficult going from a little school like that and then going to Killeen?

WH: Very. Very difficult. It was very difficult. As a matter of fact, my first year, I failed two subjects. You know, it took me a year to get adjusted to coming into Killeen. Because you're in a mix with—and I can sympathize with these young people that are thrown into large high schools somewhere. But yeah, it was very difficult.

MEB: So how did you get to school in Killeen when you started to school?

WH: There was a school bus. We—you know, my last two years of school, my parents, I rode with them because they went to Fort Hood. But I walked about four miles every morning from the point—from the place that they let me out to my grandparents' house. But anyway, there was a school bus. School busses picked us up and brought us into Killeen.

MEB: So would they pick you up at your house?

WH: At our gate.

MEB: Well, if there's—let me see, I think we've kind of covered most of everything, unless, like I said, unless there's something, some other things that you'd like to share?

WH: Nothing that I can remember at this point.

Kyle Hilliard

Date of birth: 17 May 1925
Community affiliated with: Palo Alto
Interviewed by Marie E. Blake

MEB: This is Marie E. Blake. Today is Monday, August 2, 2001. I am interviewing for the first time, Mr. Kyle Hilliard. This interview is taking place in Mr. Hilliard's office, at Hilliard Insurance, in Killeen, Texas. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

Okay, here we go.

KH: My name is Kyle Hilliard. Uh, I was born in the Palo Alto community in 1925. My parents were Joe and Edith Hilliard, and we lived on a small farm—a small tenant farm about three and a half miles northeast of Killeen, just south of what is now North Nolan Road. My grandparents were R. M. and Clara Hilliard, who lived across the Post Oak Mountain from us. We called it Grandpa's Mountain or Doc's Mountain—our neighbor being Doc Hall, who lived between us and my grandparents. Grandpa and Grandma Hilliard had nine children. My dad was number eight. And we were real close to the whole family. There were two married uncles who lived over there near Grandpa—my Uncle Alvie and Uncle Ray Hilliard, so we had a lot of cousins to play with and we visited back and forth. They lived on the north side of the Post Oak Mountain and we lived on the south side.

I can remember one trip from Grandpa's—no, to Grandpa's—with my dad in a wagon where we went straight across the mountain. It was about three and a half or four miles if we went around the road, but we went right through the Hall's pasture and through their side of the Post Oak Mountain and then crossed it and went on down to Grandpa's and it was very rough going. Some of the time you just barely, barely did make it down some of those rocky slopes. Of course this wasn't the Rocky Mountains by any means. We called them mountains but they're just hills. So, one of my earliest memories of pioneer days was that wagon ride across the mountain over to Grandpa's.

Another memory that stands out in my mind was when I was about four, we didn't have a car, but we had a buggy. And we had been over at Grandpa's visiting and we came home and it was a winter night, but it—there was no wind, it was still, clear—lots of stars in the sky. And we—my sister, Barbara, who was born in '27, and I had a brother, Sherwood, born in '23—and my sister was a baby, and Mama was holding her, and my brother and I were lying on the floor of that buggy where they made us a little pallet. And we were—the main parts of our bodies were under the seat that Mom and Dad and Sister were sitting on, but we could see—it didn't have a top—we were looking right straight up at the sky. And boy, was that ever a big sky. And it was a romantic deal, one horse pulling that buggy and making this slow, winding—about three-and-a-half- or four-mile trip around the road to our house. Before the Model T even—our first car was a Model T.

Grandpa had a good, big farm, he had several boys who would help him with labor, and in 1922, especially, he had a great crop of cotton. He made a bale to the acre without fertilizing and without irrigating, just plowing—you know, planting it and hoeing it and plowing. But, uh, cotton is labor intensive at the very best. There were no boll weevils back then. They hadn't arrived yet. And he didn't have to poison, and so he made a bale to the acre, and this was post World War I, and uh, he got forty cents a pound for that cotton. And so he practically was able to pay off his place that he had bought with that wonderful 1922 cotton crop.

And his sons, including my dad, saw that happen. And uh, so they were all cotton farmers. As was nearly everybody else in this Fort Hood area, at least fairly close to Killeen and the Palo Alto community where I was from, where I went to school. And we had cotton fever, it was our main crop, but in the 1930s the Depression came along and the situation changed considerably. Ten years later Daddy was trying to raise three kids on a 103-acre farm, and the price of cotton was five cents a pound in 1932. And by that time the boll weevils and other insects had arrived, and the land was much more worn out after farming cotton on it for ten years. And so instead of making a bale to the acre, we would do well to make a bale to three or four acres. And so we nearly starved to death during the Depression trying to make a living growing cotton.

We did grow corn and maize and various garden products. That's one of the things that helped us live through the Depression was that we did grow quite a few of our—of the things we ate. Our main food, and my favorite to this day, is cornbread and pinto beans. I love red—we called them red beans. So we raised red beans and we ate red beans. And my—we canned things like corn and beans and so forth. We would get together with the neighbors a lot of times and have a sort of a—not a quilting bee, but a canning bee. I can remember the Ramms, who were our neighbors on the west, they had three boys and a girl, and so we would all work at shucking that corn and cleaning it up real good, and cutting it off the cob and canning it. It was an all-day job.

MEB: Did you guys have any livestock or do any ranching or did you just do farming?

KH: We—most of the people in the Palo Alto community were primarily cotton farmers. We had milk cows, hardly any beef growing out there. Now south of Killeen was another story. But I'm talking about the immediate vicinity of Palo Alto and Sugar Loaf which was the first land that Camp Hood took. And so maybe on down farther away from Sugar Loaf and farther away from Palo Alto, around Brookhaven, which was another little community, it was more heavily timbered, and they grew goats and sheep mainly. And even where it was heavily wooded, a lot of it was cleared and farmed.

I know we had friends on—down at Sparta, which is a little bit off of the reservation of Fort Hood, just in the edge, and Lake Belton covered up the community at Sparta. We had friends that lived up on the mountain called Sparta Mountain—or Union Hill. And you would not think from just looking at that bluff and that big hill up there and all that timber—all that cedar and other woods, you would never dream that people lived up there. There was a very rough road getting up there and we had dear friends who lived up there. And once you got up on top of that it was flat and there were some good farms, and every one of 'em had cattle, but it was mainly milk cows. And they grew cotton and corn, and maize. Those were the main crops.

Going to the gin with a bale of cotton was a big event for a kid in the 1930s. Since it was the cash crop we were usually very, very strapped for cash by the time we got our cotton picked. Even though it was very hard work picking cotton, I was always very eager to start picking cotton, because it meant money. It meant apples and oranges and bananas and ice cream and things like that. And getting to go to town with Daddy on that bale of cotton was a real memorable event. It was a real—

MEB: What, did you guys go to Killeen to—

KH: Yeah, we went to Killeen. There were five gins in Killeen during the 1930s. We had about a thousand—about twelve hundred—Killeen was a town of about twelve hundred then. All around Killeen a lot of cotton was grown, although they mixed in more to stock farming and ranching out south. I think there were more cowboys south of Killeen than there were north of Killeen. And so going to town, on a bale of cotton, and seeing the gin work—you were fascinated by that big pipe thing that sucked the cotton up out of the wagon. You know, you drive your wagon under a big suction pipe. I used to think the best job in the world would be operating that pipe that sucked that cotton out of the wagon the way this man did.

MEB: Could you tell me a little about how one of those works? I sort of know, but I'm sure you know better. (speaking at the same time)

KH: Well, I learned very recently that the engine that ran it was powered by steam, and the boiler was heated with coal or wood. So it was a steam engine—like a train engine. When electricity became more available and cheaper some gins converted to it. When the operator sucked that cotton out of the wagon and through some ducts like air conditioning ducts, it would go into this place where the—there were cylinders that turned and separated the cotton from the seed. Don't get your hand caught, in fact, one of the gin owners had two or three fingers missing from his hand that he had gotten caught in one of those cylinders. I don't remember that the gin broke down while we were over there. But they must have had to work hard to keep it in good repair so that it wouldn't because there would be wagons, farmers—and maybe some of them had driven five miles or farther from somewhere with a load of cotton—with mules. Hardly anyone had a tractor back then. And so there would be a line of four or five wagons waiting to get ginned and the ginner needed to avoid any delay if at all possible. I don't remember that a gin ever broke down. But there were quite a lot of moving parts in one. So I'm sorry I can't tell you more. Eli Whitney invented it, but I never did have a guided tour of a gin. Looking back, it seems odd that no class at Killeen High School, even an agriculture class, ever made a field trip to a gin, because there were four of them within a half mile of the school building.

MEB: That's more than I knew before! So, that's great.

KH: We usually bought the seed back from the ginner or sometimes we might trade him the seed or some of the seed for ginning, for doing the job of ginning. And we sold the cotton to him. We didn't have any place we could store it and wait for the price to go up so we just took what they gave us. You know, farmers have always been at a disadvantage in the market place, and they always take what anybody will pay them for their products. Whereas the people who sell to farmers tell them how much they're going to pay. You know, they set the price.

But that cottonseed, that load of cottonseed—most of the time we would bring it home because it was real good feed for the milk cows. We didn't have any cows but milk cows. We had Jersey cows. And the cottonseed, incidentally, was one of the best insulators for a block of ice. We didn't have any refrigerator. We would go by and get a fifty-pound block of ice from the icehouse and cover it up real good with that cottonseed and it would not melt at all on the long trip home.

MEB: Hmmm, would you like put it in a hole or something, or put it in an icebox and put—

KH: Well, no. A bale of cotton usually would weigh around fifteen hundred pounds before it was ginned. After it was ginned the lint weighed about five hundred. So there was about a thousand pounds of cottonseed, and you'd just make a hole in there and put that fifty-pound block of ice in there and cover it up and it was completely buried in cottonseed. And it wouldn't melt at all.

MEB: Wow, I've never heard that.

KH: Then you take it home and for a long time we didn't even have an icebox. We finally got an icebox

when I was about thirteen or fourteen years old. And we would just keep that wrapped in various kinds of tow sacks and so forth, try to keep it from melting. Keep it in the shade. Usually we would make ice cream with it. But anyway, coming home with the ice, the day that we took a load of cotton to the gin and got some cash, we went and got groceries. We got lots of candy and fruit, and it was almost Christmastime, going to the gin. And that night we would usually have a freezer of homemade ice cream. The five of us would eat just about a gallon and a half of ice cream. That would be our supper on that day.

So that's sort of the lifestyle for the small cotton farmer. The only cash crop was cotton—we didn't usually sell any corn, or any maize. We used maize to feed chickens. We ate the corn or fed it to the mules. We had eggs and we would kill pullets and have fried chickens. We ate pretty well when things were in season.

Speaking of our neighbors, we hauled water from the neighbors. The water in our well tasted like a dose of Epsom salts. It was very high in mineral and very hard to wash clothes in. It was a hard, hard water. So when the windmill broke down we just let it stay broken down, and we hauled water from the Halls, our closest neighbors to the north, and from the Ramms, our closest neighbors to the west.

Dr. Norman Hall, who has already given his memoirs, I want to pay tribute to his mother and dad. When my sister was born in 1927—we all three had a doctor in attendance at birth, but the births were all at home. You didn't go to the hospital to have a baby back in those days, and you were lucky if you had an attending physician there. But we had Dr. Woods out and Mrs. Hall, our closest neighbor on the north, came out when my sister was born. My mother told me this years later. And I guess my sister must have been born late in the afternoon or early in the evening, and Mrs. Hall stayed all night long to help my mama and my baby sister. And the next morning, Doc, her husband, and Norman—the interviewee—was five years old then. Doc and Norman came out the next morning and Mrs. Hall cooked breakfast for all of us—bacon and eggs and coffee and everything—on this wood-burning cook stove. And that was a very neighborly thing to do. They were very neighborly to let us use their storm cellar. We didn't have one for a long time. And to let us come out and get water out of their well any time we—they had a windmill with good, soft, sweet water. And the Ramms had a—dug well with a nice rock curb around it. It was about twelve, fifteen feet deep. Real, real good drinking water. So we toted—I got a lot of my exercise carrying water in a zinc bucket that would hold about two gallons. And for a boy, ten or eleven years old carrying a two-gallon bucket of water—one with each hand, of course that helps you stay in balance. And it was about 150 yards to each of these places. That was good exercise.

MEB: You had mentioned—um, that it was either your father's farm or your grandfather's farm was a tenant farm, is that correct?

KH: Ours, ours.

MEB: Did you guys move around a lot or did you stay there?

KH: No, we stayed there. Our landlord should've—would've had reason to get us to move. We didn't have very good equipment. Didn't have very good stock, mules. And we didn't produce very much, really. But, we—during the Depression—the owner was from West, near Waco, and he wasn't trying real hard to make any money out of that farm during the Depression. He knew here was a family with three kids living on this farm and prices were extremely low. Cotton was five cents a pound—or, it finally did go up to seven and eight cents a pound. But nearly all through the '30s, I believe the highest we ever got was eight cents a pound that I can remember, but maybe by 1939 or '40 it had gone up to nine or ten cents a pound. And so we were supposed to give our landlord a fourth of everything we grew. We didn't do that at all, and he didn't complain. And uh, it was very

difficult—103 acres just wasn't enough land—to support a family, that's all there is to it. My dad had married when he was nineteen. He was the next to the youngest child, and by the time that Daddy got grown, Grandpa was old and tired, and he had helped some of the older boys when they first got married and he knew the names of their children. He didn't even really know my name, and my brothers and sister's name. He had nineteen. He didn't pay any attention to any of us and he didn't worry about us at all.

But he, himself, had a 254-acre farm, all of it paid for. Good land, good equipment, good stock. And of course he had made all that good money when cotton was forty cents a pound. And Daddy got into it for a little bit—well, he had a chance to make some fairly good money in the '20s before the Depression hit. But from 1930 on, making a living was just very, very difficult for small farmers, especially tenant farmers.

And then the Halls, uh, they owned about a thousand acres. I didn't know that until fairly recently. But that mountain I'm talking about, a lot of that was theirs—it wasn't good for anything but goats and wood for the fireplace and stove. They didn't raise much beef cattle as such, but they had a lot of land, and they were very good managers. They grew a lot more stuff to take to town to sell. And Mrs. Hall had an uncle who had a big store in Killeen and she could work on Saturdays and get either goods or money for working on Saturdays at her uncle's store.

MEB: At, uh, what point did you go from horse and buggy or horse and carriage to getting your first Model T for the family? When did that happen?

KH: Well, it was—I think we may have—let's see, that buggy—I was about four or five years old. By the time I was in the first grade, which was in 1931, when I was six years old—my mother saved us from starving, really, during the '30s. She taught school. She did not have a bachelor's degree, but she had a teaching degree from Baylor Normal and Southwest Texas in San Marcos. She had gone a couple summers and she was qualified to teach. There were hundreds of people looking for a job to teach, so she only kept that job one year. But she taught in '31 and '32 school year. She made a hundred dollars a month for nine months. That was by far more money than we made growing cotton the next five or six years.

MEB: Where did she teach?

KH: She taught at Palo Alto. In the two-rooms school, she taught the little room, grades one through four. It was really a break for us for her to get that job. It would have been nice if she could have kept it. But it was hard on her. She had these small kids and then we were trying to farm and all that.

There were quite a few people who just rented the farms. And then there were—some—the Halls and the Ramms and Jim Brown and my Grandpa Hilliard who were the well-to-do farmers. Not the only ones, but in our very close proximity those were the good, going concern farms. And then there were quite a few like we who had smaller, less desirable places that—at least you, you didn't have to pay rent. And you had a place to call your own and you had a place to grow a garden. And a place to keep cows and chickens and all that sort of thing as well as the land and you were supposed to be able to give a fourth of what you got off the land to the owner.

And so it could have been worse, and it was worse, and we saw it very clearly by between us and the Ramms. Near that where that we got our water, somebody who owned the place before Mr. Ramm had built a two-room house. Not two bedrooms, a two-room house. It's sort of a shack. And Mr. Ramm let people who were looking for a place to live, that had nothing, live there. Just a place to live. Not beside or under a bridge. He would let them live there for nothing. And they would work for him if he had labor to do, such as picking cotton in the fall or chopping cotton in spring and summer. Maybe doing other farm labor.

Farm labor—and I've done quite a bit of it myself working out to try to get a little bit of spending money—was twelve and a half cents an hour. You were expected to work ten hours, actual working time. You got paid a dollar and a quarter for that ten hours. I was twelve years old in 1937. By that time, I could do a man's job and get paid for a man's work at age twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. And before that, I think in the early '30s, people worked for as little as seventy-five cents a day, or maybe a dollar a day. That would just be the flat amount that they would get.

But anyway, these poor people that lived in the little house between us and the Ramms, the first family I can remember there had three children. So there was a family of five living in a two-room house. Then, the next family that came there had uh, (counts to himself) they had five children. Seven people lived there in that house, and the only cash that they got was what somebody may have given them, and what they could get picking cotton for sixty cents per hundred pounds picked or chopping cotton or doing other labor for twelve and a half cents an hour. And so they were worse off than we were by quite a bit. But incidentally, those people turned out great. Their kids were smart, they did well in school, and we're still in touch with those—with both of those families that lived there during the '30s that I can remember. One of them—one of the remaining ones lives in Sherman, Texas. The other family has a son who lives in Baltimore, and I'm in pretty close touch with him. My brother lives near Baltimore. For years we lost touch with each other, but in 1978 we had a reunion of the Palo Alto community and we found people all over the country. And even though they may not have come to the reunion, we had get-togethers. We found out from this fellow, the boy that lived in Austin, the youngest of that one family, that his brother lived in Baltimore near—well, I guess he lived in Baltimore, and my brother lived near Baltimore. So we've been in pretty close touch ever since.

MEB: That's great!

KH: Uh, speaking of those buggies, after we did start getting cars—I remember that Daddy paid twenty-five dollars for one of the Model Ts that he bought sometime in the early '30s. They would be worn out, but they would run most of the time. And so—during the '30s people, even poor people began to get used Model Ts. And then of course the Model A—I believe the first Model A was manufactured in '27 or '28. I guess the last Model T was '27. We got a '27, one of the last of the Model Ts, after it was used. It was a good running vehicle. And then later on we got used Model As.

But then the buggy became obsolete. You'd see abandoned buggies in pastures or in the corner of a pasture or behind somebody's barn. And the buggy became a toy for us farm boys growing up out in the country with no TV and no radio, no electricity, no running water, no nothing. And we would push these buggies. We would get them out on the main road that went past the Hall's house, push them up the gentle slope and then ride back down the slope.

And I remember—this is getting off on another little story about our lifestyle. In 1931 and 1932, when it rained, that black, muddy dirt was not a very passable road. Norman Hall's mother was the driver in their family, and when it came a good soaking rain, the first one that would drive out to the turnpike that took us to Killeen, Palo Alto, and Brookhaven and Sparta would be Daddy. Mrs. Hall would ask Daddy to drive her car out to the main road—to the turnpike. She was afraid that she would get stuck and figured that he knew more about how to keep from getting stuck. And so Daddy was fairly skilled, but he would make deep ruts, just sink down in that mud. But those Model T wheels—had a larger diameter than later model cars, and you weren't going to drag. Thank goodness they were not as low hung as some of these modern cars are. But anyway, after the mud dried and got hard, there were those deep ruts. And then drivers would straddle the ruts, and it would be nice and smooth again. But just to play, my dad would get down in those ruts sometimes, and show us how he could drive along real slow without even doing any steering because the wheels would not jump out of those deep ruts. You had a track that you were running on. (MEB laughs)

Well in 1934, came the WPA or Work Project Administration, the Roosevelt New Deal, putting people to work, which was very, very life saving for people trying to find some kind of a job. One of the things they did was gravel all of these black dirt roads. A lot of the roads that led up to this main road between Sparta, Brookhaven, Palo Alto community, and Killeen were just black top soil. And so—during the '30s, a lot of people got jobs doing something very, very good for the overall community. And that is they found gravel pits, gravel bars where there would be real good gravel with a lot of clay in it that would stick together and not contain a whole lot of dust. They put that on these roads.

They put a thick layer of this gravel on all of these roads, and it made the most wonderful hard surface road. They had already done this on the main road to Brookhaven and Sparta that I mentioned, and that road held up until this day. There's portions of that road that haven't been paved. When you go out East Range Road and before you get to the Cowhouse Creek there's a gravel road that branches off to your right and it goes to Brookhaven. You can tell where Brookhaven used to be and that road is still a very good road. The tanks could tear that up if they drove over that a whole lot, but it's still a very good road. And that shows you what a wonderful road surface material that gravel was. And so this road that went right by the Hall's house, between us and the Halls and went out to the turnpike, that had been so muddy that nobody dared drive it but Daddy, became a good, all-weather road.

First of all they put some limestone rock on the black topsoil. They got that out of our pasture. It was rough as everything, but they drove on it a while and got it sort of settled down. And then they came along and put a thick layer of this gravel on there, smoothing it out with a maintainer. And it was the smoothest, hardest surface. And until they paved it, it was an absolutely wonderful road. You couldn't ask for a better road, except one that was concrete or asphalted at a very expensive price. And when the engineers at Fort Hood paved North Nolan Road and East Range Road many years later, they didn't have to do anything as far as a foundation. All they had to do was to put up—put the blacktop on there. It was an excellent road.

So that was one of the projects that was done by the WPA in the early 1930s. There were 15 million Americans unemployed in about 1932, '33. And in the whole country we had less than 120 million people. That is a lot of people looking for work. And so this was one of the first things the Roosevelt administration did to put people to work. It might have been called busy work, but it was getting bad roads made into very good, all-weather roads. Today we might say that this was a great improvement in the infrastructure. We never had to worry about a rain. You could drive after a five-inch rain with no trouble at all.

MEB: So, could you maybe tell me a little bit more about your siblings—and, you know, all the farm kids, and all the kinds of chores they had to do, and that sort of thing?

KH: Yes. We all three graduated from Killeen High School. And my brother went into the air force, and stayed eleven years during World War II and through the Korean War. He became a navigator, although he was an airplane mechanic during World War II. He went to flight school and flunked out. And then went to navigator school, and made a real good navigator. Navigated thirty-five bombing missions over North Korea. He stayed in the active reserve for the next thirty years after he got out and retired with full lieutenant colonel's pay. So he's a triple dipper near Baltimore, Maryland. And after he got out of the air force, he worked at various jobs. One with the space program. Bendix had a contract with NASA, and he worked for Bendix. He navigated airplanes around the world while they checked fourteen tracking stations. And he sold real estate part-time when he was with Bendix. He would be off weeks at a time, but one time they called him and said, "Be ready to leave in two hours. You'll be gone two months." That was the kind of a job he had. He was single then, it was a good thing he didn't have a family.

My sister married and had two children. Finally when she was about fifty years old she went back to college and got her degree. She now lives in Austin. My brother has three children, and eight grandchildren. My wife and I have no children, but we have eight nieces and nephews on my side, and several on my wife's side. These great-nieces and great-nephews are sort of like our grandchildren. They say they're more fun than their children were—almost. (both laugh)

And we had the Palo Alto—Norman Hall, I don't think went—he might have gone one year to Palo Alto. We were right a-straddle almost of the line between Killeen district and the Palo Alto district. Norman's parents had to pay tuition to send him to Killeen when his grades were being taught at Palo Alto. But that was no problem. They had one child, and they were better off than we were. And my parents would have liked for us to have come to Killeen, and we did come in 1933 to '34—after Mama had taught a year, when I was in the first grade. Well then, when I was in the third grade, we came to Killeen, but we had to pay tuition. And we couldn't stand that but one year. And so we went to Palo Alto, which—as far as community and friendships and all were concerned—it was plenty good.

Then when I was in eighth grade, my brother was in the ninth, and he was going to have to come to Killeen High because his grade was not taught at Palo Alto at that time. So when my brother was going to be coming in, he was going to come out for football. And I was very interested in football and baseball, and so I had told my dad I wanted to go to Killeen High in the eighth grade. That's when it was eight, nine, ten, eleven. And he was all for it. So he went and talked to the superintendent. The tuition would have been ninety dollars, which was a ton of money for us when I was a freshman in high school. The superintendent, Mr. Lee Peebles said, "I'll let Kyle work in the office to pay his tuition." So I worked in the superintendent's office during my study hall, and worked my way through the eighth grade at Killeen High School. My brother didn't have to pay tuition, and my sister continued out at Palo Alto for another year.

Out at Palo Alto, it was a very close knit group. There weren't all that many kids. There were four grades in the little room, and fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth, and for a while the ninth grade, in the big room. And then they took off the ninth grade. So four grades in each room, a two-teacher school.

We had one bat and one ball, and we played softball all the time. We had two swings, two seesaws. And that was it for playground equipment. We had plenty of room: somebody gave the school a corner of his pasture, so we had plenty of room to run and play in, to have the softball games and all. And we made up our own games and played Annie Over and Running Base, but mostly we played softball.

MEB: What is Annie Over? I've heard of that, but I don't know what that is.

KH: Uh, one side throws the ball over the school building, and the other side tries to catch it before it hits the ground. If they succeed, they come around and touch a member of the throwing team who tries to escape around to the other side of the building. Anyone who gets touched with the ball is lost to his team. If they receiving side fails to catch the ball in the air, they throw it back and the process is repeated.

MEB: Okay, but throwing the ball over the building—(speaking at the same time) okay.

KH: It's throwing the ball over the schoolhouse and back. The other side gets it and throws it back, or catches it and runs around the building to try to catch a member of the opposing team.

MEB: Okay, I see.

KH: The big deal was to get your strongest boy on your team to get up fairly close and throw it just as hard as he could to keep the other side from catching it in the air.

It was sort of like the game we played with football where my brother and I would get out in the pasture and play. We discovered football when we were in about the seventh grade because my mother's first cousin, Noble Doss, was a football star at Temple High School in 1935, 1936, and 1937. He was five years older than I and four years ahead of me in grade, and so he was playing football by 1935 in Temple. So we became very interested in football. My brother and I would get out and just kick this football, and we called it regulation. The guy who caught it, had to kick it back from the spot where he caught it. And you tried to see if you could move, farther down the field to a certain point and you would win the game. Or you would try to kick it farther and you'd try to kick it past each other within bounds, so it was a sort of a game of punting the ball at each other and trying to gain ground on the other guy.

Then Norman Hall, our closest friend, who was born in '22, and my brother '23, and I in '25, we played touch football with three people.

MEB: That's pretty good!

KH: You gotta use your imagination, but the guy that snapped the ball back to the quarterback back, the passer, would go down for the pass, and the other one of us, would defend against that pass. You know, you can have a pretty good game doing that.

MEB: Yeah.

KH: One-on-one. Pass, defense, and receiving. When a touchdown was made, the two guys who made it would kick off to the third guy, and he would see how far he could run it back before they could touch him. You got lots of good training, playing touch football with three people.

Norman Hall, I think, pointed out that we used picket out of their wooden fence as a bat. And we'd just use any old thing—I can remember using broom handles and rocks playing ball with people. You know, going over to see somebody and kids getting together and we wouldn't have a bat, and we didn't have a ball, and we would go out where there was quite a lot of rocks that'd be about the right size and throw and hit them with an old pick handle or axe handle. I remember using a broom handle when we had a small, red sponge ball. One of us would be the pitcher and another would swing the broom handle and try to hit that little red ball. We would throw rocks at fence posts, birds, cottontail rabbits, et cetera, just to have something to do.

Lots of good training for athletics. The work in the field, playing the softball, touch football, and all. And so when I went to Killeen High School, I quickly learned what to do, on the football and baseball field.

I'm running out of water.

(interruption in taping)

KH: Our next closest neighbors were Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Ramm, and their three boys and one girl. They had a good place. They hired us sometime to pick cotton for 'em, and they let us use water—good drinking water out of that good well that was between us. And they were a good solid family, like the Halls. But the Ramms and we all grew corn, and we did canning corn together. Sometimes we had ice-cream parties together. So they were great neighbors and we still see surviving members of their family. They have a daughter, Margaret, living near Dallas, and a son, Harold, living at Florence. And Mr. and Mrs. Hall, of course, have been dead a long time, but their son, Norman, he's still going strong, living down at Lake McQueeney. He has been one of my best friends for about seventy years.

Our Palo Alto community—one thing I might mention about the community part of it, was in addition to just exchanging visits with people back and forth, which was a big thing back in those days, there

wasn't so much entertainment as there is now, and there was no TV. We didn't have a radio or any electricity. We got a battery-operated radio in 1939. That was our first radio.

But at the end of school, we had a community, all-day picnic. All of the families that had kids in school came and spent the whole day at the school, and everybody brought—a covered dish meal. Lots of good things to eat, and lots of visiting and fellowship and no more studies. We'd already finished the school year. It was summer vacation was coming up, but it was mostly work. (both laugh) And uh, but we—the dads played the boys in softball. We had a big father and son softball game in the afternoon of the all-day picnic, so that was one of the highlights of the school year.

We also had a play or two that we would give, and that was a big highlight. And, of course, there was a PTA. It was very small and didn't do much, but the ladies would get together and try to support the school.

Everybody back in those days was serious about school. The hard times, made it easy for parents to convince kids to get a good education. My dad quit school in the eighth grade, through the same Palo Alto School. And he kept telling us, "Don't do like I did, get an education." Even though he didn't find a way to save any money to help us go to college, he surely did plant that idea in our minds that we would be a whole lot better off if we'd get an education. And so I apparently believed it because I got a B.A. and an M.A., and I think he had a good idea there. But as far as the kids being hard to manage and mean or playing hooky and stuff like that, I don't remember any of that during the school year—I remember some boys fighting when I was in about the first grade. Just having fist fights with each other. But I don't remember anybody playing hooky from school. I know when people were absent from school, it was with their parents' permission. It was because they were sick, or they wanted them to stay at home and work. And so just about all the kids took school seriously and behaved, and tried to learn. Many of them walked a long distance to and from school. We didn't need a PE, we didn't need PE classes. (laughs) We got plenty of exercise walking to and from school, and working after we got home.

Oh, yeah, what chores did we have? You know, milking, and helping feed, and gathering up eggs, carrying water, carrying in wood, chopping wood and working in the fields—like during cotton picking season, you could get home and pick quite a bit of cotton before dark. And you could chop cotton and corn in the spring when you got home from school. So most of our chores, at least for the boys, had to do with working in the field. And the girls, of course, would help their mothers clean house and cook, as well as feed the chickens and gather up eggs.

Incidentally, the women—the pioneer women in our country, not just out here pre-Fort Hood days, but throughout the frontier—many women worked in the fields, did the washing and ironing and housekeeping, and cooked three meals a day in a wood-burning stove. What a hard life it was.

(interruption in taping)

MEB: Well, one thing I was wondering about was—you told me about some of really good crops that your grandfather had made, cotton crops, doing dry farming. And dry farming is kind of mystery to me.

KH: Dry land farming, yeah.

MEB: Yeah, could you maybe talk a little about that. And the effect of the weather and even though it's dry, being able to get crops, but then, you know, if there's an actual drought comes along, how that all—could you talk about that. I'm very curious about that.

KH: I can talk from real experience about that.

MEB: Good!

KH: Grandpa, that year he made a bale to the acre, it took a tremendous amount of luck. You just have to hope that it rains. You've got a certain planting time. It's not just one or two days in the spring. You want to plant your cotton—I guess in March or April, maybe. Fairly early—or your corn in February and early March. I believe that's about the ideal time to plant these crops. You know, you can't wait too late. Now if a person—if it didn't rain at all in the spring, and the ground was dry, there wasn't enough moisture to bring seed up—I can remember June corn, people trying June corn. That means they would plant their corn as late as June, but they really wanted to plant it late February or early March, if I remember correctly, or uh, certainly not later than March.

Now you know, it doesn't rain just real often in this Central Texas area. And so if you had real good soil with a lot of humus content in it, good, deep soil, it would hold the moisture quite well for a good long while. And so when they planted this cotton and corn that planter went down, several inches, and you had it bedded—so that—down in the lower part of where you put those seeds, there would be enough moisture if it was real dry, you would wait as long as you could, hoping for a rain.

So apparently it rained just when Grandpa Hilliard wanted it to that year. He got a bale to an acre. He got his cotton up real good and then he got rains when he needed them. And cotton doesn't take just an awful lot of rain. It needs rain when it needs it, but it can do real well. I think those roots go pretty deep. And so lots of good cotton was grown without benefit of any irrigating, just because the rains would come when they needed to come, and just enough, you know, to get the job done.

But in 1934, when I was nine years old, I remember this very well, it was so dry in the spring there wasn't enough moisture to get the cotton up. And so my dad tried an experiment. Since time was running out, he planted the cotton down in that furrow, down in the bottom part, thinking that maybe there is more moisture there because of the last rain that came stood there awhile. And so he did get the cotton up. It didn't work out real well, but it was an effort to get cotton up during the time—the ideal planting time, or at least not too awfully late. But we only made four bales of cotton that year. The cotton came up but we didn't get enough rain after it came up.

Normally, you'd get it up let's say in April, and—May, June, July, August—by September or October—see it took that long time for it to grow up, bloom, put on these little bolls, and these bolls grow to maturity, and then open. All of that had to happen naturally. So cotton was a very labor-intensive, time-intensive, care-intensive crop. It's a wonder anybody had the dadgum courage to try to make a living growing cotton, really. (laughs)

And the reason they did was because in the '20s, the price was so good and the land was fresh and new, and they made good crops, and they made a lot of money in the '20s. And then the people in the '30s suffered from that experience of the '20s being so good. And so in 1935, after that dry year when we made only four bales of cotton, and the price wasn't that good, about eight cents a pound, it rained too much and a seep developed in our main cotton field. Best cotton patch we had. And there was about three or four acres that we couldn't even get in there to plant cotton or corn or maize. So we had too much rain the very next year after we had too little rain. It messed us up—there's just so many things that can go wrong in dry land farming.

Some of our relatives moved to West Texas. I know the wives didn't want to go. My grandmother's sister and her husband, Uncle Lonnie Elms moved out to Littlefield, west of Lubbock. At first Aunt May refused to go. She did not want to go out on that desert away from all her family and friends and all. And my Grandmother Hilliard, I'm proud to say, told her, "Your place is with your husband. Get going." She was one of the older sisters, and gave her younger brothers and sisters advice and all. And so she talked her younger sister May, into going.

Well, he made three bales to the acre. (both laugh) He didn't irrigate at first. He'd lucked out,

probably the very first year he was out there. It rained at the right time, and he made a great crop. And then, of course, the next year he probably didn't make anything and he probably didn't make anything the next year. But maybe the next year after that he had another bumper crop. So he stayed. They had a better standard of living, I think, than we did here in Central Texas.

But it was a challenge, a real challenge, to do dry land farming, and nobody even heard of fertilizer. You couldn't have afforded to buy the stuff if you—if it had been available. I mean nobody would fertilize. And in fact, the farmers wore the land out farming cotton. They didn't rotate their crops. That came a little bit later on. I took agriculture when I went into Killeen High, and the agricultural extension services began to develop back in those days. But mainly farmers didn't have nearly the help that they do now. Nowadays you can get on your computer or on the radio or television and learn a lot of things. You could call the Blackland Experiment Station and you could even have them run some experiments for you, if you wanted to. But back then, you were on your own and what you learned from your dad was what you knew.

MEB: One of the questions we like to ask folks to sort of wrap up an interview is, what is one of your favorite memories from living out on Fort Hood lands, and the Palo Alto community in this case?

KH: Well, one of my favorite memories was the buggy ride. That was just us family, just a quiet, silent ride, looking at the stars above, and feeling cozy and warm lying in the bed of that buggy, covered up real good. Mama and Daddy there in the front seat taking care of this world. Everything was all right, everything was fine. That was a cozy introduction to a part of the world and to the many, many stars in the sky. (laughs) That's one of my favorite memories as a child.

I have a lot of fond memories, like the get-togethers, the end-of-school picnic. That was a real big deal, and the plays. I was always in the school play, and that was a big deal. And the softball games. We didn't get to play nearly as many games with other schools as I would have liked. Brookhaven was five miles away, Clear Creek was five miles away, Killeen was five miles or less away, Hay Branch was not very far away. They all had schools, they all played softball. We should have been having fifteen or twenty games a school year. We had three. You know, it cost money, a little bit of money, but not much, to get us over there and back.

I can remember one of my fondest memories of playing Killeen grade school, grammar school as it was called. It was the same grade level as we had, and I got a home run in that game against Killeen, and it was the first time in my years at Palo Alto that anybody hit a home run that wasn't the biggest boy on the team. The home runs had always been the private property of the biggest boy on the team. Well, I got a home run in that game against Killeen, and the biggest boy on the team came up to me and said, "I knowed you could do it." That's the English that we spoke at Palo Alto in those days. (both laugh) A boy named Gayle Toliver hit a home run for Killeen in that game and four years later we played in the same single wing backfield for the Killeen High Kangaroos football team. He played tailback and I played wingback. We also played together in the outfield in baseball at KHS. We were and are very close friends today.

MEB: Little kids!

KH: I have a fond memory of a friend, a neighbor, whose whole family were close friends. We had ice cream together a number of times, and even tried to play a little bit of music. I played the harmonica, poorly. And Mr. Everett played the guitar, so we had some good get-togethers. They had Norma Jean and Joyce, about my sister's age, and they were good friends. And they had some younger sisters and brothers. Here's what farm boys would do back in those days. On a Sunday afternoon or a Saturday you were liable to look up and there would be a boy that lived five or six miles away, walking up the road towards your house. Back in those days we didn't call anybody, even if they had a phone and we

had a phone. We didn't call them and say we wanted to come over for a visit. We'd just go. People just went to other people's house unannounced. If they weren't there, they didn't stay, of course. If they were there, they stayed, usually. (laughs)

So one Sunday afternoon Burl Everett walked the two miles over to our house. And he and my brother and I just hung around there for a little while on the place, and then we just started walking. We just walked along. We got on the road to Killeen. We walked past the Ramms, past the Cantwells, past Oscar Harris's, past Dick Overton's—just walking along there, talking. Every once in a while, we'd pick up a rock and throw it and see if we could hit a fence post or a telephone post. Just walking and being together on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. That was just as good a time as I ever had, really. And that boy died in 1940. He was sixteen years old.

MEB: Oh, what happened?

KH: He got sick, and I don't know to this day what it was that caused his death. He was sick just a very few days and died. One of my favorite memories is having that good Sunday afternoon walk with him and my brother. Just doing nothing.

Another of my favorite memories is my mother and dad tried to make Christmas really something. I mean, they went all out. If it was on borrowed money, even. And so we had good Christmases. We got lots of gifts every Christmas, someway or other. And I can remember after the Christmas vacation asking—just to make conversation, I asked one of the boys at school what he got for Christmas. And he pulled out a little coin purse thing, and said, "That, and an apple and an orange." I felt very sorry that I had asked him the question. He didn't get hardly anything. They had several children in the family and they were very, very poor. So that's not the way to make a conversation. (both laugh)

But anyway, our Christmases were outstanding. We would get out in the front yard where we had a nice smooth pasture, a softball field that was ready made. We'd get out there and shoot fireworks, and one Christmas, I believe it was about 1930, Uncle Ray and Aunt Dona Hilliard and their two daughters came over to our house Christmas Eve. And I don't remember whether they spent the night or not. But we had a roaring fire in the fireplace, and the kerosene lamps all lit up bright. It just seemed like the brightest place in the world. And they asked us to sing, Christmas carols—"Silent Night," and other, popular Christmas songs of those days. Anyway, we knew a few lines of most of those songs. And we just got up there and sang these Christmas carols, and I can still see my Aunt Dona—that was my Uncle Ray, Daddy's brother's wife, smiling and laughing. You could—I could tell just from looking at her that she was really enjoying us trying to sing these songs. (both laugh) We were all just having such a big time. There was so much good will and then getting out and having those fireworks and everything. So we had some great Christmases.

Oh, and I haven't told you about—in the summertime, going swimming. The Halls had a fairly deep stock pond. And I learned to swim in that pond, and it was over our head in places. After we learned to swim, my brother and I—our dad learned that we had been going swimming out there and wouldn't let us go anymore. We might drown! But we had already learned to swim. (both laugh)

And so anyway, that was muddy. It wasn't ideal. And so the real swimming and picnic party would be to go to the river—and this is what a lot of people in the Palo Alto community did. Down past Brookhaven, this good gravel road to Brookhaven, about two miles past Brookhaven toward Sparta, there was a man named Tom O'Neal who owned this place that the Cowhouse River bordered. And he—there was a fence across there that he could have used to keep people out. There was an ideal place to picnic and swim—it was called Grassy Banks. The Cowhouse River runs through a lot of Fort Hood.

So this is a story about Cowhouse River. Grassy Banks was sort of a bend in the river with a real high bank up above it, and trees and everything. Somebody had tied a rope or chain onto the tree limb and

then tied a T, you know, something to hold on to. And you could swing out way over, way up above that water, where it was good and deep, and dive off. Dive straight down. I didn't do that until I got to be a teenager, but I did—I would never do it now in a million years. So we would—whole families and maybe two or three families would go down there unannounced. Don't make an appointment or anything, just go. And I never met Tom O'Neal in my life. It's just like we didn't ask the Halls every time we went and got water. We didn't ask the Ramms every time we went and got water. We just went and got it.

And so we would go down and have a picnic lunch, and swim, and visit. And we cleaned up every scrap of paper. We never found any junk left by other people. Nobody left junk at that place. It was just understood that you don't leave your paper or your container. We never found a lot of trash, and we didn't leave a lot of trash. We went down there lots of times, and it was always clean. And we left it clean. So this was a good recreational thing to do. Some of my best memories are of going swimming and picnicking at Grassy Banks. I regret very much that I never wrote Tom O'Neal to thank him for allowing many families to enjoy Grassy Banks.

And they did the same thing at Potter's Bridge, which was closer to Sugar Loaf. At where Potter's Bridge went over the Cowhouse River. There's a real good picnic area there. And people often went out there, and went swimming and picnicking and it was just a real good spot for recreation, free of charge. And you just helped yourself. You didn't even know who really owned that land at Potter's Bridge, you just went there and did that. (laughs)

And then people went up to Sugar Loaf to have Easter egg hunts. The Killeen people occasionally would hike out to Sugar Loaf Mountain, as we called it, and have an Easter egg hunt. That was a big deal.

I can remember walking home from school one time from Palo Alto, and that was a day that Killeen had had a holiday. Killeen had more holidays than we did at Palo Alto. We were very serious minded out here at Palo Alto. Not very many ball games, and not very many holidays. And we met one of the school trustees, who was a man who lived over the other side of Palo Alto, closer to Sugar Loaf. He didn't have a car. This was about 1935 or '36, I would say, I was ten or eleven years old. And we'd met this trustee who went to town about once a month in a wagon and got all the supplies they needed. I hollered at him, and I said, "Hey, mister so-and-so," knowing he was a trustee. "Killeen had a holiday, today, how come we didn't have one?" (both laugh) And he laughed, and said, "You don't need none!" (both laugh) You don't need none. So, that was our lot. We didn't really need any holidays, we needed to work hard in our schooling and get our book learning.

I guess that's about enough of the—my best memories, or some of my best memories. I could probably think of some other great happenings.

MEB: Could you—

KH: One other story—

MEB: Sure.

KH: During the Depression, the real depth of the Depression, which was about 1932, '33, and '34 and '35, don't be surprised if some relative, some distant cousin even, showed up at your house. We lived about three and a half miles from Killeen. They would maybe hitchhike to Killeen or come in on a boxcar, or maybe a bus. But anyway, people would walk out to our house and here they would be. Some uncle of my mother's or a brother of my dad's and they'd stay three or four days, sometimes two or three weeks.

MEB: So that happened multiple times?

KH: That happened every once in a while. Not just real many times, but—and we were, you know—the Halls were our neighbors, and the Ramms were our neighbors, but we were a little bit hungry for companionship other than just our own family circle. We got tired of just visiting with each other all the time, and so we were glad to see a new face come up the road.

And one such face was Cousin Tom McHenry. He told us some very interesting stories, so we enjoyed him very much. He sold patent medicine. He looked at me and he said, "You have floating objects in front of your eyes, don't you?" I said, "How can you tell?" I didn't know what to call them. I knew that I had these things, these designs. He said, "Well, I can just tell by looking at you that you do." Now I don't know whether everybody has these things, (laughs) and he was just making me think that he could tell I had them or what it was. But anyway, I definitely have these floating objects in front of my eyes.

And so he sold his patent medicine, and he told stories about his experiences. He had known some Indian chiefs in their later years when they stopped being chiefs, and stopped fighting and all, and now there's no more Indian wars. And so this Indian chief was telling Cousin Tom one time about how he got in a scrap with some white men. And boy, he was shocked to death to learn that they had a weapon that could fire a shot for every finger on his hand. He could fire multiple times. I just had my arrow. But those Indian warriors could fire it pretty fast, they got very good at getting that arrow out of their quiver and shooting, while riding full speed on horseback. Cousin Tom McHenry asked him, "Well, did he hit you with one of those bullets?" And the chief said, "He hit me right here," (indicates the top of his head) "one of them hit me right here." And Cousin Tom said, "Did you fall off of your horse?" And the Indian chief said, "No! No, me no fall!" He was insulted that Tom thought he would fall off of his horse just because he got shot—it must have been fairly far up, if it was down here (indicates between his eyes) of course, it'd have killed him. But it was fairly high up on his head, and it hit him, but he didn't fall off of his horse. He wasn't gonna be any sissy and fall off of his horse. (both laugh)

So we heard stories like that from the old-timers when they came by, all of us sitting around the fireplace, and—speaking of the fireplace, and telling stories—one cold, rainy winter night, with no radio, no television, and bad weather outside, a marathon domino game took place in our fireplace room. Mr. and Mrs. Hall had, temporarily living at their house, a son of Mrs. Hall's by a former marriage, and a nephew of Mr. Hall. They were grown young men in their twenties, and my Uncle Herman, my mother's brother, was staying with us for a few days.

So Bob Smith and Weldon Hall—came out to our house that cold winter night and Daddy and Herman, and Weldon and Bob played dominoes. Four handed, playing partners. They played a long time and Daddy, who liked chocolate fudge candy, said, "Say, Edith, how about getting up and making us a batch of chocolate candy?" So Mama went in there and built a fire—in the wood stove, and made a batch of chocolate fudge, and set it out there. They played dominoes, and played dominoes, and ate candy. The hours ticked away, and finally, it was all gone, and they kept on playing. And after a little while, Daddy again asked Mama to make another batch of that chocolate fudge candy. It's the Depression, everything is so dreary, and so hard. Why not just live a little bit and do what you enjoy? You know, live for today, let tomorrow take care of itself. So Mama got up and made another batch of chocolate fudge candy. And they played fifty-six games of dominoes that Saturday night, and each side won twenty-eight games, so they quit. They tied. (laughs)

MEB: That's a good spot.

KH: Now that was how you sometimes would spend a Saturday night.

MEB: Nothing wrong with that. (both laugh)

KH: Another proud memory: In 1933, when I was eight years old, we made about a half of a bale to the acre in one cotton patch and it all opened at about the same time. It was the best picking we ever had, by far. So my dad challenged me to see how much I could pick in one day. He weighed and emptied my sack while I continued to pick and put it in piles until he got back with my sack. I picked 219 pounds. That was in September or October and I had my eighth birthday the prior May seventeenth. The price of cotton was very low, but my excitement was high.

One of our graduates of Palo Alto and Killeen High School went to the University of Texas and got a degree in journalism, and became eventually the publisher and editor of the *Killeen Daily Herald* for a number of years. In fact he is the J. C. Tanner, Jim Tanner, that I asked you to send the books to. He eventually became the *Wall Street Journal* oil and gas editor, and made many trips to Vienna when OPEC would meet, a very important job. He still does some freelance writing, and so that's one outstanding graduate from Palo Alto School.

MEB: All that hard work in school.

KH: Nearly everybody that I can think of that went to school out there turned out pretty good, some of them exceptionally well. One of the members of that family that lived in that very small, little two-room house was an excellent athlete. I noticed that Travis, the one who now lives in Baltimore, was a fast runner. And, you know, to and from school, kids would run back and forth from time to time, walking to school together, and I noticed that Travis was fast runner. In fact, I was a fast runner, and Travis, I believe that Travis was a faster runner than I was. And so I noticed things like that.

And they lived there about two years, it seemed like maybe three, and during those times, two or three years was a lifetime, nearly. You know, you felt like you'd known 'em forever. You really get to know people when you walk to school and back with them every day, and sit in the same classroom all day long, the same room, you know. And so they later left and I lost track of them for about fifteen years. I didn't know where they had gotten off to. And I finally discovered that they had ended up at Austin, Texas, where I was working on my master's degree at that time. And I thought, My goodness, they'd been living right here under my nose all this time and I didn't even know it. So the day I—I found out one day from Harold Ramm, the owner of that house, or his father was, I asked him did he know whatever happened to them. And he said he thought they wound up finally in Austin. So the next day when I went back down there, first thing I did when I got back to my room was call—I looked in the phone book and there he was, G. B. Tomison. And I called him up and they were both living then, Mr. and Mrs. Tomison, and their son Johnny, their youngest one of all, was still at home and I invited myself out right then and there to see them, and they told me to come on. I went out and had a real good visit with them. That's where I learned that Travis was in Baltimore, and one of the first things I asked them was, "Where were you living when Travis was in high school?" And they said, We lived in Weslaco then, down in the Rio Grande Valley. I asked if Travis by any chance played football. I could see him being a great running back, you know. He was such a fast runner. Mr. Tomison chuckled and said, "Oh, yes, he played football and every Friday night he'd make one or two or three long, eighty-yard runs, eighty-five-, seventy-five-yard runs, lots of long touchdown runs." I said I wasn't surprised. You can spot a good athlete long before he gets in high school.

MEB: Yeah, yeah—that seems like—

KH: Ask me another question!

MEB: Let's see, I had been making some notes here—okay, yeah, um, sort of an entirely different topic. But when you talk about Palo Alto, what all was there? What kind of services were there, like, you know, the store, church, school, that—what was Palo Alto?

KH: Good question, good question. Palo Alto in my time, during the '30s, was just the school and nothing else. Sugar Loaf was a church and a tabernacle at that time. So the Palo Alto community, the people in Palo Alto, when they wanted to go to church, they went to the Sugar Loaf Church. That building was not regularly occupied. Most of the 1930s—I remember we went to church over there some, but that would be temporary—some good man would come along that would hold services. He might have a little revival and you'd go. The building would be open, but otherwise the building was just empty and nobody was maintaining it. But it never did seem to have a window broken out of it or anything, and never fell into disrepair. Everybody respected property in those days. We never'd had a lock on our house. That's something that you—that might be worth mentioning. And the people that lived out in that Palo Alto and Sugar Loaf and Brookhaven community, you didn't lock your house, and you never had anything stolen.

So anyway, I get Palo Alto and Sugar Loaf sort of confused because they were fairly close together. I think together they were a community of a school or two, and a church, and maybe a store. But Brookhaven had one or two stores, Sparta had one or two stores, but Palo Alto per se, I don't remember had a store. Incidentally, the Palo Alto School had several different locations. It started out over here on the Blackburn place, which is almost off of the reservation, where Blackburn Cemetery is, I believe on the reservation, but it's maintained by the City of Killeen, I believe. And then it was moved over this side of Post Oak Mountain. And then they moved it just across through the gap of Post Oak Mountain, just past the gap. And then it was finally moved another mile down to where it was when I was going there in the '30s, and it, incidentally, it was operating until Camp Hood took over.

And then, Killeen was founded in 1882—this is way back before my time. The reason Killeen was founded was the railroad came through here. And when the railroad came through here a railroad engineer surveyed for a city, surveyed and sold lots. They wanted the town here. Palo Alto and Brookhaven, Sugar Loaf and Sparta were all close to the Cowhouse River, a small river. And—Youngsport, another small community, over here on the south of Killeen about thirteen miles out, was on the banks of the Lampasas River. So little settlements grew up along the river where there would be water available and timber—wood, would more likely be growing along the river than out on the prairie. And so Killeen, without the railroad would have never happened. The town that would've grown up would've been Palo Alto or Sugar Loaf. They would've been sort of twin cities like Minneapolis-Saint Paul. (both laugh)

So when the railroad came, nearly everybody from the Palo Alto-Sugar Loaf community, including a business person that had a store, moved over here to be next to the railroad because they knew that's where business would be. Business would grow, and this would—the railroad meant that the farmers would be able to get their produce to market faster, and maybe cheaper.

And incidentally, I remember from our celebrating the Bell County sesquicentennial in 2000, that one of the things that made Killeen thrive the way it did was when they built good iron bridges over the Cowhouse River and over the Lampasas River. That meant that farmers that lived on the other side of the river could bring their bales of cotton and their other produce to Killeen and to market a whole lot easier than they could before. Crossing the river before that was difficult. I think around, maybe early in the 1900s, new bridges were built that helped Killeen grow. Business in Killeen really did grow pretty fast when it was first founded. Up almost to the Depression it was growing rapidly. Not a whole lot of people actually lived in Killeen, but the trade area was fairly large.

The nearest town on the west would be Copperas Cove, that would be far away. Gatesville was away to the north, and Belton was too far east. Nolanville was a little wide place in the road. So Killeen, with its five gins and its produce market was a thriving community where farmers could sell their

cotton and other farm products and buy groceries, clothes, hardware, et cetera. But when the Depression hit, everybody suffered.

And one final thing about how poor everybody was during the Depression, we really didn't know it because there were so many people around us that were equally poor, and some few of them even more poor. And the best off families were a long, long way from being rich. (laughs)

MEB: That's great stuff.

KH: Long before Tom Brokaw wrote his book—CTC [Central Texas College] had an oral history project years ago and I made my pitch with it being videotaped. I don't know whatever happened to it. Was probably so bad that it was just thrown away. But anyway, at that time, twelve or fifteen years ago, I said that the people that grew up or reached their manhood during the Depression, had World War II waiting for them, a rendezvous with destiny, as Roosevelt called it. These young men were born from about 1917 to about 1922 or 1923 and—

They were the heart of the World War II soldiers. They had grown up and reached their maturity during the Depression. A tough life. And what was their reward? World War II.

MEB: Well, they did good service for their country, certainly.

KH: They came through nobly. They were great men.

MEB: That's very true.

KH: Great men.

MEB: We have their legacy now, certainly.

KH: One of them was Screwdriver Arnold from Killeen, whose father had the icehouse. They had the only icehouse where you could go by and buy ice by the twenty-five-pound or fifty-pound or hundred-pound block. The Arnold boys all worked in that icehouse, and they all had good muscles. They were strong and well built and good workers and friendly, good boys. And Screwdriver was one of the World War II heroes from Killeen who was in combat many, many, many days as a platoon leader in the infantry.

MEB: Do you mind if I ask you a question about him? I've—you know, we've talked to a lot of community members and, you know, read local histories and stuff and I've heard a lot about him, and everybody always knows him as Screwdriver Arnold. I just have to ask, where did he get that nickname? Some people that we've talked to don't even know what his given name was, because everybody always called him—

KH: They don't know it was James Hubert, do they? (laughs)

MEB: We've talked to a couple of people who've said, You know, I'm embarrassed to say, I don't even know what his name was! We all called him Screwdriver! (both laugh)

KH: The story I heard is that when he was a tiny baby, he was just squirming and twisting as he lay there in his crib or on the bed and his father said, "He's just like a little screwdriver!" And that name stuck, so everybody called him Screwdriver. My mother worked for the telephone company for twenty years, starting when she was forty-six. She worked as an operator and later as a supervisor. She said that they had people calling long-distance to Killeen and asking for Screwdriver and not know another thing about him. One lady from Waco called and said, "I want to speak to Mr. Screwdriver." And of course all the operators knew who to connect 'em with. They were looking for a plumber, really. They had the right guy. So we had stories about people calling long-distance and not having

anything in the way of a name except Screwdriver and getting their party. That was pretty unusual.

MEB: That's good!

KH: Once I was down in Galveston visiting a real good friend of mine, who was a pharmacist, and we where in his pharmacy. He and his brother were partners in this pharmacy. And I told them this story about the lady calling long-distance and my mother being able to connect her with Arnold Plumbing when she asked to speak with Mr. Screwdriver. And my best friend's brother looked at me so skeptical when I told that story. He picked up the telephone and called the long-distance operator in Killeen, and said, "I have very limited information, but could you give me the number—all I know is that this man, his name is Screwdriver. Could you give me his telephone number, please?" And the operator gave him his telephone number. He said thank you and hung up and he had a different-looking expression on his face not so skeptical anymore. (both laugh) So Screwdriver was well-known around here, and he deserved it. He was a great man.

MEB: That's great! Um—

KH: But he wasn't the only one. There were plenty of other great men that grew up, got their maturity during the Depression, or very soon thereafter and then went to World War II, and conducted themselves nobly. Several gave their lives. They were heroes in every sense of the word.

MEB: Actually, I have an idea for you. Seems like you've got lots and lots of stories still to tell me. Would you be interested in doing a second interview, maybe next week or so?

KH: I would, if you think there's anything else.

(taping stops)

MEB: This is Marie E. Blake. Today is Monday, August 6, 2001. I am interviewing for the second time, Mr. Kyle Hilliard. This interview is taking place in Mr. Hilliard's office at Hilliard Insurance in Killeen, Texas. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

KH: Okay. Do I need to identify myself again?

MEB: Um, I already, actually, every time I start a tape I do an introduction that goes on the front, so that's all taken care of.

KH: So, are we on?

MEB: Yes, we're on.

KH: We're going now?

MEB: Yes.

KH: Oh, okay. Well, let's start today with working for the neighbors. My brother and I as we got into our teens were always very short on cash during the '30s, so we worked chopping or picking cotton for our neighbors. I remember one particular day we were chopping cotton for Mr. Dick Overton, whose farm was between our farm and town. He had a good place, good land and no rocks. It was well drained. It didn't have a whole lot of washes in it, and it didn't need terracing, really, like some of the other land did. And we didn't have a watch. We were supposed to work ten hours. So we just sort of went by the sun. When we left home in the morning we knew what time we would go to work and try to work from seven until twelve in the morning, five hours in the morning and five hours in the afternoon, one until six, with an hour off for lunch.

And we were afraid that we might be quitting too quick when we thought it got to be about six o'clock. We looked at the sun and we kept working and kept working. He didn't exactly come out there and stop us, and we worked that day until seven we learned when we got home and—he paid us for ten hours. So we worked an hour extra just for having that job, making twelve and a half cents an hour. But we enjoyed it because it was good land and it wasn't real hard work. We got to walk a good little bit between strokes with our hoes.

Another time, while I was probably in school or practicing football, my brother worked for another neighbor who had a tractor, and they were pulling corn. And the neighbor tied the steering wheel of the tractor to where it would go straight down the row and put the tractor in low gear and just let it run. And he got off on one side, and my brother on the other side, and they kept up with that tractor. And it was pulling just about as fast as they could pull that corn.

Of course, pulling—you pull the corn after it has completely matured it's no longer green. It's dead looking, so it's completely mature. But it's very dusty and very musty, and sometimes those ears are tough to get off. And the shucks are very sharp and hard on your hands. I don't think my brother had a pair of gloves. We never had a pair of gloves in our life when we were on the farm. We just did it by hand, and your hands got very tough. But anyway, he remembers he was about sixteen years old then—that he stayed up with a grown man all day long behind that tractor, keeping up with his row. That was hard work.

And another time that I remember, it was in 1937, and I was then twelve years old. I was in the seventh grade and we were a little hungry and needed money more—we were getting ready to go into high school the next year. So we just picked cotton as long that fall as anybody was hiring people to pick it. So we stayed out of school, after school started and picked cotton all day long until when we finished up our cotton picking and returned to school, the kids were taking six weeks exams. So we had stayed out six weeks picking cotton.

That last job that we had was for Mr. Ike Williams, who had a real good cotton crop, and somehow it was late, later than some of the other farmers, so we were making pretty good money because we had good cotton to pick at that time at about sixty cents per hundred pounds. So looking back on that, I am very proud and very happy to have had that kind of a upbringing and I don't think I'm going to have very much trouble with my circulatory system for a long time because I got in a lot of real good hard work. Exercising and hard work strengthens your heart and your circulatory system, not to mention playing baseball and football. Not to mention playing other games and swimming and so forth.

MEB: Did you guys ever grow maize or did you ever work with anybody who grew maize?

KH: Uh-huh.

MEB: What's the difference between maize and corn? And how does all that work?

KH: Well corn has a shuck that covers up all of the grain, the seeds in the corn, and you have to shuck that off to get to the seed. And incidentally, I told you the last time when we had sort of a party with the Ramms, getting together and canning corn. That means you had the roasting ears, it had to be at a perfect stage, you could tell by looking at it and feeling of it when it was ready to eat as roasting ears. But you canned it when it was in that same stage, soft, not hard. When it got mature and dried out it was very hard. But so the corn had to be shucked whether mature, or later as roasting ears or canned.

But maize didn't have a cover like that. The dwarf maize—they made it where it was quite short and—you wanted the biggest head you could get and the smallest stalk, you know, within reason. So corn always grew a lot higher than most maize. And maize did not have a shuck and it had very small seed compared to the corn seed.

MEB: So is—does maize have a cob like corn or does it grow a head like sorghum?

KH: No, corn grows on a cob, while maize seed form a head of maize, like sorghum.

MEB: Okay.

KH: Maize has a stalk, it goes up and then the top part of it is what heads out, the very top of that plant. A field of maize, when it's ripe, turns a beautiful golden brown, and when it's a real good crop, and it all came up together, like when they irrigate and fertilize out in West Texas and North Texas, it's just a very smooth, beautiful, level field of maize heads showing all the same height, and nothing over 'em. And the stalk—the leaves are down below. Whereas with corn, the ear of corn comes—it doesn't appear at the very top of the stalk. It's about halfway up a cornstalk.

And a matter of fact, many farmers would top their corn. They'd cut the corn tops for feed. That's another thing you did working for the other fella. You would cut the corn top, just above the ear. The ear would still be there, of course. That would make it a little bit easier to pull the corn, in fact.

MEB: Okay, and maize is used for livestock feed? Or is it for people?

KH: Well, some people would sell their maize. There's a market for maize, as there is for corn, and as there is for cotton. I think probably back in our experience, there were more people that used that maize to feed their chickens, and turkeys, or other fowl. We didn't have any geese or any ducks. But we had a lot of chickens. We raised White Leghorns and Domineckers and Rhode Island Reds. And so most of our maize went to feed, primarily our chickens and turkeys. But there were people who sold their maize. And nowadays there are people who grow maize strictly to sell on the market, just like we used to sell cotton. Nobody used their cotton, it always was sold.

MEB: Okay.

KH: I see here in the outline, something about peddling. Peddling, having people call on you and you calling on people. Well, we had it going both ways during the '30s. This German that owned our farm was a Catholic priest who about eighty-five years old when I was about eight. He had no relatives, no family over here, so he wrote back to Germany, and invited his niece to come and inherit his property. He had four farms, I believe. And so they came, and they looked the situation over and they were more progressive than the priest. He, you know, was old and tired and he hadn't paid much attention to this farm. And so they saw early on that we had pastureland that was poor land. There wasn't anything much on it but broomweeds, just chalky, gravel-like, not real good soil for growing cotton and corn and maize.

So they rounded up some people—they were from Axtell, just east of Waco. They came down in the winter of I believe it was 1933, '34, and planted 232 fruit trees, mostly peach, but some plums. Within a few years there, in the late '30s, we had a pretty large peach orchard, which helped considerably. But we'd have so many peaches getting ripe at one time that we couldn't use 'em all. We couldn't give 'em away, and he wouldn't come down just for a small number of peaches, and they had to be consumed pretty soon, you know. They were perishable.

So when we had a bunch of peaches that were ready, we took the back seat out of the car and loaded up two-gallon or two-and-a-half-gallon zinc buckets with peaches. We would fill a bushel basket and a half bushel basket and then other kinds of containers and some of 'em we just put in boxes. And we would head for town and sell 'em door to door. We even went to Temple and Belton, and my brother and I both worked, as well as our dad at peddling those peaches.

I remember the buckets were the easiest amount to sell—a full-sized bucket was quite a few, and very few wanted to buy a bushel because that was pretty hard to take care of. You'd almost have to can

some of 'em before they got too ripe. And so a good-size helping to sell would be this zinc bucket and we asked and got twenty-five cents per bucket.

I remember coming into town one day—I was already in high school by now, so this was about 1939. And I went to one of my good friends who had a Gulf service station. He was a football and baseball fan and so I went to see him, and I think he would have bought a bucket of peaches from me whether he'd wanted them or not, just to help out. So he readily took a bucket of peaches, and then we were standing there talking and here came another businessman that had a business fairly close to his, walking down the street, heading home for lunch, I imagine. And this friend hollered out at the other fella, "Hey, Don. How 'bout buying a bucket of peaches?" He's a good little way off and Don asked, "Well, how much are they?" And Jack said, "Twenty-five cents a bucket." Don says, "By God, if you've got the peaches, I've got the twenty-five cents." (both laugh) And Jack reached in there and pulled out this bucket of peaches. I think he sort of surprised Don. I don't think Don thought Jack had 'em, but he didn't complain. He took 'em, I'm sure he was glad to get 'em. But anyway, that was the spirit of the thing. (laughs) So we sold door to door, and went to town, here in Killeen, and we went to Belton, we went to Temple. We had some good experience out peddling peaches.

And then the other way, coming toward us from town was the Rawleigh man. Back during the Depression when we were growing up, we were lonely. When a car would come down the road, we all looked and wondered, well, who is that? Wondered if it was coming to see us. Of course, it could be going other places, too. We always noticed when the mailman came, usually about 10:20 in the morning. And so the Rawleigh man was a regular. He didn't come real often, but he came on just about the same schedule all the time. He covered 360 degrees around Killeen, in town and out in the country. His name was J. E. Thornton. I graduated from high school with one of his daughters. He was a fine, friendly man, and everybody liked him. He gave the kids chewing gum every time he came. We just loved that. And he would have his basket of all these various products that the Rawleigh Company sold, shampoo and soap, and various and sundry things that you might buy if you went to a drugstore. The Rawleigh man was a welcome guest in everybody's home. He had something good that you would want, and nearly every time, even though we had hardly any money, we'd buy something from the Rawleigh man every time he came.

He later ran for commissioner of our precinct, and I was just sure, and my dad was sure that he would win, he was so popular. And he was very optimistic. Everybody that he asked to vote for him, said, yeah, I'll vote for ya. And he learned a very important lesson. This was his first political campaign. I was in town the night that the returns came in and they projected them up on the side of the building with a very elementary kind of a projector. Hand-written numbers and all, showing what the returns were, I remember him looking at those returns, and he lost fairly badly. And he was shocked. He couldn't believe that he didn't get more votes than he got. And so that was where I learned as a boy that people will tell a popular man that they're going to vote for him, and then not vote for him. They don't want to hurt his feelings. And so don't think that just because somebody says, yeah, I'll vote for you, that they'll really do it. (MEB laughs)

And we had house calls from our doctors in those days when we were really sick. And I was sick a lot, and when I was nine years old, I had pneumonia. The year before, in 1934, my twenty-four-year-old uncle—who routinely picked four hundred pounds of cotton a day the summer before, which is big league when it comes to picking cotton, he died of pneumonia. Then I got pneumonia in '35, about three months before my tenth birthday.

Well, it scared my mother and dad to death. But we had an ace in the hole. And that was our family doctor who was an absolutely superb doctor for those days: Dr. D. L. Woods of Killeen, Texas. He brought all three of us kids into the world. And so they got Dr. Woods. In fact, my dad tried to get my

uncle's family down near Moffett to bring him in and fire their other doctor. But the other doctor was a close family friend and they'd known him for years and they just didn't want to hurt his feelings. And they didn't know that their son and brother was going to die. So that didn't materialize.

Anyway, I can remember Dr. Woods coming out to our house when I had pneumonia. And he knew what to do. He didn't lose a pneumonia patient unless he got 'em way too late in the week that they had it. He said, "I want him to drink about a gallon of water every hour." You know, he didn't really mean that literally, but he meant for me to drink lots of liquid, lots of water. A simple thing, but it's very, very important, I'm sure. And then he looked around this old house that we lived in. It wasn't as bad as that one down in the pasture for day labor, but it had something to be desired. And the wallpaper was not stuck to the walls like it was supposed to be and that high winter, north wind would blow and it would billow out and then come back and cling to the wall. And then it would go back out. Dr. Woods looked around and saw how the house wasn't very tight. You know, the windows—the wind was coming in everywhere and the fireplace, too. My bed, my sickbed was in the fireplace room. And so he looked around he said, "I see he'll get plenty of fresh air in this house!" (both laugh)

Well, I got through it all right, but it wasn't easy because I was delirious some of the time. They said I was unconscious some of the time. Had a real high fever and they were putting those cold packs on me. I didn't know what was going on for two or three days, there. But I got all right. In fact, that was sort of a turning point. I had been a sickly, scrawny kid, and right after that my dad started feeding me cod liver oil. That was the only thing he could think of to try to build me up. And just about four years later, I came out for high school football and it was—get stronger and get tougher and grow some or get killed. So I decided to not get killed. (both laugh)

MEB: Good plan!

KH: Now the telephone—I remember reading a short story in freshman English in college, *Father, Let's in the Telephone*. It was a witty, humorous short story. We had a telephone when I was about five years old. That would have been in about 1930. And things got so tough, just a few years later that Mom and Dad decided that we could get by without a telephone. So they didn't pay the telephone fee. But that short while we had a telephone I was in the house by myself one day, and the telephone rang. I got a cane-bottom chair, and pulled it up to the telephone, which was on the wall about shoulder high to my dad, I got up in the chair, took the receiver down, and hollered "Hello" into the thing and the party on the other end said, "who is this?" And I said, "I don't know." Meaning, I don't know who you are. I thought they were asking me to guess who they were. They said, Who is this? And I would have thought if they wanted to know who I was, they would have said who is *that*. See? I was here and they were there. But anyway, they got a big laugh out of that one. Somebody called and said, "Who is this?" I said, "I don't know." Well, I did know who I was, but I thought they were trying to get me to tell them who they were. (both laugh) So anyway, that's my first time I remember answering the telephone. I didn't really know how people spoke.

And then later on, when we didn't have a telephone—the Hall family that we got the water from and used their storm cellar, we also used their telephone. My dad was very close to his mother, who lived across the mountain from us. And every three or four days, if he didn't actually go over there, which he did fairly frequently, he would go out to the Halls and ask to borrow their phone and call Grandma. And I'd go with him when I was a little boy. I'd frequently go with him anywhere he would let me go, whether it was plowing, planting, or whatever. I'd follow behind the plow lots of times.

And so I can still hear my dad turn the telephone ringer, pick up the receiver, and get central. And he would say, "Central?" Central'd say, "Yes?" "1W, please." Since 1934, I can still remember that my grandmother's telephone number was 1W. Call Central and ask for 1W, and you would get Grandma. And I could hear Daddy's side of the conversation, talking with his mother.

MEB: Was Central in Killeen, or where was—

KH: Central was in Killeen, right.

Okay, now, let's see. In this outline—it asks about natural foods, wild animals, or plants or whatever you might get. We didn't do too well with wild animals, and with wild things growing. But I do remember who during the Depression, especially during the 1930s, there were quite a number of people that would kill swamp rabbits and eat 'em. In fact, I think a time or two we ate just a plain ol' cottontail rabbit. And it's somewhat like chicken. We didn't really want to, but we did sometime. And especially swamp rabbits, they seem to be a little bigger and a little heavier. They were a cottontail that hung around the swamps. There weren't all that many swamps.

And we did find wild grapes. We found Mustang grapes, oh—and we would eat those things, and they were very, very acidy. They would burn your mouth. And there were even green grapes available, I remember, that we would eat. They were awfully sour, but we would eat just nearly anything. We also could find blackberries and dewberries wild, but generally speaking, it wasn't nearly as good as having that orchard out there. Once those trees got up and started bearing fruit, we had all the peaches and plums we could eat for a month or two every year.

MEB: Did you do any trapping or hunting or anything like that?

KH: I tried. My brother and I and Norman Hall tried to hunt and trap. We had little success, little success. But it was fun. We had a wonderful area—this mountain up there, you know. We could see these varmint holes and we could tell there had been something there and we saw quite a few rabbits. We didn't have a gun—we finally, we got a Buck Jones air gun, but it didn't have much power. And my dad never did have a gun. He borrowed a .410 shotgun from a neighbor and took me hunting. He killed a cottontail rabbit and later I killed one with my first shot. And, we had our slingshot, that we called, unfortunately, a nigger shooter. But I was never very good with one of those things. I shot at many a bird and I never killed but one bird, and I was sorry when I hit that one. It was a shock that I killed a beautiful mockingbird. But it was just an accident because I had missed a thousand times before that. (both laugh)

We had this thicket, we called it, underbrush, and post oak and live oak trees, and Spanish oak trees. It was a pretty thick thicket. In the wintertime, I remember—

Robins would come in and roost in that thicket—it would be in February. Cold and rainy weather was just what you were looking for. Not necessarily freezing, but cold and rainy weather. And I can remember we had good friends that lived down on Union Hill above the Sparta Bluff, and they knew that the robins were in there better than we did. We hardly recognized or paid any attention to them ourselves, but they were roosting there at night. So these three grown men came to our house one night just about dark and asked if they could go robin huntin' out there. And the way they did it—they had a stick, a club, and they would just knock 'em out—maybe two or three at a time, and fill up a game bag full of robins. It was just slaughter, but they ate 'em. They ate those robins, just like you would eat chicken. Took a good number of robins to make what a full-grown chicken would've made. But anyway, that one particular year, there was a bumper crop of robins for these robin hunters. (MEB laughs)

Making syrup—

MEB: From sorghum or—

KH: Sorghum. Making sorghum. Nearly everything we did was labor intensive, like cotton. Making syrup, we didn't do this but one time that I can remember. A neighbor invited us to come over and spend the

day helping them make sorghum and they would give us some of it. The whole family went over there and got involved, cutting this sugar cane which would grow higher than your head. And carrying it by hand a good little way over to this compress thing where you would run it through these two heavy rollers and just squeeze all the juice out o' that stalk and the juice would run down into this container. And then you'd have a husk, you know, what was left, the rough part of it, and that made wonderful mulch. Where the sorghum was manufactured every year the grass was much, much greener and lusher there because the stalks with the juice taken out made real good soil builder, better than fertilizer. So anyway, you would squeeze the juice out of there, and then have these vats, these big pans, with about six- or eight-inch sides all the way around to hold the juice. Then you'd build a fire under it. Cook it a good, long while, and finally it would be ready—it would turn into syrup. It would be the way you'd want it. We just took the pure sugar cane juice and cooked it and cooked it and finally—it was done, and you poured it. I can remember we worked hard that day and came home with two gallons of sorghum. I'm not sure it was worth the labor. (both laugh) But anyway, it was an activity. It was doing something to try to have a little more and a little better to eat.

I don't remember any quilting bees, actually, but I know that the women had their friendship quilts—I think everybody had one—and they would exchange pieces. They would embroidery and sew their own name on theirs and give it to this one and that one and the other one and then vice versa. We didn't do a very good job of preserving things like that. We were too busy trying to make a living. We moved to town in 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor, on December 8, 1941. Many, many years later, Mama discovered that she still had this friendship quilt. It was a wonder it wasn't completely eaten up and deteriorated. It's sort of frazzled on one corner. But here it was, and my wife and I now have it. And we're going to try to get the corner repaired. But looking at that quilt and seeing all those names of all those neighbors and relatives from the 1920s and '30s, is just sort of like a history of our lives. It's a very, very touching and precious thing to have. We want to—when we get it, if we ever do, get it really prettied up, we want to hang it up on the wall. It would be a very nice decorative thing to have on the wall. Norman Hall's mother, Lola Hall is there, Ethel Ramm is one over here on this side, Grandma Claire Hilliard, dear friends and relatives from all over west Bell and south Coryell Counties. It just a wonderful keepsake to have.

MEB: Did your mom sew clothes or anything like that?

KH: Oh, yeah. She sewed. For example, she sewed the cotton sacks. Everybody had to have a cotton sack every year. Go buy that old, hard-to-work-with ducking, and I can remember her sewing up a storm with that old foot-pedaled sewing machine, worn out, but she got the sacks sewn. And she'd make some underwear out of flour sacks, lots of people did in those days. And she even made shirts for my brother and me, and she made dresses for Sister.

And entertainment. We entertained ourselves. Teens and young single people did ring games. We called them ring games. It was almost like square dancing, but not quite. There would be no musical instrument, but there was a guy in the Palo Alto community, somewhat older than I, named Babe Springman. And Babe, and his brother Johnny Springman, both played the guitar when they had one and they would sing with or without a guitar, and they were pretty musical. So they would have one of these—and I was just an observer, back in the early '30s when I was too little to be dancing or doing ring games, I would watch the older people do it. I had an aunt, who was a good deal younger than my mother and was only eight years older than I was, lived with us there in the middle '30s for a while. She was a young teenager, and needed some social life, so we would occasionally have a little party at our house and then I would hear about them other places, too. I don't think I ever got to go to very many other houses for these parties. But anyway, Babe Springman would sing or call like a caller in square dancing. And he would sing them through these various and sundry maneuvers and steps that they would do. And they would be having the best time.

And then I remember my Uncle Alvie, if people started getting radios, he would be one of the first to get a radio. They didn't have any more money than we did, but he didn't hesitate. He'd go in there and buy, and he'd be one of the first to get a record player. He was way ahead of us on getting a TV in years later. So he had what we called a portable. I thought a portable was what it was. I didn't realize that the maker of this thing was Brunswick, a record company kinda like Columbia or RCA. So I don't know, Uncle Alvie either loaned us or gave us or we bought this portable from him, maybe he got a better one. Another uncle had a console, an RCA Victrola. So our portable Brunswick was our entertainment center. We had no electricity and no money to buy batteries if it had been battery operated. So this thing, you just wound it up. And you had a bunch of needles. A needle would last two or three records, and then it would be—it was so soft it would get too dull and you'd change needles. After winding it up, you'd move a little lever that would start the turntable that held the record, gently put the needle—receiver—on the outer edge of the record and it would play music. When we got that, boy, we just thought we were in hog heaven!

We had probably not over eight or ten records at the very most. And this was before we even went to school. And when I was four and five years old, I couldn't read, but I could tell you which one of these records was "Hand Me Down My Walking Cane" and which one of 'em was—oh, just whatever they were. We learned to tell by the scratches on 'em or something about the label. These were different kinds of labels, and there was some marker that we could figure and our parents were dumbfounded when we could tell all of these records, which one was which.

We learned that the same way we learned locations. We'd never paid any attention to street signs. I don't think Killeen even had street signs for a long time back then. We would go to Temple and visit my mother's aunt, and she would frequently talk about 31st Street and Avenue D or Avenue A or whatever and we would never pay any attention. That was Greek to us, the streets. We wanted to know—we wanted landmarks. You go to this building and you turn right, and you go to that building and this tree here. It was all landmarks in our thinking. I'll bet I was sixteen years old before I realized, well I've got to learn to pay attention to streets and be able to get somewhere when somebody tells me they live on a certain street, and it joins a certain other street. And I started paying attention, but not for a long time. So in other words, we learned to get from one place to another without any street directions, and we learned to tell what song was what records without reading what was on the label, but just by some sign, some landmark.

MEB: Different ways of going about it.

You know, one topic we haven't talked much about is church. Were your family churchgoers, or were you busy working or—

KH: Well, my mother was more so than my father. We did not regularly go to church all the time we were being brought up. Mama would very much have liked to. Daddy didn't care that much about it. And the Palo Alto community—and I think, our schoolmates, we went to school six years at Palo Alto in that two-room schoolhouse. And very little was ever said about church in that school. Never heard anybody talk about going to church. I think very little church-going happened during the '30s around Palo Alto. At Sugar Loaf, there was a church and a tabernacle, and, occasionally, somebody would hold a meeting over there and it would be nondenominational. It would be Baptist, Methodist, maybe Church of Christ. They would hold a meeting and people would go for maybe a few nights a week. And then there wouldn't be Sunday services.

And Mama, with great effort, got us to come to the Church of Christ in Killeen quite a lot during the later part of the '30s when things weren't so really, really tough economically. And she was a very devout member the rest of her life. It was a very, very big part of her life and she was a prominent and much loved member of that church. But during the time that we lived out on the Fort Hood lands,

religion was sort of put in the background. You'd would think as poor as we were we'd be praying every night—but we didn't. I didn't hear anybody praying for things to get better, for example. There just wasn't much religion practiced. That doesn't mean that people weren't feeling religious deep down inside. But it certainly wasn't on display. It was very private. The people that lived in the house between us and the Ramms, that family of seven, now they were very religious and they did promote religion somewhat. And he was a lay preacher, and they tried to hold meetings, but there was hardly any response to it and they moved away after a very few years. And so I would say that during the '30s, in the Palo Alto community, religion was a very private thing with the individual, and there was not much group participation in church-going or prayers. I don't remember anybody praying before a meal except at the end-of-school picnic. And they were all good people, all good people. Religion almost was forgotten. Now I may be going too strong on that. There may be a lot of people disagree with me, but I sure didn't see it much.

MEB: That's interesting. I've never—I wanted to, on a different topic, a while back you were talking about, you were telling me the story about selling peaches, being at the Gulf service station. Um, can you tell me a little bit about when the area started developing things like that? I'm assuming that early on that there was no such thing as a service station before lots of people had cars, but then that thing would have come in over time. What can you tell me about how that developed and where those were and what other services they might have offered.

KH: Let's see—from memory it's going to be hard for me to get this right, but I would say, through the '10s, from 1900 on to about 1920, there were very few cars. There had been cars as far back as 1900 or 1903, but very few people had one. And I think along about 1914 or '15 or '16, the first automobile appeared in Killeen. I may be off as much as five years there, but anyway, there weren't very many of them. I remember my Grandpa Hilliard, by the way, had one of the early cars. I wish I could remember exactly what year it was that he got a car. It might have been before 1920. And then, of course, more and more cars were built by Henry Ford, when he started mass production. Very smart guy that he started this mass production. And then they came off the assembly line and it got to where people could afford them. I think a new Ford sold for $395 during the '20s maybe. And of course after World War I, there was this boom. When my granddaddy was making a bale to the acre out there and getting forty cents a pound, naturally he got a car.

But it didn't take a great many automobiles to cause a service station, a gas station, to spring up. And I do remember gas stations in the early '30s—I also remember the lowest price that we ever paid for gasoline. Sometime there during the '30s we paid nine cents a gallon for white gas. It was not premium gasoline, it was white gasoline. As a matter of fact, a time or two my dad tried to burn kerosene in our Model T when it ran out of gas, and kerosene would run, but not well in a car. (both laugh) And of course there had been kerosene. Kerosene was sold somewhere in the hardware store. It didn't take a service station to get kerosene, but you had to have somewhere to buy kerosene. And now you can buy kerosene at a hardware store out here on Business Highway 190.

But anyway, when the car got fairly common, then the gas stations were going to spring up to sell the gasoline to operate that car. As well as automobile repair shops. 'Course there wasn't just a whole lot to the Model T, and there was a saying that the Model T—all you needed was a pair of pliers and some baling wire, and you could fix nearly anything that went wrong with a Model T Ford. (laughs)

The Model T, the first ones that we had, you started them with this crank thing. And so when we'd play cars, as kids, we would play like we were cranking it. You know, we would make the sound that it made. And you had a little wire thing with a loop in it sticking out there by the radiator, down in the lower part of the radiator and when you wanted to choke it you'd pull on that wire while you'd turn this crank handle, then you'd let it go and it made a little bit different sound when

you were choking it from when you didn't. So we learned how to sound like a car was sounding when it was being cranked while it was being choked and when it wasn't. And we learned to make like we were a car running.

We parked our car under a big live oak tree just outside the barbed-wire fence that was our yard. And so when Daddy went to town, we always wanted to go with him when he went anywhere, but of course he wouldn't let us go most of the time. We started asking him if we could back out with him. See, he would have to back out and then head out. So when we were little kids we would hurry when we found out he was going anywhere, we'd say, Can we back out with you? And my little sister was—a lot of the times she wouldn't get to go, maybe the others would. But anyway, one day when Daddy was going somewhere, and Sister asked to back out with him. She was on the running board, and he started backing out and she fell off for some reason. And the wheels were cut so that they were going to run over her. I don't know whether that thing would have actually run—I don't know whether he had up that much steam or not. He's just backing up, but anyway, he was scared that he might. And he pushed down on the brake, which probably wasn't really very good—to try to get leverage. He pulled back on that steering wheel so hard that he broke it. (laughs) The wheel part was gone, and he had two little ol' things that he could hold to, the spokes. So he drove to town. (both laugh) That Model T didn't have a top on it and sort of showed, it stuck out. It looked funny with him driving like that holding on to these two little spokes. But fortunately his car stopped before it got to Sister.

MEB: That's good. Did that end you guys getting to back out with him?

KH: Well, I know it did for a little while. Memories are short, though, it probably wasn't very long before we were doing it again.

MEB: You know, if you don't mind, I wanted to ask you, is your wife from the Fort Hood area as well?

KH: No, no, she's from down about fifty-five miles southeast of here, in Milam County, between Sharp and Davilla. She grew up on a farm and—her folks had a syrup mill, and they had the compress that squeezes the juice out of the sugar cane, and the vat to cook it in and all. And that's where I noticed how much greener the grass was around where the squeezed stalks lay than the other land was.

Well, I've just about run out of things to talk about.

MEB: Let's see if there were other questions I wanted to ask you. Actually, we can probably—do you want to call it quits there? I have a couple of spelling questions for you and that's about it.

KH: Okay.

Joe D. Insall

Date of birth: 15 June 1930
Community affiliated with: Antelope
Interviewed by Martha Doty Freeman

MDF: This is Martha Doty Freeman. Today is November 26, 2000. I am interviewing Mr. Joe Insall for the first time. The interview is taking place in Mr. Insall's home outside of Salado, Texas. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University. [Myrna R. Insall also took part in this interview.]

So tell me about your family.

JDI: Well, my mother and my dad? What their name was?

MDF: Yeah, yeah.

JDI: My dad was Arthur Lee Insall, and his dad was Joe Gansey Insall, and his grandfather was Frank Insall. He was the first Insall in the U.S. And he came here in about 1800. He was in the army. In 1815 he lived in Opelousas Parish, Chicot Bayou, and then he was in the army a little over six weeks. I'm pretty sure he fought at the Battle of New Orleans. The first Insall came to Texas two years after the Alamo fell.

I knew most of my uncles and aunts, but not all of them. I had an uncle that fought in the First World War. Daddy never was in the army. My granddaddy was a Confederate soldier for four years, and he went to old Mexico when Lee surrendered because he couldn't put up with Yankees. Anyway, Daddy and them settled on Clear Creek. My brother and sister were born there, and I was born at Antelope in 1930. It was right in the bad part of the Depression. Dad owned eight acres, and he built our house out of an old house that he tore down.

We had some pretty good land. It was partly sandy and partly black. Grew sweet potatoes and watermelons real good. And we grew nearly everything we eat. We were about the poorest people in the neighborhood because we didn't have but eight acres. Dad worked on WPA sometimes, and my grandmother lived with us. She got a Confederate veteran's pension, or old-age pension, I don't know which. It was fifteen dollars a month. Mother took care of her kind of like people go to rest homes now, but they didn't have that then. And we just more or less survived.

I started school at Antelope in 1936. I guess in 1941, when Camp Hood came, there were GI soldiers living in tents about two miles from us. They had a PX in a tent and all that stuff, my brother worked in the PX some, and he was three and a half years older than me. Me and him both did our obligation to the flag. I was in the Eighty-second Airborne, but I had my mother and dad and sister for dependants, and I got out early. I didn't do all my three-year hitch. They transferred me to the reserves.

But anyway, about Antelope, we had a church and a schoolhouse, and a little further down the road there was Antelope Store. There was a road that feeds into the county road from Gatesville to Copperas Cove. It went to Eliga and back across House Creek. And I went over there with my mother in a buggy. We owned a Model T Ford, but there wasn't too many cars in the neighborhood then.

When someone got sick they were just in bad trouble. I think I was nine years old before I went to a doctor. And when the doctor delivered me, my dad gave him this gold railroad watch to pay for it because he didn't have no money. And when my sister was born three years later, he gave him a Jersey milk cow. That's the way we did things.

This old Rawleigh peddler would come around ever' so often selling this toilet soap and stuff. It was a whole lot better than that homemade lye soap. My mother would trade him a chicken for a bar of it. He had a chicken coop on the back of his car. I don't know how we survived. Never did get snake bit, or nothing. Caught lots of rabbits. There is a light plane landing strip just up on the hill from where we lived. Back then it was just grass and broomweeds. A lot of rabbits lived there. This old dog would chase the rabbits in that rock pile. I can see him now up there wagging his tail and barking on top of them rocks, I was a little bitty feller, probably seven or eight years old, and I'd run over there and move the rocks and catch that rabbit. Knock his head over a rock and head home with him. I was even too little to skin him. But we ate lots of rabbit.

My brother made him a little garden, like some kids make a playhouse. Well, I had to build me one, but mine wasn't quite as pretty as his. So my little sister got the fever, and she built her a little bitty one, and the beans come up, and we got to teasing her about them, and she pulled 'em all up!

And when my brother was thirteen years old, he put a Model T together. He had the frame, and the steering gear, and the wheels. He traded a .22 caliber rifle and three dollars for a motor. He got the .22 selling Cloverine Salve. One day I was playing in the sand, and he called me to come and help him. I was real thrilled because he didn't have too much to do with me. My dad was forty-six when I was born. He was always busy working. We were most of the time. Anyway, I run down to help him. I said, "What you want me to do?" He said, "Hold that spark plug." I said, "Where's it at?" He showed me, and I held it, and he started to turn that crank. When he got on mine, it gave me quite a shock. I didn't much want to help him anymore. But he got her going, and about all he had to go by was a *Popular Mechanics* magazine. He ordered him a battery from Sears and Roebuck. It was a dry-cell battery to get it going. Then it run on magneto. But he was a natural-born mechanic. I turned out to be a carpenter.

But we would go fishing on Cottonwood Creek and the Cowhouse. Get us a Prince Albert tobacco can and dig a few worms, stick it in our pocket. The only store-bought thing on it was a hook. They used to wrap things in paper and tie string around 'em. They didn't have paper bags. We'd save the longest strings we'd get and tie 'em together and rub beeswax on 'em. Tie that hook on there, and find a piece of lead off a roofing nail or something, and beat it flat, and roll it on the string for a sinker, and find us a cork that come out of a bottle, put on that, and then we'd adjust it in a rainwater barrel and see if it worked. We'd hook the hook in the cork and wrap the string and stick it in our pocket, and we was ready. 'Cause we'd cut the poles when we got to the river. Never did catch nothin' much over ten inches long.

Then, when Fort Hood came, we had the eight acres and the house and the barn, stock tank, and just lots of fruit trees. They gave us six hundred dollars for it and moved us out. I remember moving. Daddy had a rent house in Copperas Cove that he got five dollars a month rent for. For seventeen years he worked on the railroad as a section hand in his younger days. I think that's why he built that house. He must have been well-off at one time, because he had this old phonograph. They had these round records, and you'd poke 'em on there like a tin can, both ends cut out of it. You never did have to change the needle. It had a diamond-tipped point.

Anyway, when we were moving to Copperas Cove, I think the army furnished us some trucks. I'm not sure. I know my brother led the milk cow, and I led one horse and rode another one, and she was pretty skinny. Didn't even know what a saddle was. My rear end was pretty raw by the time I got there, seven miles. Daddy had a couple of extra lots there to put the horses in, and he finally sold 'em. But we kept the old cow, and we'd stake her out, and I got smart and learned how to milk. Well, that was a mistake, 'cause that was my job, tending the cow and milking her. Then, life was pretty dull in Copperas Cove, 'cause I had to walk half a mile before I could start hunting. Back in them days you just went anywhere you wanted to, and nobody paid no attention to you.

MRI: Tell her about your grandma.

JDI: Okay. And I had a paper route and I had forty customers, and that covered the whole town. Those first GI soldiers I saw had these old World War I helmets, and when I saw the new-type helmet I didn't know whether I'd go close to 'em or not. I thought they might be foreigners.

MDF: Was it a German style?

JDI: Well, you know, like they wore 'em in Korea and World War II. And, anyway, my grandmother—

MRI: Her name.

JDI: They called her Penny. But it was Peninah Insall. That's on my dad's side.

MDF: Peninah? How's that spelled?

JDI: I don't know. Pennin, something or other.

MDF: Oh, what an unusual name.

JDI: I heard she was from South Carolina.

MRI: I think it's spelled P-e-n-i-n-a-h. She's buried in Killeen.

JDI: It's been told that they had a Comanche raid one time, and her and her mother hid in a hand-dug well. They were the only survivors.

MDF: Now, where would that have been?

JDI: I'm not sure, but I think around Leander, toward Georgetown. That's where my grandpa lived on one his brother's places. I've heard Dad talk about it. But then, I wasn't real interested in them things back then. I never did ask him about all this stuff that I wished I had of.

My mother's name was Vann, maiden name. Jim Vann was her daddy, and her mother was a Fry. My great-uncle, Charlie Fry, lived close to us, and I knew all of his—one of his brothers, Tom Fry. We liked Uncle John real good. He was a bachelor, widower, or whatever you call. And back then, if you lived on one of, they call 'em ranches now, just a small place, like a couple of hundred acres, well you could live in the house, and usually the man that owned it furnished the milk cow. All you had to do was keep up the water gaps when they washed out and sort of take care of the house. Uncle John lived close to us at one time, and we'd go visit him, and he'd make these big old biscuits he called terrapins. And one time, my brother got mad of me. He called me an old bitch. Back in them days, you didn't even say nothing like that. That was a automatic whupping with a peach tree limb. And my mother heard him. She jerked a limb off the peach tree, and it just tickled me to death 'cause she was really whupping up on him. She said, "Where did you hear that word?" And he said, "Well, that's what Uncle John calls his old cow when she slaps him up the side of the head with a wet tail."

We had lots of good times. I don't know much about playing football, but I can trail a ant across a rock pile if he's bleeding. I learned how to hunt and fish pretty good, and grow things. And I still kind of like to live the way we did back then. It sort of warps your mind.

Shoot, if we had game running loose in the woods back then like we do now, we'd never see a poor day. We got hogs and deer. Don't even mess with squirrels. They're running all over the place. In fact, I feed 'em out the back door. I can't shoot too straight anymore, and I have to tame them so I can kill 'em. Cats give 'em a bad time, but they don't bother squirrels much.

MDF: So there wasn't as much wild game when you were growing up?

JDI: No, there wasn't even a coon or a fox running loose in the woods, 'cause back in them days, you could sell the furs. Daddy bought him a bunch of traps, and I don't think he knew much about hunting or trapping. And so when we got a little bit bigger, well, we would set 'em all except one, and it was pretty strong. It was double-spring, about a two and a half. I had a cousin that was in World War II, and he come visit us a lot, and he always had some money. He got a pension. This is, this is before World War II though. And, I remember one time, we was setting traps, and I just come along. They'd let me go if they'd use me for a pack horse. But I'd go with them whether they wanted me to or not And so, they were setting this old bad trap, and my brother got his finger hung in it. Just the end of it. Well, his fingernail come off, and I got to laughing. I mean, I was hurtin', I was laughing so bad, I was rollin' on the ground. I couldn't even get my breath. And my cousin was trying to get him out, and he got his caught in it a little bit, and that turned me on that much more. [They said,] We're going to get even with you, boy. I 'bout forgot about it, and there was a log across the creek, and it wasn't waist deep. And they told me, You go first. We ain't goin' to shake it. Swore they wasn't. But they did, and they left me hanging on that log, and I was scared to drop down in the water, 'fraid a alligator'd get me or somethin'. They used to play all kinds of pranks on me.

And then, another time, Uncle Charlie called us. We had this old telephone. Our ring was three longs and a short, and everybody was hooked up on the same line. If you wanted to make an announcement, you rang some kind of a ring. I don't remember what it was. And everybody would listen in. Like, say, "We're going to have a dance over at our house Saturday night. Y'all come." But they'd listen in anyway because they didn't have no other kind of entertainment. You'd hear them things click when they hung up.

One time I was wanting to go to the gin with Uncle Charlie, and it was raining a little bit and they wouldn't let me go. I was always barefoot, and I'd catch on telephone lines, and kind of jump up and down, swinging on it a little bit. And my brother run in the house and rang our ring, and I could tell everything he rung. I didn't know how to read too good, and I been looking at one of my dad's books. I think it was about Buffalo Bill or something, telling about the telegraph lines, and these Indians tearing 'em down, and they were shocking them. And I thought—it showed a dead Indian—I was going to die, but I didn't know when from the shock. Scared me to death.

MDF: Now, where did the telephone come out of?

JDI: I don't know. It come down the county road. They had 'em on the cedar posts. In fact I showed—

MDF: Just low cedar posts?

JDI: Well, they were ten, twelve foot tall with a arm on it, and this little insulator like they used to put on electric fences. And they were always broke or something.

MRI: Do you think it came from Gatesville?

JDI: Or Copperas Cove. Then, if you wanted to make a long-distance call, you had to get the operator on

the other end of the line, and she had to plug in or something. 'Course we never did make one. Then, later on, we got us a battery-powered radio. And all I could hear was Ernest Tubb, the Texas troubadour. My sister was the oldest one. She was always listening to that.

MRI: Did you have electricity?

JDI: Didn't even know what it was. I was nine years old first time I ever flushed a commode. And I thought I broke it.

Then, we had a neighbor that lived in this place where my Uncle John lived that had the milk cow. And he got appendicitis. Of course, they waited until he was about dead before they do anything, and his dad had a wagon that was made out of a car frame. I guess it had rubber tires on it. Pretty smooth riding wagons. And down the road about a mile, Jack Scott had a car. They took him down there and loaded him in the car. Then they took him to Gatesville, took out his appendix, brought him back home, and he must have busted a stitch or something. I think they was killing rats in the barn, or something. Were jumping around there. And he got an infection and died. He was about a teenager. I don't know how old. They didn't have much for anything then. We'd step on rusted nails all the time. Never did know what a tetanus shot was, and Mama put a little kerosene on it and tied a rag around it. Said, "That'll take the soreness out." That's about the way she doctored it.

MDF: What other kinds of doctoring things did your mother do?

JDI: Well, that's about it. We had a weed. Looked like a potater plant. It's got a little round yellow ball on it, and I don't know the name of it. But she'd dig one of them up and get the roots, and cut 'em in little bits and take a needle and thread and sew 'em on there like beads, and put 'em around a baby's neck to make him burp when he smelled it. I seen a lady had some kind of perfume-like stuff that they'd put on the collar, and they'd smell it and it'd make them burp. But you never hear of it anymore.

MDF: Unh-uh.

JDI: Then if you get rattlesnake bit and you go to the hospital, you're in trouble, because you might luck out and get a doctor that knows something about it. Chances are, you ain't, and he's going to cut you wide open. The best way to cure it is to crank up your lawn mower or old truck or something, and shock it off of a spark plug about six or eight times, and it'll, it'll neutralize the poison, 'cause the poison's got some kind of metal in it. It'll take the swelling out, and it will quit hurting. I never have tried it, but that's the first thing I'm going to do if it happens.

MDF: Did one of your neighbors do that? I mean, where did you hear that?

JDI: Uh-huh. I read it in an *Outdoor Life* magazine. I told my friend about it that coon hunts all the time. One of his dogs got bit, and he took him to the vet. People don't listen to you too much. You can show 'em, but you can't tell 'em nothing.

MRI: You didn't tell her about your grandma. I want you to tell her about your grandma.

JDI: Well, about when she lived with us?

MRI: Um-hm.

JDI: Well, I think I can remember this. I was pretty little. She sat in the middle of the wagon in a stiff-backed chair. And we were traveling along at a pretty good little clip of speed and run over a red ant mound, a little hump of dirt about a foot high, tilted the wagon, and she fell out and broke her hip. She never did go to the doctor. I'm pretty sure it broke her hip because she was crippled the rest of her life. Didn't have no walker, so she used that straight-backed chair to push in front of her. That's

the way she traveled from the bedroom to the living room. She'd sit there in the rocking chair all day. I carried her many glasses of water. She'd always holler at me, and she left me a trunk and a bedstead when she passed on. She was ninety-four, I think. She died in '43.

MDF: Now, was that your mother's—

JDI: No, it's my dad's mother. Her husband was the one that fought in the Civil War. I'm fourth generation.

MDF: Now, when did your family first move to that area?

JDI: I imagine it must have been about '29. They probably lived in Fort Hood reservation somewheres up in Clear Creek, about where Gray Base is now. But I don't know where it's at. I asked my uncle, and he told me, and they always talked about that place, so they must have been sharecropping or something.

MDF: Now, that was 1929?

JDI: Um-hm. When they moved to Antelope.

MDF: Where were they before then?

JDI: Well, they lived on this Norman place on Clear Creek on Fort Hood reservation, but I don't know where. And I don't remember Daddy building a house or nothing, but he done a pretty good job with nothing to build it out of. He was always wanting to lay rocks. I lost his old rock hammer down there. Soon as I laid it down, forgot where I put it. And I never can find it. Cost about forty dollars now, and I bet he didn't give fifty cents for it back then.

MDF: Do you know—can you describe the house to me that he built?

JDI: Got a picture of it.

MDF: Oh, you do?

JDI: In that Antelope book.

MDF: Oh, yeah. I saw that.

JDI: You can see daylight under it. Stacked up on some rocks. I used to crawl under there and go to sleep. And they'd get to hunting for me, and they'd finally find me under there asleep. I'd be playing and just go to sleep!

MDF: How many rooms was it?

JDI: There was four downstairs. Wasn't two story. We just had an attic up there. They built pretty steep roofs back then. When I started to carpenter they was about five-in-twelve, then they kept on getting flatter. Daddy said, "The steeper it is the less it'll leak. The rain will run off quicker." We had the stairs on the inside of the house coming from the kitchen up, and about the only thing we heated with, I think, was a cook stove. I don't remember having a heater.

MDF: Where did you get your wood?

JDI: He cut it along Uncle Charlie's fence line. And didn't have a saw neither. Cut it all with a axe, every stick of it. Dad was pretty old-fashioned. He was born in '85. Grandpa was born in '32. It was a long time. I was born in the '30s, so about a hundred years between mine an' Grandpa's birthday.

MDF: What do you remember about your mother's cooking?

JDI: Well, we always had biscuits and cornbread. And I said something about light bread the other day. My

son's wife said, "What kind of bread?" She never heard of it being called light bread. Mother made some buns sometimes, a few loafs, but not regular. Mostly biscuits and cornbread. Had chickens and all that stuff.

In 1945, we moved back in the woods again. Just thrilled me to death. I was about fifteen years old. Had me two dogs. I was about sixteen before Daddy put me to work in the fields. I roamed the woods all the time.

MDF: Now, why did he wait that long?

JDI: I guess he figured I wasn't big enough to hold up the plow handles.

MDF: Huh.

JDI: When other people were using the tractor, we were still using an old turn plow like they did back in Indian days. Saturday noon a neighbor going fishing camped on the river and spent the night, and I wanted to go with them. Daddy wouldn't let me. But he didn't get much plowing done that afternoon. The horses was tired.

MDF: What kind of animals did he use on the farm?

JDI: Something you can buy at First Monday for about twenty dollars a head. Might be one great big mule and one little bitty quarter horse or something. I can still hook up a pair in the dark, but I was seventeen before I even learned to drive a car. And that wasn't very good.

MDF: Did you all grow fruit at all?

JDI: If we wanted to eat.

Like to buy [the land] back. We always thought that they'd let us have it back after the war.

MDF: Did your mother make pies with the fruit?

JDI: Yeah.

MDF: What else did she make?

JDI: Dried peaches on top of the house. All you had to do was keep the ants out of 'em. She made peach pies, and we canned lots of stuff on a wood cook stove. She made quilts. You could freeze to death under a cotton quilt. They put polyester in 'em now and they're pretty warm. But if you take a cold night, get down freezing, get about ten of them cotton quilts, and you couldn't turn over. But you'd still be cold.

MRI: He said his father wouldn't eat cornbread.

MDF: Why was that?

JDI: Well, I imagine that's all he had to eat for a long time. See, my grandpa was in the Civil War. They didn't whup us, they just starved us to death. I really ain't happy how it turned out either. Not real fond of Yankees. My grandpa was real poor, too. Daddy just kind of inherited that stuff. And he done pretty good for a while, I'm sure, but like I told the guys at work, "I got the edge on y'all. I know how to starve to death, and you've never had no experience at it."

I remember a time when my next meal was running loose in the woods. But we had all kinds of vegetables if it rained right. We didn't have a freezer 'cause we didn't have electricity. But we canned lots of things and dried them. I remember way back in the '30s when they killed all them cows to

raise the market, I don't know what year it was, but Daddy wouldn't bring all that meat home 'cause he figured it was stealing it. Of course, we didn't have nothing to kill. I'll guarantee you, I'd have got me a hindquarter or something.

MDF: Did he work for the government helping to do that cattle shoot?

JDI: No. They didn't have that many people employed, I don't imagine. But he worked on WPA, and that helped a bunch.

MDF: What did he do with the WPA?

JDI: Worked on the county road. They done it all with pick and shovel, and load the gravel in a wagon. If you furnished a wagon and team you got fifty cents more a day. He also helped build rock gymnasiums at Pidcoke, Copperas Cove, and Kempner.

I remember when the ice man come around, and we'd buy some ice from him. I'd run and get the biggest watermelon I could and sell it to him for a nickel. And if my mother would let me, I'd walk a mile to the store to spend that nickel. You'd be surprised how much caramel candy you got for a nickel back in them days. One of them big ol' suckers on a stick, they called 'em BB Bat [sucker], made out of caramel candy. You'd get it hung in your teeth, and you'd about pull your teeth out.

MDF: What were they called again?

JDI: Caramel, I think. Is that right?

MDF: Well, but BB?

JDI: BB Bat.

MDF: BB Bat.

JDI: Yeah, it was kind of like a Fudgesicle, except that it's candy on a stick. And you'd get 'em for a penny apiece. And I'd be gnawing on 'em after I got home and had some left over.

MDF: Now what—did you go to the Antelope Store for that?

JDI: Uh-huh. About a mile south.

MDF: What was that store like?

JDI: It had a gas pump in front that you worked this lever back and forth. And had a little gauge up there to tell how much gas was on it, and then you run it into your car. Go inside, and if you bought something like bacon or anything like that, they'd wrap it. They had this big roll of paper, and they'd tear off a chunk, put it over there and wrap it up. Then they had a ball of string up yonder come through a couple of loops. They'd pull some down and tie it on there, and that was your fishing line.

We'd go to church at Antelope. It was a Baptist church. When we had to. We'd get out of it if we could. And we'd go to neighbors listening to the radio. We'd go listen to Gene Autrey on Sunday evenings, I think. He'd sing songs and sell that Doublemint Chewing Gum. The people that lived next to us were Czechs, the Tomastiks. They talked Czech. In fact their mother never did learn to talk English. They'd make kolaches, and they grew poppy seeds to put in 'em. Them girls was a whole lot older than me, and they was always teasing me. They said, Them was fleas they'd picked off of chickens. And the old man grew his own tobaccer that he smoked in a pipe. Had one of these old crooked pipes. We'd steal a little bit of it and get us some brown paper and hide in the bushes and roll a cigarette and light it and get sick.

MRI: Didn't you say the girls picked mushrooms?

JDI: Uh-huh.

MDF: Really?

JDI: Yeah.

MDF: How did they know what was okay, what was poisonous?

JDI: They knew. And they grow here, but I'm afraid to pick 'em. In Colorado, everybody picks 'em. There aren't that many poisonous ones, but I don't want to take a chance.

MDF: Now was it the Tomastiks that picked mushrooms?

JDI: Yeah. In the springtime when it rains just right, and if there's leaf mold, they grow out of there. They get about oh, twice or three times big around as a coffee cup. Most of them are just a little bit bigger. They've got to be the light pinkish-brown on top and real clean looking underneath. When they get older they change colors. I don't think they had any real, these fancy recipes or nothin'.

They farmed a lot more land than we did, and I think John Tomastik was the first one to get a John Deere tractor. He had a son who was just a little older than me, and younger than my brother. Daddy was sharecropping a little patch of cotton up there one year, and I was about four years old. He'd drop me off to play with Lewis, and he was talking Czech and I was talking English, and I don't think we ever knew the difference. He was always showing me his muscles. Of course, I was a little ol' scrawny thing, and they wanted to put boxing gloves on me. Well, I couldn't hardly lift them. Then he'd whup up on me real good.

MDF: Did you all fight a lot?

JDI: Yeah. Well, I couldn't whup nobody. It wasn't much of a fight. I'd make my brother mad. He'd take after me and I'd try to head to my mother for a little protection. But one day he cut me out, and I was heading away from him going out across plowed ground. I stumped my toe and fell and he stumbled over the top of me. I got up and headed back to the house.

And in the hot summertime we'd sleep outside, but we was scared to. We built us a tree house and nailed some boards onto the trees about four foot off the ground. They were always talking about mad dogs and wolves. We didn't know there wasn't any, because the only thing you knew was what you heard people say. No TV or nothing. So we built us a chicken wire thing around it where they couldn't get us. And about the time we'd get to sleep it'd thunder and lightning and we'd have our bedroll and go back inside the house.

MDF: Did you ever play baseball in school?

JDI: Um-hm. Mostly softball and basketball. And I liked that real well.

MDF: Now tell me about playing basketball. Where did you get the equipment?

JDI: I guess the school furnished the basketball. That's all the equipment we had. And then this pole with a hoop on it and the backstop. We kind of went by the rules pretty much. In fact I think we played some other schools that was close by. About six, I know. There wasn't too many of us on the team. I don't think I ever got to play. I was on the volleyball team one time, but I was substituting.

MDF: Did you ever have enough boys in the class to form a baseball or softball team?

JDI: No. You had one batter, and when he got out, well everybody shifted around, and the hind catcher got

to be the batter. It worked pretty good.

I remember the first school lunches that we had. They cost about six cents a meal, I believe.

MDF: Where was that?

JDI: I don't know. Well, I left there in '41 and it was before that. Maybe, I would say '38 somewheres along in there. I'm just a-guessing. And they give us this great ol' big apple. I mean, a big, looked like as big as Dallas. And I heard 'em talking about it. Said, We might ought to cut them half in two. I think they're too big for them kids. But I didn't want 'em to. And these old ladies would come and cook. It was on wood stoves, I'm sure. They fixed up a lunchroom in part of the schoolhouse, and they knowed how to cook, too.

MDF: What would they cook for y'all?

JDI: I don't remember. I can't remember what I had for breakfast this morning! But it was good.

MDF: And that was at Antelope?

JDI: Uh-huh.

MDF: Interesting.

JDI: It just went through the eighth grade then. I was in the sixth grade when it folded up about in March. We got a five-month summer and I flunked the next year. But I wasn't too smart anyway. My interest wasn't in the schoolhouse. There were two pupils in the sixth grade.

MRI: He said his mother was a good cook. That she could make any meal about of a little bit of nothing.

JDI: She could take a quart jar of home-canned tomatoes and make tomato soup and cook a pan of cornbread. Then we'd have meat later on if I'd killed a lot of squirrels or something.

MDF: What did you grow in your garden?

JDI: Everything. We grew cabbage, but we didn't grow cauliflower and broccoli. Didn't even know what it was.

MRI: He told me the one thing that he didn't like is cushaws.

JDI: Yes. Like a pumpkin, except it's light striped and got a neck on it sort of like a gourd. But they grow great big. We never did grow pumpkins. I don't know why. But we had cushaws. It's kind of like a summer squash. You know, the hard ones that you can keep until they freeze. Then they get mushy. But, anyway, we had a bunch of them big ol' cushaws, and we put them in the hay in the barn. My mother'd take one of them and cut it up in little squares and put some cinnamon on it. Don't like cinnamon, nutmeg, either one. She'd bake it, and you just ate it off the rind. I'll tell you, her pumpkin pie was about the next thing to nothing that you can get. Sweet potato pie is not bad. We always grew sweet potaters, and Dad would take cornstalks and stand 'em up like a tipi on this sandy land we had. He'd dig a little hole and put the sweet potaters in there and then cover the whole thing up with sand. Then, when you wanted to get some, you just dug in the side and pulled a few out.

Always had some kind of a storm cellar, but it wasn't very fancy and just a hole dug in the ground with cross ties on it and dirt. Put tin on top of that. And we never did worry about the weather. John Tomastik used to set up, watch them clouds all night 'cause he didn't have no weather forecast. We'd just sleep through it all. Figured we'd blowed away, well that was just tough.

MDF: What did you use the storm cellar for? Did you store anything in it?

JDI: We put a few canned things in it to keep 'em from freezing or gettin' too hot. But it didn't work too well. That's the reason when I built my basement, it stays about from fifty-five to seventy degrees in there year-round. You can keep canned goods in there, and we make beet pickles like Mama did. And when we can tomatoes, build a fire around a wash pot and get the water boiling, I put the tomatoes in a wire basket with a long stick on it, and I'll set 'em down in there for about thirty seconds and take it out and go over there and sit under a shade tree. And you can just slip them peelings off and cut the little deal out where they come off the vine. When I get a bucket full, I bring 'em in the house, and she puts 'em in a fruit jar, and we can a slew of 'em in a half a day. And the ol' cow comes by and eat the peelings, so you don't have to clean up. Same way with beet pickles.

MDF: Beet pickles?

JDI: Um-hm. Did you ever eat one?

MDF: Never have.

JDI: I'll give you a jar of 'em.

MRI: Tell her about your grandma asking you to kill a possum.

JDI: Oh, yeah. You know, them ol' pioneer farmers, they'd eat anything running loose, I guess. I had this little bitty trap that I could set. I wasn't very old. I don't know how old I was. I'd spend half a day trying to catch a mouse or something for bait, and I'd tie him on a string and hang him on a tree limb where he hung down. And I'd put this little trap under it and tie it to a tree or something with a piece of baling wire. Next morning, I couldn't wait until it got daylight and go check my trap, and I'd have a little ol' possum in it. Just thrilled me to death, 'cause that was about a dime, fifteen cents. I'm going to make a bunch of trips to Antelope Store. I'd get my dad to skin it for me, and I was always bragging about it. I'd go tell my grandma. She'd sit there, and she'd say, "Is he a fat one?" I'd say, "Yeah." "Is he a young, tender one?" I'd said, "Yeah." She say, "Well tell your mama to cook it for me." Then that's about like eating a buzzard, you know, 'cause they're scavengers. But them old-timers done it.

I've heard tell that they'd put 'em in a pen and feed 'em good groceries for a while so they wouldn't have all that ol' stuff in 'em. But you can find a dead cow and kick it, and there'll be a lot of possums run out of it. There's a lot of that stuff's not too good groceries. Like coons and what else, possums, armadillers. But I used to not kill armadillers unless they were bugging me pretty bad. I'd usually relocate 'em, 'cause times may get hard, and you can eat 'em. We did back in the '30s, but I haven't in later years. You let a wetback come by and give him four or five of 'em in a cage, and you've done made him one happy Mexican. 'Cause we done it, remember? When we first come here, I caught four and put 'em in this cage. I was going to relocate 'em. I come by there and seen 'em working, I said, "Y'all want some armadiller?" "Yeah, man," he said. I said, "Well, when you get through with 'em, just leave my cage here by side of the road, I'll get it."

MDF: Where did you take the fur?

JDI: Um?

MDF: Where'd you take the skins and sell them?

JDI: There was a fur-buying store at Copperas Cove. Or you could ship 'em to Sears. And, I remember one night, this boy was working CCC camp—it was getting close to last, the last year we was at Antelope—and he come up there to the house and had a little ol' scrawny dog with him, about, oh, I don't know how tall he was, eighteen inches tall, shorthaired dog, and he called him ol' Spark Plug. He said, "Ol' Spark Plug treed a coon down there, I think. I built a big fire but I still couldn't see

him." He said, "Do y'all have a flashlight?" We had one, about burned out, and we went back down to the tree and didn't find anything, so we just went a-possum hunting. And that little ol' dog would bark, and we'd go over there, and he had a possum up in a tree. I think he got four of 'em that night. He said, "Ol' Spark Plug was hittin' on all fours!"

Way they worked that, one of these boys joined the CCC. It's similar to the army 'cause they can just kick 'em out of there right in the army, but you couldn't get in the army. We didn't have no army when they bombed Pearl Harbor. They had to make an allotment out to somebody at home. You know, it was more or less to keep folks from starving to death. 'Cause it was hard times. And he had to make one out to his great-aunt and uncle that lived close by, the Sherwoods. And of course they saved the money and give it back to him, I guess. And I think he'd go visit them and get paid again, and he had to walk to get there.

MDF: Well, what kind of work did the CCC guys do?

JDI: You ever hear of Mother Neff Park? You ever been there? They built all those buildings. That's pretty rock work. And this park at Brownwood State Park. They built all those rock houses. We stayed in one on our honeymoon. Went out there and gathered up some wood and built a fire next morning in the fireplace. Got me some more on the porch. I wondered how come there was so much wood around there. And then when we went to town we saw a sign [that said] ain't supposed to gather wood.

MRI: Did you have that dog named Brownie when you lived out there? Tell her about your dog named Brownie.

JDI: Um-hm. He was the only squirrel-treeing dog we had. And I think one time he treed their pet squirrel, 'cause he was coming down the tree one day and they shot it. And we were always catching little squirrels and trying to raise them up. Ol' Brownie, he went with us to Copperas Cove when we moved from Fort Hood. He fell in love with an ol' hound and walked out in front of an army truck. Smashed him in the ground. I was about thirteen years old then. Good thing I wasn't home at that time.

MRI: We have a picture of you and Brownie somewhere.

JDI: Yeah. He got snake bit one time. I think close to his nose, and his head swelled up about two sizes too big. The only thing he'd do was lap a little bit of milk. We doctored him back. That was back in screwworm times.

MDF: Did you have to dip at all, or did you help with dipping?

JDI: No, but I've seen lots of dipping vats for ticks. Everybody had one, I think. Some of 'em pretty fancy, made out of concrete where they swim the cow through 'em. But I guess that was probably before my time, because I can't remember it. But I saw where they did it. And these syrup mills where you made syrup, this was after we left Fort Hood. But I think, me and my brother made the last batch of syrup that was made on that mill over there on Wheat Branch, runs into North Nolan, somewhere on Fort Hood now. Brother grew some cane, and we took it over there and made syrup. Had this deal where the horse or mule walks around and around. You stick it in there and squeeze the juice out of it.

MDF: Was there somebody who was there to make the syrup, to do the boiling?

JDI: Must have been, because we probably didn't know how. We made some and give the feller that owned the deal a little bit of the syrup.

After I got out of the paratroopers, I started working with my neighbor, Alton Heiner, doing carpentry. It got to where everybody done one thing and didn't build a whole house. You know, everybody's

specializing, roofing or flooring or framing or something. And he was nailing Sheetrock, so I had to join the union and get me a job with him. So we got through and we still traveled together, and we were both apprentice carpenters. When he died a couple of years ago, he was a millionaire. I was raised up so poor I figured if I had a house full of groceries and a roof over my head and the catfish were a-bitin', it didn't get any better than that. Just didn't ever dream about things like that.

MRI: Did you, were you out there at Antelope when you got that wagon, that little wagon?

JDI: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

MDF: What was that?

JDI: This ol' mail carrier, he had a Model A Ford, I think. His name was John DeWare. We used to have a little poem we always said: John DeWare lost his underwear. Back then, if an adult seen a kid messing up, it didn't matter who he was, he just got with it. Straightened him out. You had a lot of respect for your elders. But anyway, we ordered a little red wagon from Sears or Montgomery Ward. That's the only two ways we had of buying things. And we'd look at them catalogs. Otherwise, that's about all the literature we had. We kept waiting down there at the mailbox. It was pretty close to the house, and that old mailman would come by. One day one of us asked him, "When are you going to bring our little red wagon?" And he had been hauling with it for a long time, but the address had washed off of it. It got in the Cowhouse in high water. He didn't know where to take it.

MDF: What did you use it for?

JDI: Oh, we played with it, we'd haul things in it. I remember hauling a fifty-pound watermelon to the house in it one time. We didn't have any water supply, just a cistern where the water run off from the house. Daddy tried to dig a well or two, hand-dug, and somebody witched it, and he was pretty bent out of shape because they lied to him. No water. But I don't think it went over twenty foot deep.

Me and my mother would go down on Cottonwood Creek. There was a crossing there, and it was rock, and the water was shallow. We'd haul that wash pot on that little wagon, and a washtub, and a bunch of clothes, rubbing board and all that stuff. My job was to keep the fire going around the wash pot and punch the clothes, like the agitator on a washing machine. She had a hard time keeping me on the job, because I was usually chasing a red horse minner or a perch.

MRI: Joe's always stayed real clean when he was working. I asked him, "How come you always stayed so clean?" And he said, "Well, if you'd had as many whippings with a peach tree limb as I have for gettin' down and crawling on your knees, you'd keep 'em clean, too!"

JDI: It sort of hangs with you.

MDF: Now, would she do the washing down at the creek?

JDI: Yeah, and then rub 'em. If they were real dirty, you had to rub it on that rub board with that lye soap. She'd take that homemade soap and cut it up in little pieces so it'd dissolve in the wash pot. Didn't know what bleach was. We had chinches, bedbugs, and the only way she could get rid of them—and never did, I don't think—was to take kerosene on a rag and rub it where their eggs was on the bedsprings and around the mattress, and then put 'em out in the hot sun. She said, "The ants will eat 'em." And you had to stay on it, too. It was like cockroaches plague some people today.

MDF: What, was the cistern above ground or was it a dug cistern?

JDI: Um-hm. It set up above ground. Had a water hydrant on it. And had a rainwater barrel sitting there, too, and had gutters going to it. Daddy hauled water from Tomastik. He had a fifty-five-gallon wooden barrel, probably an old vinegar barrel. He built him a slide out of some logs with a platform

on it and set that barrel on it. He'd go fill it up, and it was mostly sandy land. He'd just drag it with some horses. And I remember he put a piece of wagon sheet—we called it back in them days—with a barrel hoop on top so it wouldn't slosh out or get anything in it. They had a big spring well. It was probably ten foot in diameter. It wasn't too far down to water, and they had a pump on it. We had a pump at the schoolhouse, too, and either the teacher or some of them boys would pump while the others drank.

MDF: Okay, let's see. Was your great-grandmother named—

JDI: Um-hm. Her maiden name was Henson. She married John I. Vann.

MRI: On his mother's side.

JDI: Yeah. And she outlived all my grandparents. My great-grandmother. And one of her nephews lived with her. 'Cause they didn't have rest homes. Just to be somebody there. And they had a whole bunch of milk cows, and milked a lot of milk. And they ate corn flakes. When me and my brother would go visit sometime, we'd eat a bunch of Post Toasties, which is pretty much of a treat. And then we'd roll us some cigarettes out on the porch, and smoke 'em. Sometimes he'd come visit us, and him and my dad was pretty good friends.

MDF: Now where did they live?

JDI: It was between us and Copperas Cove, but I don't really know for sure. There was some little creek run through there. That's where my grandmother on my dad's side fell out of the wagon. We were going over there. And I pretty much remember my great-grandfather's funeral on my mother's side. Isaac Vann. I think I do, or I might have just looked at the photographs a bunch and, you know, remembered that. But I'm not sure. Wore these little short knee britches, one of them silly lookin' caps.

MRI: Tell her about your mother making your underwear.

JDI: Oh, yeah. Feed sacks was the only way to go. They just had one big ol' button on the front, 'cause she didn't spend a whole lot of time on 'em. In the summertime when I'd get up, that's the first thing I pulled off, put on a pair of overalls and a shirt, and that was what I wore. Barefooted, and a big ol' cheap straw hat. Only thing I had to do back then was make sure I didn't leave my straw hat in the yard, and get in the wood and chips where Daddy'd chopped wood, and put 'em in the wood box by the cook stove. 'Cause he'd get up and pour them chips in that cook stove and put some kerosene oil on 'em. Had this little can that sat back there. Light a match to it, and then pile some wood on and you'd have a fire going. I guess he made the coffee. I don't remember. I remember I drank it for a long time. We had these snuff glasses. They had three rings on 'em. I'd put one ring of coffee and two rings of milk. Or visa versa. It was pretty much like hot chocolate.

MDF: Did you, tell me about your bothers and sisters.

JDI: Well, me and my sister didn't get along real well. Me and my brother got along good. He was a easy goin' kind of guy until you got him mad.

MDF: So there were three of you in the family?

JDI: Four. Two girls and two boys. My younger sister's still living. I talked to her two or three days ago.

MDF: In Crockett?

MRI: Henderson.

MDF: Henderson.

JDI: And my brother died, how many years ago was that?

MRI: I don't know.

JDI: He was sixty-five. I was—about eight years ago, I guess.

MRI: Been awhile.

JDI: Anyway, he smoked Kool cigarettes, and they killed him.

MRI: And his older sister's dead, too.

JDI: Yeah. She had a blood clot.

MRI: Her name was Norene. And his brother's name was Howard.

JDI: She married one of them GI soldiers. Lived down the road from us. I wanted to shoot him a whole bunch of times, and I would have if it hadn't been again' the law. And I'd have still felt good about it. I thought it would have been the right thing to do. I never did like him. But I guess she did. They had twins, and had about four or five kids, didn't they? Had twins. Both of my sisters had twins. Anyway, they lived up in Virginia right where Tennessee and Virginia comes to a point on the east end. Some of 'em live on one side in Tennessee and some in Virginia. And they got pretty much of a southern drawl, and they use words we don't know what is. When they say bear, you say, "What?" They say it real funny. You don't know what they're talkin' about. Kind of like these people in Colorado. We don't even talk the same language. I told somebody, one of them guys we know real well, I told him about a coyote. He said, "A what?" He said, "A cow elk?" I said, "No. Coyote." Myrna said, "C-o-y-o-t-e." "Oh," he said.

We went to a cattle auction sale. They have a little dinky one down there, and we wondered how it worked, and what the price of cows was, see if they were anything like here. And the head auctioneer got to rattlin', you know, nobody can understand him. "What's that guy saying?" "I don't know, you're the one talk the language." And their snakes don't get but about that big. I taken the skin off of one about as long as I am, with a whole slew of rattlers, and he saw a picture of it and he said, "Is that a rattlesnake?" I said, "Yeah." I didn't say no more because they don't like for you to out do 'em. He was a mail carrier, and he married a girl that worked in the motel. About twenty years difference in their age, I think. But he said her people was a bunch of hay seeds, and he ain't too far off.

MDF: What, how much older was your oldest sister, older sister?

JDI: About eighteen months older than my brother. And then my brother was about three a half years older than me.

MDF: And what, when you were growing up, what did the kids, what were they responsible for in the house, out in the fields?

JDI: Well, depends on who you was, mostly. But we hoed weeds in the garden and had four acres of corn, and Daddy didn't even plow it. We hoed it. And I knew I needed to be down on the creek a-fishin' real bad. We'd hoe, but our heart wasn't in it. Kept us pretty busy all the time. There was always somethin' to do. We played a lot. We didn't have nothin' to play with, but we'd make somethin'.

MDF: What would you do?

JDI: We'd make rubber guns and shoot these rubber bands off of inner tubes. And a bunch of us boys would get together, and we'd just run around and shoot at one another and chunk wet corncobs. Just a lot of stuff like that. I remember, we never did get much for Christmas. They didn't have plastic back

in them days, and I got a little rubber car. I wore the wheels off of it. And I just kept on playing with it. Build me a corral and catch bugs and put 'em in there for animals. Stayed pretty busy all the time. And my brother bought a little billy goat kid. I think it was a milk goat. About the best pet you can get a kid is a little goat. And it ain't good for nothing else. Me and the goat would butt heads, and I found out that ain't no way to play with a goat pretty quick! He knew how to do that!

MDF: No thanks.

MRI: Did you hear about Fort Hood when your aunt came by your house, or was that a later time?

JDI: Oh, yeah. We lived at Antelope. And I had an aunt that didn't have any children. Everybody else had a whole bunch of 'em. That's where I flushed the commode at. They were pretty well hooked up. And, anyway, they came by there one night. It was back in Prohibition. Plain speaking, they'd a-been honky-tonking I reckon. I was pretty little. Anyway, they stopped by the house down there in the road. We went down there talking to 'em, and Mama smelled whiskey on her sister's breath, and she just passed out!

MDF: She fainted?!

JDI: Fainted. Yeah. That was somethin' unheard of. Women didn't even wear slacks back in them days. Boy, they were real strict.

MRI: When he told you about the cow, what his uncle called the cow, well, he was not allowed to say words like that, you know.

JDI: You didn't even say bull. You had to say that old he-cow or something. That was an ugly word. They taught me that, to grow up, and I think I was twenty years old before I figured out that when you heard somebody cuss around a lady, or female, it wasn't a lady. Some of 'em wasn't, but I thought they all was. You were supposed to slap him, you know, or do something. I kind of raised my boys that way. [My son] said, "This old boy's talking ugly around them girls. And I told him to get out of the car. And," he said, "he didn't get out of the car." So he just hit him in the car, and said, "He crawled out and whupped up on me!" He come home all skinned up. And this black guy, he fought him all through school. He said, "I never did whip him, but we come to an understanding." Anyway, the times have changed a lot now.

MDF: Yeah. Tell me about the peddlers who came around.

JDI: Ol' Rawleigh peddler? He had this kind of squeaky voice. I met a guy at Fort Hood when I worked out there, sounded just like him. I went and asked him if it was his son. Can you believe that? I remember that voice. And my mother told me, "Don't be asking him for chewing gum." He'd always give us all a stick of chewing gum. My brother didn't ask him for any. And he said, "Man, I love that chewing gum." He'd bring a little basket full of stuff in the house and tell all about it. Mama would trade him a chicken for some of it.

About the only money we made was when we picked cotton for somebody in the fall. We'd do that until school started, and we'd buy our own school clothes and pencils and things. I'd need a work book cost fifteen cents or something. I'd tell Daddy about it. "What did you do with your cotton-pickin' money?" He'd let us manage it. We got to keep what we made, but we better do something good with it. A box of .22 shells cost fifteen or twenty cents. And you didn't just shoot 'em just for the fun of it. No, I never did learn how to shoot until I got in the army. My brother went, and when he came back, he never did teach me. I'd always jerk the trigger and miss the squirrel. Supposed to shoot him in the head. I'd shoot at him a couple of times, and he'd say, "Give me the gun," and he'd roll him out. But he never did teach me how. I aimed to eat him out about it, but I never did think about it while I was around him.

MDF: What kinds of things would the peddler bring into the house for your mother to look at?

JDI: Oh, different kinds of things like soap and maybe some kind of salve. Might have even had some toothpaste or something.

MDF: You mentioned, I think you mentioned [Cloverine] Salve?

JDI: Yeah.

MDF: What is that?

JDI: You could send off and they'll send you a roll of just salve. It was in a white can about this big around, and about that tall, and there'd be a whole roll of it, and they'd send it to you in the mail. There was about twelve of 'em, I think, maybe ten. And you went around and sold it to the neighbors for a quarter a can. And when you sold it and sent 'em the money, you got a prize.

MRI: Is that that kind of salve that we bought, that tin? Cloverine? Cloverine?

JDI: Is that what I said?

MDF: Cloverine.

MRI: Uh-huh. We have a tin.

JDI: This lady had one of these empty cans at a flea market for five bucks, and they had another one. It was a smaller can that was red, and they called it Rosebud. It was just about like what you get now to put on a little cut place or somethin'.

MDF: And what kind of prizes did you get?

JDI: Well, one time I got a telescope about that long, made out of cardboard. You could pull it out, and you could see way down yonder with it. And my brother got a .22, but he had to sell a bunch of that stuff. Then, they got a lot of stuff, shaving cream and different things that you could sell other than the salve. And then we'd sell garden seeds the same way. You get it in the mail, and you turn around and sell these seeds.

MDF: What kind of seeds did you get?

JDI: I don't know. Just little packages like you buy in the store now days. You know, buy 'em in these stands.

MDF: Just for garden vegetables?

JDI: Uh-huh.

MDF: And do you remember the name of the company?

JDI: No. All I remember, the name of the Cloverine and Rosebud Salves.

MDF: Now, how did you know about that?

JDI: I don't remember.

MRI: Did you have a newspaper?

JDI: No. Not back in them days.

MRI: You had a radio.

JDI: Could have been. We didn't have it all the time. But I remember one time the schoolteacher was going to Gatesville. Most of the time we didn't have a vehicle except mules, horse and wagon. He took our radio and got it repaired.

MRI: Tell her about the schoolteacher's staying at different people's houses.

JDI: Well, no, they had their own house.

MRI: Oh, they had their own house?

JDI: Yeah, on the school ground. See, the school kept a-gettin' smaller and smaller. I think at one time, like eleven grades. When my brother got in the ninth grade, he had to ride the bus to Gatesville. So, the schoolteachers, they had a house back there, and he had a little barn to keep the milk cow and whatever in. They just had two teachers, a principal and another teacher. At one time they had three. This teacher stayed in one room, I guess, and I don't know how they managed, but I guess they managed. Every year we'd have a picnic up there at the school grounds. People make this homemade ice cream. You could buy a cone for a nickel. And then they'd have a big barbecue, and they cooked that barbecue in a pan. Had juice in it. It wasn't just roasted over a fire. Somebody'd furnish a cow.

And I remember back, they had a kind of a beef thing. We didn't have refrigeration, and most people didn't have electricity. I'm sure some of 'em did, but there was a beef club, and they would kill this beef and everybody'd come over there and get 'em a chunk of meat, that belonged to it. Then the next week it would be somebody else's turn to kill one, and then just go on and on. I don't know if it went year-round, or just a certain time of the year. But we didn't belong to it 'cause we didn't ever have no beef.

MDF: So what did you do for, did you have, did you ever have hogs or anything like that?

JDI: Well, at one time we had some, but we couldn't raise enough corn to support 'em. Everybody else did, and I said, "Y'all are rich."

MDF: So did, I know some places they would just let the hogs run wild, just everywhere.

JDI: Not in our country. Some of 'em wanted to, but when they come over eating on your garden, well, get in a fuss about it.

MRI: Was that when you had that great big patch of okra that you told me about?

JDI: That was at Nolanville.

MRI: Oh, Nolanville.

JDI: They had this rock pile where they'd throw all the rocks out of the field, and all this topsoil washed up again' it. Must have been six or eight foot deep. And there was bloodweeds there when we moved there. Later on, well, okra seeds washed down there, and there was just a regular cane brake of okra stalks. Everybody come over there pickin' okra. Daddy got to where he couldn't farm it.

And when I was twenty-one, I left home. Daddy was sixty-five, and he started to get a pension, Social Security. And I figured that was the time for me to cut out. But I still looked after 'em.

MRI: Didn't you tell me one time your dad worked at the school, or helped build a school, or did something over by Pidcoke?

JDI: Oh, yeah. WPA built those gymnasiums.

MDF: Really! At Pidcoke.

JDI: I forgot about that. In Copperas Cove, too. 'Cause I've been by there when he was working on the Copperas Cove one. We used to go visit our grandpa and grandmother who lived in our rent house. When he was working over there, we'd go there where he was working sometimes. They laid rocks on the walls. They built one at Kempner, too. I think you can see it from the highway.

MRI: His mother was a real neat person. She was a little bitty short lady. But Joe said whenever they moved into town, she kind of got sickly. But when she lived out in the country, or even back then, she was real healthy and everything.

JDI: When they bought our land the second time, the government bought our land north of Nolanville. They went right down our fence line. Didn't get the feller south of us. And I used to go over there on his land and climb a tree and hunt deer over where we used to live at. Their house burnt.

MDF: Whose house?

JDI: My dad and mother's.

MDF: On the farm at Nolanville?

JDI: Had a shingle roof, and Daddy built a fire up in that ol' fireplace, and them sparks bouncing off those shingles. I was about fifteen. Back in them days, they ain't too much you can do about it. Most of the time, that's when kids think they're smarter than everybody else. I still don't think that away, but, anyhow, it caught one time from a stovepipe in the kitchen, and all we had was a well and a rope and a bucket, one of them skinny ones. Hold two gallons of water. That was the extent of our utilities. Mother had a refrigerator that run off of kerosene. I don't know how it works. She'd do her cooking early in the morning 'cause it's too hot later in the day. And, anyway, when their house burnt, we bought a big ol' chicken house down at Nolanville. It was pretty big, and we got the material out of it. Me and my brother built 'em a one-room house, sixteen by sixteen. I was an apprentice carpenter, and I bought me a square and went by and asked Chester Casey how to cut rafters. He told me, and I went and cut 'em. And they fit, too!

MRI: Didn't you tell me about your mother making your sister, Joyce, something for Christmas one time?

JDI: Oh, yeah. Apple boxes, back then, was real soft wood. And my mother made my little sister a little cabinet set to play with. Little bitty, for Christmas.

MDF: What, did neighbors get together and have parties and dances and things?

JDI: They'd have a dance sometimes.

MDF: Tell me about that.

JDI: The Tomastiks were pretty much musicians. Jerry had an accordion, and I think Johnny played the fiddle. He was the first one that went to World War II. He was about twenty-two years old. Jerry was cripple. One leg was shorter than the other one, but they were real ambitious. There would be somebody else join in, and I don't know if they played at them house dances or not, but we'd go down there and listen to the music if it was close by. I've seen 'em put cornmeal on these old wood floors to make it slick. I bet they've knocked all the splinters out of it. They'd start playing. They'd get to stomping the floor.

MDF: How many people would come to a dance like that?

JDI: Well, I'd have to guess, but I'd say twenty-five or thirty, maybe. Wouldn't be room for everybody. They called 'em house dances. Then, a lot of them religious people was way again' it, but there was some of 'em that would do it. We had some neighbors that would have one every once in a while. We

didn't go very far 'cause we had to walk. Daddy was about twenty years older than Mother, and he never did go, and she'd take us kids down there. But later years, you'd get to travel a little more. I remember going to one at Sparta, but I was so bashful I wouldn't go in. I'd just look in the winder.

MDF: And was that one in somebody's house?

JDI: Uh-huh. I used to work for my neighbor on Saturday for three dollars a day. He taught me how to cut a two-by-four with a handsaw, how to hold it and everything. It was dull as sin. You'd finally get it burned in two if you kept rubbing on it. He built one of them old-timey kind of houses, just had one-by-twelve walls, no framing. Kind of a deal. We tore one down and re-built in a different place.

MDF: Was that the kind of house that your parents had near Antelope?

JDI: Yeah. Pretty sure. And probably at Nolanville, too. I never thought much about it. I mean, a partition wall, was just, no two-by-fours in it at all. Just them boards stood up there. One-by-twelves.

MDF: Were they pretty cold in the wintertime?

JDI: Yeah, you got plenty of fresh air. Didn't have too many bad colds. Lived about like the Indians did. Of course, you had a roof over the head. Most of the time it didn't leak. We were playing dominoes up there in Colorado, and we had this big ol' long trailer house rented—two bedrooms—and it come a little shower or rain. I don't know what kind of dominoes we were playing. Had about a hundred dominoes and maybe ten or twelve people playing, I think. I didn't like the game too good. Nothin' else to do. It started raining and got to leaking right by this lady over there, and she said, "Give me a pan or bucket." And she just set it down there and kept a-playin'. I think it was on the table maybe.

MDF: Was there a gin any place around your house?

JDI: What?

MDF: Was there a gin any place nearby?

JDI: No. It was at Copperas Cove. My dad told me back in the old days, they didn't keep cottonseed. They just piled 'em out there. In the old days, everybody had a milk cow, 'cause that was the only way you could get milk, was milk your own cow. They'd chain 'em out, and if they lived in town, you'd have to go get it and give 'em a drink of water and go put 'em on another place where they could get more grass. Dad said them old cows got to eating that cottonseed and they give a lot more milk. So everybody started keeping their cottonseed to feed to their cows. And that's how it got started.

I remember when Killeen was a little bitty town, too.

MDF: How often did you get into town? Did you usually go to Copperas Cove, or did you go to Killeen, too?

JDI: Copperas Cove. It was seven miles. No, I never did go to Killeen. My brother went over there to the hospital one time. That's when he put that Model T together. The doctor told 'em, "Don't send him to school next year." I think he had a nervous breakdown or something. I really don't know what was wrong with him. But he got to stay out of school for a year, and that's when he built that Model T. But, no, we hardly ever went to town. Maybe Christmastime. If you didn't have a vehicle, you went in a horse and wagon. It took two or three hours. My dad'd be going to get groceries or something, and me and my brother dig us some worms, and he'd let us off over at House Creek or Clear Creek, and we'd fish until he come back by. We'd rather do that than went to town.

MDF: Now what did you put the fish on once you caught 'em?

JDI: Usually a piece of baling wire. They'd be so dry they'd rattle time you got home! We'd scrap 'em if they wasn't three inches long.

MDF: What kind of fish did you catch?

JDI: Perch, mostly. I remember my brother caught a catfish one time about a foot long. I thought that was the biggest thing I'd ever seen. I caught 'em—forty-seven-pound one was the biggest one I ever caught. I caught him last spring. I trotline fish a lot.

MDF: Are there any stories particularly that occur to you about living out there, or—anything funny that happened, or—

JDI: They had a killin' up there by Antelope Store. I talked to an old lady later on. I remembered the names and asked her if she knew anything about it. She said it really happened. It was back in the Bonnie and Clyde days. Had a machine gun or something. These people got shot, and they throwed 'em in the well, they said. Or something. I really don't know how it happened, but I heard about it.

Then they had a scandal in church one day. I missed that. Things that happened that wasn't supposed to, and this lady got up in front of the church house and told about it. A pretty respected citizen was involved. And she was a single lady with a couple of daughters. It wasn't too long after that one of the preachers was preaching. Had all the winders and doors open, 'cause they didn't know what air conditioning was. They had these little fans you fanned with. And you could see this guy's house. It was about a mile down the road just past Antelope Store. It was burning down. So I think they all went down there. They had two or three exciting Sundays there. And I bet it was all connected. I don't know.

MDF: Was, now what would, what would make you decide if you were going to go to the Antelope Store or if you were going to go into Copperas Cove?

JDI: Distance. Kind of like—

MDF: That's the first black person I've heard of out there.

JDI: Well, the first one I ever saw was at the jail house in Coryell County. My mother was friends with Annie White. Joe White was the sheriff. So we went and visited them. I think Daddy was working over there somewheres. We were going to spend the day. I was a little bitty kid. She cooked for the prisoners, I guess. I suppose they all lived right there close together someway. Of course, I was real small. And the first one I ever seen, she looked like Aunt Jemima. She was a really jolly lady. But, you know, the first time you ever see something like that, and you're little, you stare a lot.

I've seen people moving sheep. They would come down the road, just be full of sheep from fence to fence, and there'd be a driver between so many sheep. And if we heard that they lost one, and you found it, they'd give you some money for it. We was hoping one would get loose. And another way we made money, when a sheep would die, you could go pick up the wool and sell it. They call it dead wool. And then the Japs was buying all our scrap iron, and trucks would come around. You could sell all the iron you could find, been laying there for years. And they shot it back at us. We're a pretty stupid bunch of people, you know it? My son's a merchant seaman. He said, "We're the laughing stock of the world. We'll give one of the countries a shipload of grain, they unload it and go and put it on a another ship and sell it to the Russians, and one guy gets paid for the whole thing." He said, "I don't remember how many tons of wheat." Said, "They even had to furnish sacks to put it in. Took them two or three weeks to unload."

MDF: Now, somebody said there was a little railroad line that went through there somewhere.

JDI: No. It run to Copperas Cove from east to west. It come to Killeen, Copperas Cove, Kempner, Lampasas. But there wasn't none north and south.

MDF: Did you ever have any big storms or weather events out there that you remember?

JDI: Yeah. Pretty cold a time or two. Creek froze over, and I had a new pair of shoes, and I was skating on that ice. Didn't have but one pair. I was warming my feet and burned the soles off of them. That didn't go over real good.

We didn't have a whole lot of social life. Sometimes they'd have some holiday deal at school. Be like a play or something. And I always got to be the colored person. They'd paint me up to become black.

MDF: Now, why were you picked for that?

JDI: I don't know. Little ol' Sambo, or something.

MDF: So you put on plays at school?

JDI: They had one one time, PTA, and my youngest boy, he was probably six years old, and he played "Sing Joy to the World." And he was up there, acting like Elvis Presley. Had two little girls older than he was backing him up, in case he messed up. But he liked to show off. Then when he got older he got bashful.

MRI: Was that when you lived out there that you were watching down at your aunts and your mother wrapping Christmas presents?

JDI: Oh, yeah. And they came over for Christmas. We always hung our stockings up. Didn't have no fireplace. But we hung 'em up somewheres. And we'd get 'em full of pecans and a apple. Maybe one of them little red and white sticks of candy. And we were upstairs, and they had it floored, and had a couple of beds up there. We were lookin' through them cracks, and they were down there by that kerosene lamp a-putting them presents out. And they had this little nigger black girl, a baby. When you wind it up it'll crawl on the floor. We was watching that. And we thought that was kind of funny. One of them twins was going to get it. My mother's youngest sister.

MDF: Did you have family come visit often?

JDI: Yeah. All my mother's people, we visited a whole lot. But my dad's people, I didn't know but one aunt and two uncles. But there was another aunt that I never did meet. Uncle Charlie had two schoolteacher daughters, about the only ones that made it pretty good. When they came to visit they always wanted to give me a kiss, and I'd climb a tree and I wouldn't come down until they settled down a little bit.

Remember one time my brother had a pet squirrel, and I wanted one real bad. We were up at school. Had a Easter egg hunt. I found me a whole bunch of eggs, and the little jackrabbit jumped up and everybody took after him. One of them long-legged boys caught him. I traded him some Easter eggs for him, and I took him home, took him up in a tree and put him in a box. I was feeding him some grass, and directly he decided he wanted to hop, and he jumped up, and he missed the box and splattered all over the ground and killed him. He just wasn't meant to climb trees, I guess. But we always had some kind of a pet, if we could catch it.

MDF: Did you keep chickens?

JDI: Um-hm. They run loose. Hoot owls would eat them. Dad would trap the owls and kill them. We had pigeons, too.

MDF: Where did you keep them?

JDI: Anywhere they wanted to be. They stayed on the barn most of the time and in it. We had boxes for them. About once a week in the summertime, we'd go out there and catch enough squabs for a mess. Were eating gourmet groceries and didn't even know it. For Sunday dinner, Mother's bother or sister or somebody come over, you know, and there'd be a bunch of kids to play with.

MDF: Now, what kept the pigeons there?

JDI: It was their home. I've got some down here in the old deer stand. The hoot owl get in there and pull their head off and eat it and just leave the rest. They swaller chunks whole. So I made me a little hole where a hoot owl couldn't go through it. Pigeons go in, but the hoot owl can't. But this little ol' bitty green hawk can, and when it gets real cold winter, well he eats all the pigeons but about seven or eight, and he leaves them so they can raise about thirty or forty more next summer. Then he's got something to eat all next winter. Probably ought to kill him, but only reason he ain't dead's 'cause I ain't smart enough to do it. I've been workin' on it, but that hawk's pretty smart. [Weeks later, the hawk quit eating the pigeons.]

MRI: He told me about something that I thought was real unusual, that they ate whenever they were little. I think they called it chocolate gravy.

JDI: Yeah. It was hot chocolate, we called it. Mama would make it. It was kind of like a puddin' or something, but it was a whole lot like gravy. I assume it was cocoa and flour with sugar, and you put it on a biscuit just like you would gravy. It was pretty good, too. Mama was good at that.

MRI: Did you cut your foot real bad when you lived out there at Antelope, or was that—

JDI: No, at Nolanville.

MDF: What happened?

JDI: I was cuttin' posts. And I was on a hillside. Usually I'm pretty careful, but my foot was where it shouldn't have been. I cut this little limb off, and I had on some old brogan shoes, and it went right down the side of 'em. Didn't hit a bone, but it cut a big blood vein. And I walked to the house, bleeding, and it was raining, and you couldn't travel the road to town 'cause it was too muddy. We had a bed on the front porch, and I laid on the bed and propped my foot up and got it to quit bleeding. It started raining again, and I got up and walked on it again to go in the house, and it got to bleeding again, and when it—I done lost a bunch of blood—and when it stopped, I done lost a bunch of blood. I knew better than to put it on the ground again 'cause never did get it sewed up. Ol' Jake Heiner said, "You ought to a-hollered. I'd come and sewed it up." And he would have, like he does a hound dog. I run around there on one foot for about a week. I could ride a horse, or use a walking stick, you know, and hop.

MRI: He still has a real bad scar from it.

JDI: I missed the bone, though. I went down the side of my foot.

MDF: Who were your neighbors over there at Antelope?

JDI: The permanent ones were Ben Thompson—that's Murrel Lee Thompson's dad—and there were a lot of Thompsons close to us. Leslie Thompson, and there were some Coxes, but they moved around a bunch. I think they were sharecroppers. Close neighbors were Tomastiks, and Uncle Charlie Fry. Aunt Pauline, that's my great-uncle, my grandmother's brother. And then there was some Wrights. I met a bunch of them boys. There was a whole slew of 'em. They come by our house, about five of 'em. Stop and get a drink of water and keep on truckin'. They was going to go visit their grandpa. I don't

know where they come, but I met one of them later on. He worked at Fort Hood. Another one was his uncle, I think. He was about twenty-five years old when we left there, and he had this real fancy little ol' Model A car with a mother-in-law seat in the back. I was up there at North Fort Hood when he was, and I went in this, it was like a beer joint. I don't know what they called it, NCO club, or something. But he was working in there. And I heard him talking, and I recognized his voice, but I didn't have a clue what he was supposed to look like. I can remember names, but I don't know what they look like. And I asked him, and he said, Yeah, he was C. B. Wright.

MDF: So how did you all, well, you had the idea that you were from Antelope. Why were you from there and not from Clear Creek or some other community?

JDI: Well, I imagine Daddy bought this land, the eight acres, and he was going to live on his own land. So he had to build that house and barn and move on.

MDF: Did you have an idea of other communities?

JDI: Unh-uh. Back then, there was no TV or nothing. We got a grandkid that's smarter than I was when I was about fifteen years old. He's six years old, playing Monopoly. Had all them folks' money. He looked at me and said, "Ain't I good?"

MRI: Tell her how you felt when you had to move from there.

JDI: Oh, man, when we moved from Antelope to Copperas Cove, I figured it was the end of the world. I looked like Pa'd given my dog away. I was lookin' sad all the time. They had a tent show came to town, cost a dime to go to it, and I started worrying about it about sundown. Where am I going to get a dime? Well I'd go to the show. It wasn't too much to show, like, old-timey cowboy show. I'd mow grass. Didn't have a lawn mower. I'd go borrow my cousin's lawn mower. One of them pushing kinds without no motor on it. This old lady had some tough Bermuda grass. She'd pay thirty-five cents to mow that stuff.

MDF: How did you parents cope with moving, with having to move?

JDI: Oh, they didn't take it too bad, I don't guess. I didn't like it. I didn't like all them people close to me. I still don't. If I can win the lottery, I'd buy my neighbors out if I could and hire me some. Some of them folks killed theirselves, when they had to give up their home place that had been in the family for generations.

Cecil L. Newton
Estelle L. Newton

Cecil L. Newton
Date of birth: 19 January 1919
Community affiliated with: Pidcoke

Estelle L. Newton
Date of birth: 15 November 1920
Community affiliated with: Pidcoke

Interviewed by William S. Pugsley III

WSP: This is Bill Pugsley. I am recording an interview [via telephone] with Cecil Newton and his wife, Estelle Newton, who are in Pidcoke. This is October 25, 2001. It's about nine o'clock in the morning. [This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.]

We are interviewing people who were formally on the Fort Hood lands. This morning we are talking to Cecil and his wife because they were the last owners of a cotton gin in Pidcoke. Am I correct in that?

CLN: Yes.

WSP: If you would, please, give me your parents' names and your siblings' names.

CLN: Okay, my parents' name was W. I. Newton, and my siblings, there's several of them. The older one would be Eddie Newton.

WSP: I'm sorry. What was your mother's name?

CLN: I beg your pardon?

WSP: Your mother's name?

CLN: My father's name was W. I. Newton—and my older siblings' name were, to begin with, was, uh—Eddie Newton—uh, Guy S. Newton, and, uh, Nancy Newton, Akard Newton—

WSP: How do you spell that?

CLN: Paul Newton—

ELN: He asked you how to spell that. Akard.

WSP: Thank you. Did you say Paul Newton?

CLN: Paul Newton. There was Ella Newton, there was Ves Newton—

WSP: Spell that, please.

CLN: V-e-s.

WSP: Okay, thank you.

CLN: And there was a Betha Newton.

WSP: Spell that, please?

CLN: B-e-t-h-a. And then myself, Cecil Newton. I was the youngest.

WSP: I'm sorry, I think I missed your mother's name?

CLN: My mother's name was, uh, Ella Swindall Newton—

WSP: Can you spell her middle name, please?

CLN: Ella.

ELN: Middle.

CLN: Oh, middle?

WSP: Yes sir.

CLN: Her middle name was Swindall—

WSP: Can you spell if for me?

CLN: No, wait just a minute, I'm wrong that. Her middle name—

ELN: (unintelligible) It's her maiden name.

CLN: Oh, Swindall.

WSP: Okay. Tell me about the gin, please, if you would?

CLN: Well, I believe the gin—the gin was built in 1910.

WSP: By whom?

CLN: I believe, uh, Homer Perryman. (pause)

WSP: Can you tell me how your father came to own the gin?

CLN: I believe in 1919 my daddy bought half-interest in the gin from Homer Perryman, and at that time it became Perryman and Newton Gin. And it was Perryman and Newton Gin up until—I'm not sure what year, but, uh, during that particular time, the gin operated each fall just to gin cotton. And in about 1933 or 1934, I started working at the gin. But my father passed away in 1930, and one of my older brothers, which would be Akard, kind of took over the operation of the gin. And he and—somehow or other I worked for him, then, for several years, from about 1933 to 1938—that was when the gin ginned it's last bale of cotton was in 1938.

And, uh, then, in about 1962 all my brothers and sisters deeded their half-portion of the gin to my wife and myself. And then, later, I'm not sure what year this would be—probably in the '90s sometime—my wife and I purchased the other half-interest of Perryman heirs, and then we owned it

again up until it was sold. Then we sold it to the person that is rebuilding, redoing the gin.

WSP: That would be David Harman.

CLN: That's David Harman.

WSP: After the last bale that was ginned in 1938, what was the gin doing from that point on?

CLN: It was—it was nothing, it was just a idle piece of property. I had used part of the storage part for store hay. And it had sat idle all those years—there was nothing—no need for it. It deteriorated during that time. All the machinery and stuff that was in it was taken out, and, uh, it was just—it was just an empty buildings there.

WSP: What happened to the machinery?

CLN: Ah, I believe it was sold for junk iron. I'm not sure on that.

WSP: Estelle, you wanted to say something?

CLN: Beg your pardon?

WSP: Estelle?

ELN: They didn't do it. It just disappeared.

CLN: Yes, it just disappeared, I think. We moved away from Pidcoke. My wife and I moved away in 1956. We moved to Copperas Cove.

WSP: No one was actually watching the facility after you moved.

CLN: No, there was no one watching it.

WSP: So pieces of the machinery and stuff just walked off the property?

CLN: That's right.

WSP: During it's heyday in the '30s, how much cotton was ginned and what was the ginning season like?

CLN: Oh, that's been so long ago, I don't remember all of that. It'd been a regular ginning season that—of course it was slower then, the cotton was brought in by wagons, wagon and teams, and, uh, I guess it'd be a longer season than it is now. It took longer to get cotton out of the fields. I don't remember exactly how long it would last during those years.

WSP: Was it only in operation as a gin during the cotton season, or was there other activities for the gin, say, in the winter and spring?

CLN: I didn't understand you this time.

WSP: Did the gin lay idle during the winter and spring months when there was no cotton?

CLN: During the winter and spring months it would be—there'd be someone there working on it, and they'd get it ready for the next season.

WSP: The repairs took place during the off season.

CLN: Yes.

WSP: How long was the ginning season, usually?

CLN: Now, I can't remember that for sure. It would be longer than the ginning season is now. It'd take people longer then to get the cotton out of the fields. They had to pick it by hand, and the ginning season would be longer then, but I can't tell you exactly how many months.

WSP: Can you estimate?

CLN: I beg your pardon?

WSP: Can you estimate it?

CLN: Well, I'd estimate about three months.

WSP: Which months?

CLN: Well, it'd be—it'd be the months of cotton season, when cotton was ready to pick, which would be probably about the beginning of the school years. Back then the school years didn't start as early as they do now. It'd be—oh, I'm not sure—I can remember I used to help get cordwood for the thing back in the summer months. It'd be hot and—we'd be getting the wood that would furnish the heat, the steam, and that would start early in the hot months. I just don't remember all of those little items.

WSP: I visited the gin along with other members of Prewitt and Associates research team. David Harman gave us a tour of the building. Can you give me your recollections of the physical description of the gin?

CLN: Oh, well, we have pictures of it. The general part of it looks the same now. He kept the same roof. And—

WSP: But for those who will not be able to visit Pidcoke and won't have a chance to see the gin for themselves, can you describe in words what it looked like and how it was constructed?

CLN: Well, I don't know that I can really describe that very well. You'd need a picture of the gin, and the way it looked back at that time. It doesn't look the same now. Nothing looks the same there now, everything has changed. Even the landscape has changed. Back at one time there wasn't a tree one out there. It was just a bare lot for where the wagons parked and all. So it's—I can't describe exactly how it looked then.

WSP: Well, I recall that from the tour that it was two separate buildings made out of stone.

CLN: It was made with stone. It was a stone building.

WSP: But I recall two separate units. One of them was for ginning and one was the storage unit? Am I correct in that?

CLN: Well—a gin has different things. It'd be hard for me to explain everything about a gin. The extra building you're seeing there now was called the seed house then, that would be the cottonseed itself would be separated and put in that building.

WSP: Can you explain then, how cotton was unloaded from the wagons?

CLN: Okay. There'd be a strong suction line from a big fan—it'd be—it would suck the cotton off that wagon. A hand would have to operate the suction pipe that would suck up cotton off the wagons.

WSP: Where would the cotton then go inside the gin?

CLN: Okay, it'd go into the gin itself, and it'd be hard—it would take me a long time to explain all the workings of a gin. I was around it all the time, and I kind of understood them. It was a steam-operated deal, and the cotton would go through the gins and be separated from the seed. The seeds would go

into this one building we were talking about, and the cotton would be, go into what they called a bale of cotton. It'd be a five-hundred-pound bale. It would be compressed and weighed, and that would be what you called ginning.

WSP: Are you saying that the ginning process was basically a separation process?

CLN: Yes, that's right, that's what, that's why they called it a gin, I guess.

WSP: Was the machinery that did this separation steam operated?

CLN: Yes.

WSP: What was the most common repair on this machinery?

CLN: Oh, well—(laughs) I don't remember all of this, but there was a lot of machinery to it. It would be a pretty big operation on a cotton gin.

WSP: Can you give me some idea? Most people don't have any concept of how a gin operates. We were hoping you could provide some insight.

CLN: Well, I guess—I guess you'd just have to see it operating to exactly understand it.

WSP: How many people would it take to operate the gin during peak season?

CLN: They had what they'd call a fireman. They'd have what they called a ginner. And they'd have what they'd called two press operators. And they'd have a hand that would take the cotton off the wagon—so that would be—and of course, then they'd have extra hands around, maybe to bring in cotton from a farmer's fields, something like that.

WSP: A five- or a six-man crew most times?

CLN: Yes. And that's plus some of the others that managed this deal.

WSP: The business aspect?

CLN: I beg your pardon?

WSP: You mean managing the business side of the gin?

CLN: Yes.

WSP: I understand because you're operating a ginning machine, you also needed a good source of water—

CLN: I can't hear you very well. You're sounding kind of dim now. Can you repeat that sentence?

WSP: Should I call back and try to get a better line?

CLN: No. No, you just got kind of dim. Can you repeat that question you asked me?

WSP: Because there was a steam machine, it required some water. I understand you had a special way of getting water.

CLN: The water came from the Bee House Creek. There was a steam line that would run to the creek with a pump, a steam pump down there, that could pump water from the Bee House Creek to the gin.

WSP: I understand that part of the creek was quite popular as a local swimming hole.

CLN: Yes.

WSP: Did you swim there when you were a kid?

CLN: All my life. Yes, I swam there all my life up until about 1956, I guess.

WSP: There's a rock ledge that continues along the side of the creek bed. We walked along that ledge and saw where people had marked their names in the rocks.

CLN: Yes.

WSP: Can you elaborate on your experiences of swimming? Any stories?

CLN: Yes, one story I have that's a true story. There's one man—after we'd all—it would be when I would be a kid, and we'd be all down there swimming. And this, about the time everyone would get out to put their clothes on, of course, we didn't have bathing suits then, that was before the time of bathing suits—the one man that got out and, and he told us how he used to dive when he was a kid.

So he walked up to the edge of that rock ledge and jumped as high as he could and was going to intend to turn a flip. But somehow or another he didn't get the flip turned, and he went straight down—and the water was only about four foot deep. So he came down. He hit his head on the bottom, had a pretty good gash in his head, and it also broke his neck. They had to get him out, and he didn't die. But he went around for about six months with, uh, with something on his neck that the doctor put on there—I can remember that.

WSP: Do you remember what year that was?

CLN: Oh, I'm guessing it would be about—I'm not sure, I guessing about 1929 or 1930—somewhere along in there.

WSP: Lucky he didn't die.

CLN: No, he lived.

WSP: Do you remember your dad talking about the fluctuations in the crop level, or problems growing the crops that might change the quality of the cotton?

CLN: No. No, I don't remember that. I can remember him talking about the stock market plunging and when they all lost so much money there one year.

WSP: What did he say about that?

CLN: Well, it was just during the Depression. I can just remember him talking about it, I can't remember exactly what was said. But it was pretty rough years then.

WSP: He bought the gin in 1919, didn't he?

CLN: Yes.

WSP: The next year there was a tremendous crash in the cotton market. Do you recall that?

CLN: Now, I'm not sure on those years. But the one I remember him talking about was 1929, I believe.

WSP: I see. Besides Akard, did any of your other brothers help with the gin operation?

CLN: I believe, the way I remember it after my father passed away, then one of my older brothers, Akard, was the one that kind of took over the operation of the gin, and also the store. They also had a grocery store and a post office there in Pidcoke, and I believe he took that over and kept that for a while.

WSP: Did Guy or Paul help with the gin?

CLN: No, I believe Guy was already gone. Paul helped out some, I believe. But I believe Akard was the one that took care of the business end. Mr. Perryman didn't come around much. He was just—he was a silent partner. He was well respected, and everyone liked him, but he just—he didn't come around much.

WSP: Was your father born in Pidcoke?

CLN: I'm not sure exactly where he was born—my wife may know, but I'm not sure where he was born—but he came to Pidcoke in 1917.

WSP: It sounds like he was a pretty good businessman, starting a grocery store and a post office. Do you remember the sequence of that?

CLN: Ah, he had—I don't think he started it, I think he bought all of that.

WSP: Do you know how he came by his money?

CLN: No. No, I really don't. I sure don't. I believe he was—I think he was a schoolteacher on the side. I believe he did—I can remember my parents talking about him teaching school, and I guess that was maybe the way he made the extra money.

WSP: Did anybody make any changes to the building over the period that you recall?

CLN: Did anyone do what?

WSP: Make any changes to the building?

CLN: No. No, the building stayed the same all the years after—that I remember. The only changes in the building that was made during the times that I—this was before I—this was made earlier. They did add a, the seed house that you were talking about—that other building there that was added later on after the gin was built. That was after people started keeping cottonseed, or some how or other, or maybe that's when people started selling cottonseed and didn't keep all of it. Then they added the storage building for cottonseed.

WSP: I see. Do you remember what year that storage building was constructed?

CLN: No. At one time I knew, but I can't remember off hand now. It wasn't there in that picture, was it Mother [Estelle] was it? My wife has a picture here that her mother drew of that deal, somehow or other. I'm not sure what year the seed house was added.

WSP: Was it early?

CLN: Yes, it would be early.

WSP: How many wagons would be at the gin at any one time?

CLN: Oh, maybe twenty, twenty or thirty wagons at one time.

WSP: During the busiest part of the season, what would a typical day in the life of the gin operator be like, starting from the time they woke up and went back to bed. What was the daily routine?

CLN: Okay, the busy part—sometimes it would, it would last up until maybe ten o'clock at night.

WSP: What would a gin operator's day be like? I mean, what activities would they do, from the minute they got up?

CLN: Well, it just took those hands—sometimes—those, the gin would be running constantly, it didn't shut

down except in breakdowns or something like that. It would run constantly from the time it started in the morning until it ended, until they cut it down at night.

WSP: How long would it take to start up the gin in the morning?

CLN: Well, it would take awhile to do that. They'd have to, have to get the fires going to build the, get the steam, get the steam going. I don't remember exactly how long that would be.

WSP: And shutting down the gin, what was that process like?

CLN: No. No, they'd just discontinue the firewood. Sometimes they'd use coal. Most of the time they used wood, though.

WSP: Several of the people with whom we've spoken recall their parents concerns about accidents occurring around a gin. Was there ever any accidents that you recall?

CLN: Not any accidents that I remember. The fire was the main thing, the fire could get in the gins and—uh, that was the main thing they had to be careful with. And, oh, I can remember a time or two there would be a fire. And occasionally bearings would go out in the gins.

WSP: You said a time or two there was a fire, can you recall a story about one of those fires?

CLN: The fire would be when—I guess a spark or something would light that cotton. Cotton would be easily ignited, and if they got any fire in there, it was hard to put out.

WSP: How did you put out the fires that you recall?

CLN: Ah, I believe they had power—they had a power pump there that would—there would be a pressure, they could really get a lot of pressure, and that, they'd use that water pressure. They had a lot of water hoses and, you know, fire hoses around there at that time. That's they way they'd put it out.

WSP: Where did these fires usually start?

CLN: It would start in the gin itself, where the—where it'd be separating the cotton from the seed. That was usually where the fire would start.

WSP: Not near the engine itself?

CLN: No. No, the engine itself would be off in—the boiler room would be in another part of, part of the gin. It would be another—it'd be separate—it wouldn't be a separate building, it would be a partition there between the two, so it would start from that, from that at all. It would start within the—somehow or other it would be—I guess friction somewhere in that, those gins, like gravel or something to start a spark and light the cotton. It wasn't that many fires. I don't remember that many, but that's what they had to be careful for.

WSP: Did you ever hear about incidents, or fires at somebody else's gin that you can recall?

CLN: No, I don't remember many of those.

WSP: What did the people do that brought their wagons to the gin and there were other people there? What did the farmers do with their time while they waited for their cotton to be ginned?

CLN: Most of the time they'd sit and wait. And then if they brought their children with them to the gin, they'd all go to that swimming hole. The kids would all go to the swimming hole.

WSP: In your busy season, how long would it take to gin a wagonload of cotton?

CLN: Oh, I'm guessing it'd take at least at least an hour, at least an hour to put it on the scales and be weighed, and take the cotton from the wagons and run through the gin. I'm not sure on that. I don't remember, I don't remember checking the timing back then. But I'm sure it would take at least about an hour.

WSP: Was it on a first-come, first-served basis?

CLN: Beg your pardon?

WSP: Was your gin on a first-come, first-served basis?

CLN: Yes, yes.

WSP: Did you make a waiting list or pass out numbers? How did you know who was next in line?

CLN: Oh, ah—I don't remember exactly how they did that. I believe each one just lined up and kind of knew where they were in line. I believe it would be kind of like now if you'd go into a barber shop, you'd kind of know where you were in line.

WSP: Was there any problem with rain? For example, standing in line and suddenly rain starts falling. Or cotton delivered the previous week getting wet from a sudden downpour?

CLN: I think back then they might have had a tarp to put over that wagon. But I don't remember. I believe most of the time then it'd be dry. I don't remember. I don't remember—the only time rain would affect anything was they couldn't pick the cotton until it dried.

WSP: I see, but was there any concern about cotton being too wet—in terms of weighing the wagon or weighing the cotton?

CLN: Well, now I don't think they worried much about that. I think they just did the best they could with that. If some of it was wet, it'd be packed pretty hard and be hard to take from the wagon—I can remember that—

WSP: The last question was about water. And you said there was some problems when the load came in a little too wet?

CLN: It was not so much a problem there. You didn't see much of that.

WSP: But was wet cotton a problem to suck up into the gin?

CLN: That would be the—there wouldn't be much problem, it'd just be harder to do.

WSP: Did any of the farmers get into a dispute with your brother, or your dad regarding the value of the cotton they delivered?

CLN: No, nothing, not—not at any time that I ever remember.

WSP: Was there any grading at the gin to determine the quality of cotton?

CLN: Uh, the cotton was graded. After it was baled, well, the cotton was graded then. The buyers graded the cotton.

WSP: Did buyers hang around the gin at the same time as the farmers?

CLN: Yes, I think at that time, like it was the people that was managing the gin would buy the cotton, if they wanted to sell it, if they didn't want to take it home. The manager of the gin usually was the buyer. I believe then they was the buyers, and they'd buy the cotton from them. Or else they would—

the people would leave their cotton there and then, then you'd, we'd ship it on to, to buyers. We sold the cotton right there.

WSP: Either your brother bought the cotton, as an intermediary with the broker—

CLN: Yes.

WSP: Or else they put a flag on the bale after it came out and said, Ship it to this particular broker.

CLN: I believe that he'd—I believe he'd buy that cotton that was left there. Otherwise the other man might take the cotton home with him. Some people would take their cotton home with them. I don't know how they'd ever get it sold then. But most of the time I believe they'd sell it right there at the gin.

WSP: Now what was—after it was processed into a bale, what happened to the cotton after that?

CLN: Okay. We'd haul it from the gin to a wharf. A lot of times either in Copperas Cove to a wharf there to be shipped somewhere, or you'd haul it to Gatesville to what they called a compress.

WSP: What would a compress do?

CLN: That would compress that bale from a five-hundred-pound bale, the size of a five-hundred-pound bale, it compressed it down to just about a, maybe half-size.

WSP: What was the purpose of doing that?

CLN: The purpose would be for easier shipment, I'm sure, so you could get more bales on a boxcar.

WSP: I see. Was there a special machine at your gin for putting it into a bale?

CLN: Oh, yes. That's what they called a press.

WSP: You had your own press on site, just not a compressor? Two different machines.

CLN: Yes. Yes, that press would press it into an average five-hundred-pound bale. And then, then when—like if you hauled it to a wharf in Copperas Cove to be, go on the railroad. I don't know where it'd go from there. But sometimes they didn't haul it to there, they'd take it to what they called the compress in Gatesville. And I guess there were different buyers, probably different places were the ones that would, would have that done, go into different places.

WSP: Now how did you or your brother establish the price of the cotton? I mean, it's an international and national pricing mechanism. How was that—

CLN: They had—that some kind of—they had a radio, and they'd talk each day and get the market, each day.

WSP: They listen to the radio, or talk into the radio?

CLN: They'd listen to the radio, somehow or another, and get that market for that day.

WSP: I see. What radio station would be reporting cotton prices? Where was, or what town was this radio station in?

CLN: Oh, I don't remember that. I don't remember—the part that I—I just don't remember that. I didn't have anything to do with that. My older brother always did that, and my daddy when—of course I was too little then—I can remember it, remember him having to go get the stock market each day. But that somehow or another they, the buyers, I guess, gave them the prices they could pay for certain grades of cotton.

WSP: The particular grade of the cotton helped determine the price that your brother would pay. Was your

brother considered a good grader?

CLN: I think so. I guess he was.

WSP: Did he ever show you how to grade cotton?

CLN: No. No, I never was interested in that. I was just, I was just a hand. (laughs) He'd just treat me like the other hands at the place.

WSP: Did it require any special equipment to grade cotton?

CLN: No, no, they just looked at it.

WSP: They looked at it?

CLN: Yes.

ELN: (laughs)

WSP: You're saying that even after he looked at it, there was never any dispute over the grade?

CLN: No. No, I don't ever remember any dispute anywhere down that line. I don't remember any disputes anywhere back then. It seemed like everybody was just happy to get their cotton ginned.

WSP: If the season went long, you'd see some of these farmers several times? Right?

CLN: Beg your pardon?

WSP: If the cotton season went long, you might see certain farmers several times, right?

CLN: Yes, several of them, some of them made a good little bit of cotton, some of them made two or three bales a year. But some would make more cotton and they'd—as they picked a bale they'd bring it in.

WSP: I see. Now, I've heard descriptions of going through the cotton fields a second and third time late in the season. Did the quality of cotton change if it was picked later in the season?

CLN: Ah—I think that later in the season the quality of the cotton might not have been as good as it was earlier. I'm not sure on that. I really don't remember that.

WSP: Do you remember any humorous or interesting stories related to that time period?

CLN: (laughs) Yes. Another interesting thing I remember was the ginner and the fireman, uh—they stayed there. They'd come and during the ginning season they would stay there at the gin. And this one fireman, uh, uh—somehow or other, he and the ginner—the ginner liked to fish—I believe it was the ginner, he liked to fish. And when they'd kind of catch up during the evening or something and have time, why, he'd go and catch him some good perch for bait, and go to that, that good hole of water down there and set out his hooks, for fish hooks. So this one evening he spent a lot of time and got him some good bait and baited several of his lines, hooks. And when it got dark the fireman went up to the store and bought a can of sardines for each hook. I think he bought about twelve cans of sardines and carried down and punched a hole in them and hung them, took that good bait off and hung a can of sardines on each hook. And I can remember—this is when I was a kid—the next morning everyone was laughing about the fish that the ginner caught that night. I can remember that.

And then I can remember some things, like some nights we'd be caught up, late in the season, and they'd get—kill a bunch of chickens or something and carry them down there, and they'd roast those chickens in those coals from that boiler. And I can remember those stories.

WSP: Where did they stay in the gin? Were they sleeping on the floor?

CLN: No. I can't remember exactly where they stayed. They might have had some rooms there somewhere in Pidcoke.

ELN: They might have stayed in the gin office.

CLN: Well, that was a small loft—it might have been.

WSP: What did you say, Estelle? I missed that.

CLN: Beg your pardon?

WSP: What did Estelle say? I missed that.

CLN: She said—(laughs) they might have stayed in the office there at the gin—which they might have. There was places around there they could have stayed with their cots. I believe—I remember one ginner would bring his cot and camped in. He'd stay at least, at least a week and maybe sometimes longer before he'd go back home. I can remember that.

WSP: Now do you remember any characteristics of the particular operators?

CLN: Oh, yes. (laughs) I remember some. One of the operators that was a ginner—I believe his name was Bill McCurry, he was a big heavy, strong fellow, always wore overalls. When he came—I believe he was there about two years, maybe. And his first year, the first thing he wanted was to know if there was anyway he could buy sweet milk.

So we checked around, and there was a lady there that said, well, she'd furnish him at least a quart of sweet milk every day. And I can remember late in the evenings he'd be—after the ginning—the gin shut down and they'd caught up, he'd come up to that store, and there'd be that quart of milk in the ice cooler. Then they just had ice coolers for soda water and that quart of milk would be in there. He'd take that quart of milk, and he'd sit out there in that cool breeze, and he'd drink that milk. And I decided that looked good to me. So I asked the lady if she could get me a quart of milk each day, and she did. So I'd get me a quart and sit out in that door with him. (laughs) We'd set there and drink that quart of sweet milk. I can remember that.

WSP: How old were you when you were helping out your brother and your dad?

CLN: Just about that time I would have been—let's see—that would be—I didn't help my dad, I was too young then. I was just around in the way, then. It was later. It would about 1930, I'd say 1933 to 1938, probably about 1933 when I was drinking that milk—what would I have been about—I would have been fourteen.

WSP: Right. Was there any particular type of apparel that you'd have to wear?

CLN: No. No, mostly overalls—seemed like back then there wasn't—we had overalls.

WSP: Gloves?

CLN: No, I don't believe we wore gloves. The fireman might have worn gloves when he was firing the boiler, you know, the furnace to heat the boiler.

WSP: Where would you all get your wood to fire the boiler?

CLN: They'd cut it around at different areas in the community, start in earlier in the—in the summer months. It'd be the hot months and you'd cut the wood earlier, and it would be drying out during that

time until—back then there was a lot of wood around there.

WSP: But not on the property itself, as you said?

CLN: No. No, you'd have to go other places.

WSP: How many weeks in advance would you have to start preparing the firewood?

CLN: I'd say, two months, at least, earlier, maybe three months earlier starting.

WSP: Did they measure the amount of wood in cords back then?

CLN: Yes, in cords.

WSP: How many cords would you end up gathering?

CLN: Oh, I don't remember—I imagine two or three hundred cords.

WSP: Where did you put all that wood?

CLN: All on that gin lot out there. It'd be in rows, and the wagons would have to come down through the rows of cordwood. Yes, there was a lot of wood out there.

WSP: Now, about what month, and about when in the month would you shut down the machines?

CLN: When would you shut down?

WSP: Yes, for the season.

CLN: I can't quite remember that.

WSP: Can you estimate?

CLN: I'd say, I'd say November, maybe. It might have gone even longer.

WSP: Early December, perhaps?

CLN: Probably.

WSP: What did you do with the machinery at that point?

CLN: What did you do with the what?

WSP: The machinery.

CLN: Oh, it would stay idle.

WSP: Would you clean and repair it?

CLN: Yes, we'd do some of that, not much. It'd usually wait until the next ginning season and start all of that repairing and getting all of that ready.

WSP: During the height of your operation, a very busy day, uh, what were the conditions inside the gin?

CLN: Inside?

WSP: Yes.

CLN: It would just be a steady work all day long. The gin wouldn't shut down, it would just run constantly.

WSP: Was it noisy?

CLN: Oh, yes, it was noisy.

WSP: Can you describe the noise?

CLN: (laughs) It'd be hard for me to describe that noise. It was noisy. It'd be, it'd be three what you called gins that separated the cotton from the seed. There'd be three sections of those things. And they'd be about—oh, I'm not sure how long—probably for those three sections it'd probably take, oh, maybe fifty feet. And those were all—those were the noisiest parts of that. Those things whirled so fast to separate the cotton from the seed. They'd whirl so fast, that, that's where most of the noise came from.

WSP: Was there any thumping, pounding sounds?

CLN: No, it was a humming sound. It run so fast it'd be a hum, be a humming sound.

WSP: Was there stuff in the air?

CLN: Was there what?

WSP: Cotton dust in the air?

CLN: Yes, there was a good little bit of cotton dust.

ELN: Lint.

CLN: They called it lint.

WSP: And it would just be floating around in the air?

CLN: Yes, it'd be in the air.

WSP: Can you tell me more about that? Did it get in your eyes?

CLN: No, it was not that bad. Everything was open then, there was a lot of windows and doors in there, and everything was open.

WSP: What about the smoke from the steam machines?

CLN: No, it—they had the smokestack on the boiler, and all the smoke went out the top. Then the steam from the steam engine was carried out to the back of the gin. Then all that—that engine room down there, it just—it just was a big engine, and it turned all the drives, the drives that went all the way through the gin.

WSP: Was there a big large flywheel driver?

CLN: Yes.

WSP: What was the mechanical means for the drive wheel to power the gin machine?

CLN: The power was just from the steam.

WSP: But the connections between the steam engine in one room and the ginning machines in the other room? How was that made?

CLN: Well, it was just a large shaft. It'd be about—about maybe four inches in diameter that went all the way through. It powered all those others. It had pulleys coming off of that that would power those others, the gins.

WSP: Where was the shaft located in the ginning room?

CLN: That would be in the central part of the gin.

WSP: Along the floor?

CLN: Uh, yes, yes, along the floor.

WSP: So basically there's three large ginning machines and a steam engine. What was the machinery involved in the press?

CLN: Okay, that would be—ah, let's see, they called that a—let me think just a minute what they called it. It's a pump—I've forgotten now what they called that pump. It's a powerful pump, though—it'd just pump. But anyway, it would pump that, press that cotton into a five-hundred-pound bale. The steam also went up in that area. That would be what they called the press area. It would go up in that area, and they'd use that press to press the cotton down into a container. And then after that was done, then you'd switch—that part of the container you'd turn it to this other. I can't remember now what you called that other—that other pump. But it would be a pump that would press it into a five-hundred-pound bale from about—

(telephone disconnects; interruption in taping)

WSP: Hello? Hello?

We'll stop the interview now, and I'll try to call them back.

(re-dials; telephone connects)

WSP: Okay, we're back on again.

CLN: Okay.

WSP: How did you get the cotton from the ginning part of the machine over to the pressing part of the machine?

CLN: Okay. It was rolling in there with a high-pressure air. It had a big fan that would blow all that cotton from the ginning in the gin up to the press box.

WSP: Give me a little bit of description? Is it inside some kind of piping machine?

CLN: Yes, it would be just a pipe, and it'd be about, oh, maybe three foot in diameter, at least that large. It'd carry that cotton from the gin to the press box.

WSP: How was the pipe positioned relative to the presser?

CLN: Well, that's kind of hard to describe. The pipes were—like I say, I believe they were at least three feet in diameter, and they'd go all the way across the back of all the gins. And then they would take that cotton from the gins and force it into the—up to the press boxes. And then you'd use a—I can't remember what they called that press either—I worked there for about four years! I can't remember what they called it now. It'd press the cotton down as it came in, into what you called a press box, and then after you had your full bale there, then you'd move it around and put it on this other compressor, and it would bring it into a five-hundred-pound bale then. Then you'd wrap the cotton with what they called bagging.

WSP: Bagging came after you pressed into the right size?

CLN: Yes. Yes, then you'd wrap it with what you called bagging and ties. Then you'd tie it off—you'd use about six or seven ties.

WSP: Did each of the ginning machines have its own press box?

CLN: Yes. No, no, they—no, just the one—there'd be two press boxes, one in the beginning to put—to store the cotton in until you compressed it again. But that would take care of all of the gins that was separating the cotton and the seed.

WSP: The blower would push the cotton out of each of the three gin machines, and blow it into this preliminary storage box—

CLN: Yes.

WSP: And then from that box it went to the presser?

CLN: Yes.

WSP: How did the cotton move from the storage box to the presser?

CLN: Okay. From the big—there'd be two of those boxes—one would set under the—where the cotton came out—and the other one would be an empty one. If you finished up one bale you'd turn this thing—it was a big sucker deal, up in the top of that, up in that press. And you'd turn those bins around. It was built on a circular deal. And you'd turn it around and lock it in place, and then you'd use this other—maybe I'll think of it before we end, the name of what they called that compressed that cotton. It'd be a—it'd be an awful strong pump that would—hydraulic pump! It'd be an hydraulic pump that would compress that cotton.

WSP: All the cotton went into one box, blown in from all three ginning machines, and when that box was full, the machine rotated that full box around, and an empty box came into place under the blower.

CLN: No, we didn't have a machine to do that, you did that by hand.

WSP: Once you turned it by hand, the full box would be positioned someway relative to the hydraulic press?

CLN: Yes.

WSP: I'm missing how you moved that full box of cotton into the presser itself. How do you do that?

CLN: Ah, you didn't get it out of that full box, you compressed it in that full box. You just turned it around. The boxes were the same, the two of them were the same. There was a big circle. It'd be about a twenty-foot circle that we'd switch places with the two boxes.

WSP: Oh! The full box rotated around into the right position, under this hydraulic press that would somehow or other mash the cotton while it was still in the box.

CLN: After you turned it around and get it in position, the hydraulic presser then would press it into a bale of cotton. Then you'd tie that bale of cotton, and then you'd open all of these, open this box, which is built real strong. You'd open that box, and then the bale would—you'd throw the bale out.

WSP: How would you open the box? Were the sides of this box hinged?

CLN: It'd be the front—the front, it would be hinged from the front.

It'd be awful strong stuff. It took a lot of strength to press that cotton into that five-hundred-pound bale.

WSP: It sounds like it would take quite a lot of manpower just to move the bale out of that box and onto the platform.

CLN: Well, you learn to do that. You can handle a bale of cotton pretty easy. You know, you just learn to do

that—you can roll a bale of cotton and handle it.

WSP: Just manhandle it?

CLN: Beg your pardon?

WSP: Manhandle it?

CLN: Yes, you'd manhandle that bale of cotton. You'd manhandle it out on what you called the platform. There was a platform then that used to go out behind that gin. You don't see it now, but there was a platform that would go out—the road was just real narrow out there behind it then, that platform. Then you could get there and you'd have—you had scales out there—you'd raise that bale of cotton and weigh it right there for them.

Then, after that, you'd either—you could also swing that around and put that bale of cotton in their wagon, or if they sold it, you could leave it there. Then you just—what we'd do then, we'd just push it off that platform, and they'd stack them out at the back of that gin out there.

WSP: Weighing the cotton came at the very end of the whole process?

CLN: I beg your pardon?

WSP: Weighing the cotton—

CLN: Weighing the cotton?

WSP: Came at the very last?

CLN: Yes, that was the last thing you'd do, you'd weigh the cotton.

WSP: At what point did you grade the cotton?

CLN: That would occur—I'm not sure, now—I believe that would occur—if they sold it then, probably at the time. I don't remember that the people actually sold their cotton right then. Sometimes they'd wait, I believe—sometimes—I don't believe they actually sold it there. Sometimes I don't believe they actually sold it there. Sometimes, I believe, he'd leave it and we'd haul it and send it somewhere else to be sold—I believe—I can't remember all of that. I used to haul that cotton to those wharves.

WSP: Oh, okay. So you're just preparing it in bales, and the whole sales and exchange of money occurred elsewhere?

CLN: Ah, yes, I believe so. I'm not sure, now, about that. They might have bought that cotton right—I guess if someone wanted to sell a bale of cotton right then and wanted the money for it, I guess they'd buy it.

WSP: Were there many bankers or, you know, money people that would show up at your gin inspecting the season's cotton run?

CLN: No, you didn't see many of them. They'd be somewhere else. I guess those buyers would be in Gatesville or somewhere. I don't know where they'd be. I can't remember exactly where you shipped most of that cotton to.

WSP: Which way would it go after it left Pidcoke?

CLN: Pidcoke—a lot of it would come to Copperas Cove, to wharves, cotton wharves over here in Copperas Cove along the railroad tracks. And then some of them would go to Gatesville.

WSP: Well, I think you've given me a very good description of the process. Let me ask Estelle a question.

CLN: All right.

WSP: Estelle?

ELN: Yes'ir?

WSP: Do you have any recollections of the gin?

ELN: That's really before my day. I wasn't in the family then because we only—we married in 1940, but we did live in the community. And I remember the gin. I remember that part of it.

WSP: Did you ever go to the gin when you were a kid?

ELN: No, I think kids had to stay away from that gin when it was running. But no, I didn't really go down there. I didn't go to the gin with my dad. I don't remember it.

WSP: Do you remember any stories being told about the gin that Cecil has not told?

ELN: No, not really. It's a process that would be hard to understand without being there. I mean, even me knowing about it, I can't really understand what he's telling you, and I doubt if you will.

WSP: I think he's done a very good job, actually.

ELN: Well, if he'd had more time and thought about it, he probably could have told you more names and more of the things within the gin and what they called them, than what just now, not thinking about it thirty, forty, fifty years.

WSP: Did you ever swim in the swimming hole?

ELN: Well, sometimes, but we didn't all go at the same time. (laughs)

WSP: (laughs)

CLN: The girls had to wear bathing suits. (laughs; unintelligible)

WSP: Oh!

ELN: Later on, you know, after we were in school, maybe like at school, well, maybe there was a special day, April Fools', well, they'd get to go swimming. But really the girls didn't go swimming that much. But I'm talking about—

WSP: I was not expecting this interview to go this long. This is wonderful. Can you tell me again what you were saying?

ELN: Oh, I said I finished school there in 1936, so that's going to be over sixty years ago. Then you rode busses to Gatesville to another—to a high school. The ninth grade, then—in 1936 was the last year they had the ninth grade—I mean, that was the highest grade completed in 1936.

WSP: I want to get back to the swimming hole for a second? Was there any concerns about snakes?

ELN: Snakes? Yeah, but then people in the country just knew how to, you know, watch for them. We weren't as afraid of them as people are now.

WSP: Even in the swimming hole?

ELN: Well—

CLN: No, you just really didn't—

ELN: You didn't see them that much.

WSP: What about bugs and things like that?

ELN: Well, there weren't that many, I don't believe, as there is now. (laughs) Country kids knew how to handle them.

WSP: Well, thank you very much, Estelle. Cecil? I have one last question for you.

CLN: All right.

WSP: The steam machine that operated the pump for the water?

CLN: Yes?

WSP: Was there somebody down there managing that pump?

CLN: No. No, the steam line went down to the pump, and—oh, I guess you'd manage that from the gin itself, just to turn the steam line on to start the pump.

WSP: The pump was operated by steam from the main—

CLN: It was operated by steam from—from the gin.

WSP: From the main boiler?

CLN: Yes. You had a steam line going all the way to the Bee House Creek. Then you had the water line return up—up to the gin.

WSP: Was ever any concern about a loss of water to the steam engine?

CLN: No, I don't remember that. Every once in a while you'd have a line to break, a steam line would break or a water line or something, and you'd repair that. That was about all there was to that.

WSP: Was there a vat or something for water storage?

CLN: Yes. Yes, there was a large storage tank there at the gin site.

WSP: Did the pump just refill the storage vat?

CLN: Yes.

WSP: I see.

CLN: That pump would keep the storage vat filled.

WSP: Have I missed any questions, or anything that you would like to say about that experience?

CLN: I can't think of any. It was a good experience that I had. I'm glad I grew up there. I grew up there from a kid.

I can remember—I believe they had more than one storage tank there. They had one huge storage tank, and then they had a smaller one down close to the boiler. I can remember that.

I grew up right there, up there at that thing. Our home was right there at it. My home was—this gin lot was—they called it about a two-acre lot—then adjoining that would be our place that my daddy bought back in 1917. This went all the way on down to the Cowhouse Creek at that time. Then they

gradually sold some of the property off, and then they let the school have some property down there.

And I grew up right there, just in the—on the front side of that gin, and—

WSP: The gin was big part of your life, wasn't it?

CLN: Yes, it was.

WSP: Was your mother involved in the operation at all?

CLN: No. No, she didn't ever get involved. After my daddy died the one brother that was still left there kind of took over for her, kind of managed it for her all that time.

WSP: Where did you have to get the parts, the replacement parts on the machinery?

CLN: Ah, I can't remember where they'd get those from. I forget, but it'd be—it be different places. I can remember different times when parts would come in from different places.

WSP: Was there a special gin repairman that would come out?

CLN: No. I think the people there at the gin did it themselves.

WSP: Well, I thank you—excuse me?

CLN: I didn't understand you?

WSP: I just said I wanted to thank you very much for taking the time this morning to talk with me about your time at the gin at Pidcoke.

CLN: All right.

WSP: And Estelle, thank you. And I'll make this recording into a transcript and send it to you, and we'll be done.

CLN: Okay, if you're ever this way, well, stop by, and we'll have a visit.

WSP: I'd like that! Thank you very much sir.

CLN: All right.

WSP: All right. Bye-bye.

ELN: Bye-bye.

Mary Alice Dorsey Powell

Date of birth: 1901
Community affiliated with: Friendship
Interviewed by Thad Sitton

TS: This is Thad Sitton. Today is June 26, 2001. I'm interviewing for the first time Mary Alice Dorsey Powell at her home in Gatesville. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University. [William Ake Powell also took part in this interview.]

(interruption in taping)

WAP: Sunday's the revival, when they all brought stuff to eat. Had dinner on the ground on the last Sunday of the revival.

TS: So, it went on all week?

WAP: It was a week long, always.

TS: (to MADP) The revival went on all week.

WAP: (to MADP) You remember about how they used to do the last Sunday, everybody brought stuff to eat, they had dinner on the ground. Had dinner on the ground, didn't they?

MADP: Uh-huh. Dinner on the ground.

WAP: Preacher'd come, somebody'd keep him a night or two, and then somebody else'd keep him a night or two—kept him and fed him. They rotated it around.

TS: It would be—that was just kind of to spread the support for him and also I guess it was an honor to have the preacher.

WAP: Let everybody help with him, too. They'd fatten him up and everything.

TS: The preacher would come out from Gatesville?

WAP: Well, naw, not necessarily. He might come from further off than that, you know. He'd ride a horse or come in the buggy. He might come from Waco or Temple or another pretty far off community. They'd find him, and he'd agree to hold a revival, and then he'd come. And they'd keep him and put his horse up and everything—(unintelligible)

And back then they used to have a Rawleigh man and a Watkins man.

TS: (to MADP) Peddlers. Do you remember peddlers coming around?

MADP: Peddlers? Uh-huh.

TS: What would they be driving?

MADP: Well, I imagine they had cars, mostly.

WAP: Well, back then, though, to start off with, they didn't have no cars.

MADP: Oh. Well, they had wagons and buggies and horses.

WAP: Buggies, most of 'em—the mail carrier used to drive a buggy.

TS: Were y'all on a star route? Did they bring the mail to your box? They'd come down the road, didn't they?

WAP: Yeah, they come down the road. And you could put a nickel in there and write a note, they'd bring you a spool of thread the next day. You know, that sort of stuff. If you needed something from town, you could put the money and a note in the mailbox, and the mail carrier'd usually get it and bring it to you the next day. I remember my Grandma Powell used to put a nickel for a spool of thread and tell him what color thread she wanted. The mail carrier'd bring her a spool of thread the next day.

MADP: Sometimes several people would get their mail in the same box.

TS: Yeah. But he was not coming up to the house, he was coming down the road to your box, on the nearest public road?

WAP: Yeah.

TS: And so, if you wanted to communicate with him, you needed to leave a note.

WAP: Yeah, or you met him, you know. If you had a letter you wanted to mail and you didn't have no postage, well, you'd just put the letter and the money in there, and he'd put the stamp on it and mail it for you. They's real accommodating—(unintelligible)

TS: They're not like that, now. (to MADP) Where did y'all farm? After you got married, after you married Mr. Powell, where did y'all farm? (to WAP) Did they stay on—

WAP: I think y'all—(to MADP) where I was born was on the little place next to Grandpa Dorsey's place, wasn't it?

MADP: Uh-huh.

WAP: And I think he owned it, I think y'all rented it.

TS: So, it was family renting to family.

WAP: Yeah. And it was on the right just before you get to the cemetery. Used to be a little out there, and it had a barn.

TS: So, really, just right next door to—

WAP: My Grandpa Dorsey's. Then, they bought a place further on over, a mile or so away, I imagine somebody had let go back during the Depression or something.

TS: So, they bought, they bought a place.

WAP: Yeah. And my Grandpa Powell and my daddy built a four-room house on it, a little bungalow-type house. It had partitions in it, but it didn't have no ceiling. It had some windows in it, didn't have no screens on the windows. And that's where I was raised up, that place right there. And the thing I remember the most about that is, this place had laid out, nobody had worked it for several years, and I

think we killed forty-five rattlesnakes on it the first year.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

WAP: The first year we lived there.

TS: So, it had been laid out and grown up, and you probably had a lot of brush to clear, and the fields were all—

WAP: All the fields had growed up.

TS: Oh, it gets to be a mess. (to MADP) Well, you raised cotton, you and Mr. Powell raised cotton on your place, right? And corn?

MADP: Uh-huh. And any kind of feed.

TS: Feed. Highgear?

MADP: I don't know whether there's any highgear there, or not.

WAP: Yeah, I used to plant some. I remember that. We'd usually head that, cut the heads off of it when it got mature.

MADP: The corn and cotton and wheat and oats and maize and stuff like that.

WAP: Uh-huh. You'd go along and head that, cut the heads off when it got to the right stage. You could store that in the barn and feed it all winter.

TS: Uh-huh. It was just raised, it was raised as a feed fodder. And that was—(to MADP) did you cut the corn tops for fodder?

MADP: Yeah, sometimes they did.

TS: People did that—a lot of corn farmers, today, don't know about that one, right?

WAP: Naw. Used to take a big ball of that twine, binder twine they called it, take one of them, and you cut 'em in pieces all the same length, and you tie a loop in one end of it, and you cut these tops and lay 'em down, let 'em dry about a day or so, and the next morning when it's kind of damp and cool, you go and pick 'em up and bundle 'em up and tie 'em. And then you shock 'em and leave 'em out there and air two or three days, and you could haul it and put in the barn.

TS: I interviewed some Germans down in Fayette County, and—now, they cut the corn tops of course like you're saying, but they did it at night. And the reason—I kept trying to find out why they did it at night, and apparently, one reason, it was to save having to buy the twine, because if the corn top is flexible enough, you can tie it up—

WAP: Yeah, yeah, you can tie it with the top around it.

TS: But they were out there in the dark, the Germans were, and there were all these stories about getting into snakes under the piles. You know, the piles would be cut and lay there, and then they'd be going back to tie 'em up, and there'd be snakes.

WAP: I used to—the way I made money to buy my school clothes, we had a pair of mules, small mules, and I used to take these mules and go work for a guy that had a threshing machine. I went to the field, and we hauled these shocks and stuff and put 'em in the thrasher, and they thrashed 'em. You got paid like two dollars and something a day for you and your team of mules. And I used to follow that thrasher every year and do that. And you had you a bedroll, and they had a cook shack and all, and you didn't

go home until you got through with that. I might be, you know, ten or twelve miles away from home.

TS: (to MADP) How often did y'all go into town? Would you go into Gatesville?

MADP: Well, when we got out of things that we needed, one of 'em would go into town.

WAP: Had to buy flour—flour and sugar was the two things they had to buy.

TS: Was there a store of any kind short of Gatesville? Was there a store in Friendship, is what I'm asking?

WAP: Naw.

MADP: Not in Friendship.

WAP: No, they had one in Ewing.

MADP: Ewing had school where you could graduate from, and they had a store there, I think.

WAP: Well, Black used to have a store on the—

MADP: Oh, yeah, Black did, too.

TS: So, was Ewing a little bigger?

WAP: Yeah, it was a—well, their school went through eight or nine grades, nine when I went. And the Friendship School, Owl Creek School, just went through seven. So, when you finished down there through the seventh, you had to go to Ewing for the closest one. Didn't have to go to Gatesville.

TS: Yeah, if you wanted to finish off the twelfth grade, you'd go to Gatesville.

WAP: Yeah, I went up there one year, and then Flat down here had a high school, and I graduated from Flat.

MADP: And Ewing got to be—

WAP: Yeah, finally did, but it didn't until after I went. It had nine grades when I went. It got to be a high school.

MADP: No, but I went to it awhile.

TS: You went to Ewing?

MADP: Uh-huh. Took a horse to a buggy part of the time.

TS: Well, that was even further, right?

WAP: Well, it's probably about five or six miles from where they lived, probably six miles.

TS: Well, is that what she was talking about? How far was it from Friendship where she lived to the Owl Creek School?

WAP: Just right close.

TS: Just right close. So, she was remembering going to Ewing School for those last—

MADP: Just the high school. I went to school at Friendship until I finished there. And then, uh, I went to Ewing. They had a high school.

WAP: You used to have to sweep the yard when you got home, didn't you? You remember sweeping the yard when you got home? Sweeping trash out of the yard? You used to have to do that, I've heard you telling about it. That's one of your chores after you got home from school.

TS: Got home from school and still had to sweep the yard, huh?

WAP: (to MADP) You getting tired?

MADP: No, I'm making it okay.

WAP: (to MADP) I may want you to mow my yard this evening.

MADP: Huh?

TS: He may want you to mow his yard this afternoon.

MADP: Okay. (laughs)

TS: Well, you just had your hundredth birthday party.

MADP: Uh-huh.

WAP: Had a whole bunch of people, about eighty-five, I think.

TS: I was given that (to MADP, refers to sewing item gift) very nice.

MADP: Uh-huh.

(interruption in taping)

WAP: We kept 'em out in the lot. One of them sheds was for the cottonseed that we fed the cows. The rest of 'em was just out in the open. Winter or summer, it didn't make no difference. It might be pouring down rain, she's out there milking. She used to do a lot of that.

TS: (to MADP) Used to a lot of milking, right? But you were saying, after—what were they doing now?

WAP: Well, that was the place they bought.

TS: That was the place—first, they lived on your grandfather's place, and then most of your life you grew up on—

WAP: The place that they bought, yeah. And then, I went in the air force. Wasn't anything to do, much, when I graduated. I graduated in 1940. Wasn't many jobs, much. So, my daddy sent me to welding school, and I joined the air force to go into a welding shop, and I stayed in there nearly five years. I never did get to go to welding shop. They never put me in that.

TS: That is an old story. People join the service to learn some trade, and then they get made into something completely different and sent—

WAP: My daddy borrowed money to send me to welding school. I never did get to use it. I had a good time in the army until they started shooting at me, then it wasn't funny no more.

Mary Lou "Honey" Hudson Powell
William Ake Powell

Mary Lou "Honey" Hudson Powell
Date of birth: 3 March 1930
Communities affiliated with: Ewing, Friendship

William Ake Powell
Date of birth: 12 January 1921
Communities affiliated with: Ewing, Flat, Friendship

Interviewed by Martha Doty Freeman

MDF: This is Martha Doty Freeman. This is May 24, 1998, and I'm going to be talking with William A. and Mary Lou "Honey" Powell at Friendship Cemetery. [This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.]

Let me start by asking, when did your family move to this area?

WAP: Well I was born here, and I was—they were, too. Right down there. My mother's people lived right off of this road and then my daddy's people's place adjoined their place right on down the creek.

MDF: Now is—do you mean the road coming into the cemetery here? And were they—let's see, is that east?

WAP: Yes.

MDF: That's east, so—

MLHP: They were southeast of the cemetery, right?

WAP: Yeah.

MLHP: Was the Dorseys and the Powells.

WAP: Dorseys and the Powells. Dorsey's place came up to the fence, and the Powell's place joined it right on down the creek.

MDF: Okay, um, and you were saying that your parents were born here also. Do you have any idea when your grandparents got here, your Grandparent Powell?

WAP: I couldn't give you that information. We've got some of it wrote down, but I don't remember all of that.

MLHP: We know that the grandparents, the Powell grandparents, either came here as children or were born

here. Their parents were the first family in the community. One of the first families, but it was Bill's great-grandparents, Jimmy and Jane. And they called them aunt and uncle. That's the way Bill's mother refers to them is Uncle Jimmy and Aunt Jane. And we did not find tombstones, but there've been some that were destroyed, 'cause this is on the gunnery range—and the shells—

MDF: Um, where was the first house that you knew of that was associated with your Powell family?

WAP: Well, um, I—my Grandpa Powell was one that I remember most, and they lived in a big ol' frame house. They called it a gallery, it went around two sides of it. Long porch, like on two sides of the house. And all of the grandkids used to come, and we used to sleep on quilts, and it looked like wood laying out there. These ol' porches were full of kids wrapped in these quilts—(unintelligible)

MLHP: Bill used to say, "Racked up like cordwood." (laughs)

WAP: Yeah, but that was the first house connected with the Powell family that I remember.

MDF: And where would it have been relative to this road?

WAP: Well, it would have been probably about—maybe two miles east of this road. Maybe not that far.

MDF: And how long—that was your Grandparents Powell, and how long did they live there?

WAP: Well, they lived there until Fort Hood took this area. And we lived in here before Hood took it over. I mean I was already a gone in the service, and my mother and daddy still lived on _____ (??) in the area.

MDF: Now, is there—there's not a picture of that place in here, is there? Okay, do you have a picture of it anywhere?

WAP: I don't think so.

MLHP: Not that we're aware of. There's a picture somewhere, either at Bill's mother's house or in some that she had sent to our house that we were unable to locate. And there are a bunch of family members, but I think it's the Dorsey family.

WAP: Well, that's not the house that we're speaking of in that picture.

MLHP: Right.

WAP: Now my Grandpa Powell used—he used to be a well driller. He drilled wells all over this country. And my Grandpa Dorsey that lived right down here was a blacksmith. And he'd sharpen all those plows and shoe the horses and all that stuff, long time ago.

MDF: Did he farm also?

WAP: Yeah, both of them did.

MLHP: Didn't your Grandfather Dorsey have a mill? Didn't he build a—

WAP: No, that was Uncle Jeb had the mill.

MLHP: Oh, okay.

MDF: Now who was he?

MLHP: He was a Powell.

WAP: He was my grandpa's brother.

MLHP: He's this one.

WAP: That one right there.

MDF: And where was his mill?

WAP: Further on down Owl Creek. There was—my Grandpa Dorsey's place, and then there was Grandpa Powell's place, and I—nobody didn't tell me but I assumed that Uncle Bun (MLHP speaking at the same time) Powell got the next place. And I think sold it, and he moved to Nevada. And a guy by the name of Charlie Brown lived on that place. And then on the other side of that was Uncle Jeff. Uncle Jeff had a place there next to that, and then Uncle George had the next place, and Uncle Emmett had the last place. (MLHP speaking at the same time) Right on down the creek. And I can imagine maybe that their parents moved here. They probably had a land grant for a lot o' land and it was divided among the kids. That's the way I figured it out.

MDF: Do you know about how many acres were in each place?

WAP: Uh—

MDF: Just generally.

WAP: I just off hand, I'd say maybe 300 acres, 350.

MDF: In each?

WAP: Yeah.

MDF: Did they—what did they do in terms of farming and having cattle and—

WAP: Well, they raised—(unintelligible; wind noise) and Grandpa Powell used to have dairy cows, and they sold milk and butter and cream.

MDF: They did?

WAP: Yeah, you'd have to draw water for them old cows. Boy, they drank a bunch. (MDF laughs)

MLHP: Bill talks about when he—I guess it was when you were going to Ewing to school, when you used to come through your grandmother's kitchen on your way—

WAP: No, not Ewing.

MLHP: Oh, at Friendship?

WAP: Yeah. Owl Creek.

MLHP: Okay, and he usually had some of the Kinsey boys with him, and they'd go through and raid her pie safe, and she would have to cook supper. 'Cause he'd put the leftovers from lunch in the pie safe for supper.

WAP: Yeah, we'd get it all.

MLHP: He said she never did fuss. And I asked him if she didn't give him holy heck about that. And he said, "No," he said, "She wouldn't have fussed at him anyhow." Nobody fussed about the Kinseys 'cause they were—how many? Seven or eight of 'em.

WAP: Whole bunch of 'em, and their mama, their mother was a single lady widow (??) and they had it pretty tough. I used to take 'em there and feed 'em. Oh, well.

MLHP: Do you remember hearing your granddaddy play the fiddle?

WAP: Sure!

MDF: Tell me about that.

WAP: Well, they lived on this ol' place down there, this ol' house that had this porch all the way around it. When he'd done with all his work, he'd get right out on the south end of that porch. And he was kinda hard of hearing, and he'd get out there, and you could hear him for about four miles up and down the creek. He'd be pattin' his foot, and he played real loud because he couldn't hear good. And he'd get out there any play an hour or so after he'd get done with his work every night.

MLHP: Where did he get his fiddle?

WAP: I don't know. I've got it now. He played it when he was fifteen years old. He told me he traded a six-shooter for it, and it was used then. And he lived to be a hundred years old, and he died in 1966. He died in '66, was when he died. And so it would have been—he would have had it eighty-five years then. And it was used when he got it, and I've still got it. I had it restored. I've got it now.

MLHP: Bill, that can't be right. He was born in 1832 to '58.

WAP: Eighteen fifty-six, and he died in 1966.

MLHP: Sixty-six, that's 110 years.

WAP: Hmmm.

MDF: Well, he was elderly.

WAP: Yes he was. I'm going to have to live to be a hundred to get out of debt. (MDF laughs) My mother is ninety-seven and she still lives by herself.

MDF: Oh, my! And where does she live?

WAP: Where does she live now? She lives right near the golf course and the VFW. She lives next door to the Gatesville VFW in a little white house right there.

MDF: Do you think she'd be willing to talk to me if I can get up—back up to the area to visit with her?

WAP: Ah, I imagine she would.

MDF: Okay, because she would've spent her—almost her, well, most of her life out here.

WAP: Yeah, until—

MLHP: Until 1944, '43.

WAP: They took this whole area, see.

MLHP: She'd be able to tell you, too, about how it felt when they had to move out. And they lived in two other places, didn't they, before they bought a farm at Pearl from Uneva Whatley's aunt and uncle?

WAP: One other, one other place.

MLHP: One other place? Well, I knew they lived in the community up there at Coryell City, but I thought they lived in two different places. Just one.

MDF: Now when were you born?

WAP: Where was I born?

MDF: When.

WAP: When? 1921, January the twelfth, right down here on the left of this road. There's some trees down there, green trees up on the left, and up just a little ways was a little house. I was born right there.

MDF: And what—did your family, did your parents build that house?

WAP: No, it was on my Grandpa Dorsey's place—(unintelligible)

MDF: So was your parents' farm part of land that came through your mother, or what?

WAP: No, they bought a place. It was about a mile or so due east of here. Right across here. It was an old place, just uh—people had probably moved off during the Depression. They bought this place and my Grandpa Powell and my daddy built a four-room house. That's where we moved over there.

MLHP: How old were you when you moved?

WAP: I don't know, I suppose—

MLHP: Before you started to school?

WAP: Yeah, when I started school, that's where—

MLHP: That's where you lived.

MDF: So you were born down the road here, and then moved over to the four-room house. What was the house like where you were born?

WAP: If I remember it was just a common, little ol' frame house. That's one thing I can remember about it is, it had a great big black walnut tree in the—(unintelligible) I remember that (??), and then later on, that's where the Kinseys moved. The boys that I used to feed, they moved in that house. My grandpa rented it. I imagine he gave it to 'em to live in, I'm sure.

MDF: Was there much tenant farming around here when you were growing up?

WAP: No, sometimes somebody would rent a place, you know, and farm it, but most people owned _____ (??).

MDF: What about in other communities around here? Did it seem like there were—there was a lot of tenancy?

WAP: Well, no, there wasn't a lot. Not that I remember. Most everybody owned their own place, and—

MDF: What kind of livestock did your father raise?

WAP: Uh, we just had the milk cows and horses and mules to work the farm.

MDF: Did he raise goats and sheep?

WAP: No, some people did. No I don't—we didn't have any. Later on he got sheep after, you know, after he'd moved out he had some sheep, but down here there was a few people who had goats, a good many.

MLHP: Bill, your daddy rented his team to do the—what? A railroad dump?

WAP: No, that was Grandpa's.

MLHP: Grandpa.

MDF: Now what was that about?

WAP: Well, there was, somebody come in here, and they was going to run a railroad to cut through to Temple or somewhere down there, but it came between the Flat Road and the _____ (??). And my Grandpa Powell took his team of mules and he helped build that dump to put the railroad on. But they didn't get it built. So the road down there and _____ (??) shrub _____ (??) and right there across—(unintelligible; wind and generator noises)

MDF: Huh. How far is that from here?

WAP: Uh, probably about fifteen miles from here.

MDF: You mentioned that he had dairy cattle and that he made—you know, that he—did he sell milk and butter to the neighbors?

WAP: No, they took it to town, Gatesville, and sold it. And they had a big cream separator and they had the cream cans. And they'd separate the cream and put it in the cans and everything. And that's mostly what they sold was the cream. Yellow milk cream separator that you turned the handle, you know, and that thing turned all around, and the milk would come out one end and the cream out the other, and I used to have to turn that around.

MLHP: And that was at your Grandfather Dorsey's?

WAP: Grandpa Powell.

MDF: Would he have been considered to have a dairy?

WAP: No, no, I don't think so. They had a few Jersey cows, but they, you know, used for themselves. And they didn't sell anything else from the farm. They did this work on the farm and then they took it to Gatesville, and they had a place that sold eggs and butter and cream, and that sort of thing.

MDF: Um, what do you remember from the 1930s out here?

WAP: Well—(unintelligible)

MLHP: I know you remember going to the Centennial.

WAP: Well, yeah. I went to the Centennial. I remember I saved my money and rode the school bus from Gatesville, and I paid, I think, a dollar and a quarter for a Justin belt, and I was so proud of that thing, you know, it was hand-tooled and all. It was a big deal on that trip. Yeah, we rode the school bus from Gatesville.

MLHP: Was that FFA? Future Farmers?

WAP: Uh, I imagine it was. I don't remember. Soon after I got out of school, well, I went in the air force, in the service.

MDF: What—where did you get your training?

WAP: March Field, California. I went through basic out there. And then I was transferred up to Muroc, California, army air base then, which is Edwards Air Force Base now.

MDF: So were you a bombardier, or—

WAP: No, I was a gunner. Gunner on a big—(unintelligible)

MLHP: But first you towed targets at Edwards.

WAP: Well, I worked on some of those bombing and gunnery ranges where they train fighter pilots, bombing ranges where they used to fly and drop the bombs.

MLHP: Helped build Edwards.

WAP: I was working on those things for a year and a half, I guess. And then I went to gunnery school and got sent to Italy. I flew forty-one missions over there—(unintelligible) and I got out.

MDF: So were you gone at the time the government took your family's—

WAP: Yeah, I was already in the service then.

MLHP: Yeah, Bill graduated high school at Flat.

WAP: I went to Gatesville one year, 1938, and we lived a little bit closer to Flat—(unintelligible) football. They got a six-man football team, so I went down there. I would have gone—(unintelligible; wind noise)

MLHP: It was the first year they had statewide, six-man football. He was the quarterback, and I have the pictures to prove it. (MDF laughs)

WAP: We didn't do too good, but we played anyway. (all laugh)

MDF: So, um, how did your parents manage with—did they—how many brothers and sisters did you have?

WAP: Had one brother.

MDF: Was he younger?

WAP: Yeah, he's younger than I. He's five years younger than I am. Sometimes he looks older—(unintelligible; wind noise) some think he's my older brother (??).

MLHP: Well it was me he told, and I was dumb enough to say something about it. (laughs)

MDF: So did he help your parents move?

WAP: I'm sure he did, yeah, because he was still at home. Yeah, he still lived over there after they moved, most of those places.

MDF: Was there any—did they—were they involved in the cattle shoot at all during the 1930s?

WAP: Well, yeah. And I remember it well because my uncle that was here, that's the Logan that sat out there in a chair, he worked for a guy that had a lot of cattle. This guy's name was Willie Carouthers, and I lived with them and worked—helped him work. They—

MLHP: It was the Logans.

WAP: I lived with the Logans a year or two and they farmed a lot of land, and he was renting us land there. And I helped him, you know, we plowed and picked the cotton and all that stuff. But anyway, he had worked for Mr. Carouthers for a long time and he had a lot of cattle. And I remember real well when he come out, I even helped pen 'em. We got 'em all up, penned 'em all in a pen and they sat on the fence and shot 'em, from the fence. And they had a big place where they drug 'em all off to. They let people take 'em to eat, but they shot—no tellin' what they—they might have shot two or three hundred of 'em, I don't know. I remember sitting on the fence wanting to shoot 'em. I don't remember what year that was. I imagine I was about fourteen or fifteen years old.

MDF: What did people think of that around here?

WAP: Well, I don't know really. They—I just don't remember of hearing what the comments was on it at that time. But I never seen anything like it, I know that, and they—what they used to do, some people would have just a few cattle, and they'd drive 'em to a place where they'd want to do away with them. And they'd get a whole bunch of 'em up, and that's the way they'd do it. And I don't remember whether my daddy had any in that or not. I wasn't at home at that time, but I remember well this guy lived right up here at this creek, and then there's that road not too far from Turnover Creek where he lived.

MLHP: Has anybody else mentioned anything about Egypt Cave?

MDF: No. What was that?

WAP: Right to the south—(unintelligible; wind noise) cave back there, I imagine it was three or four miles—(unintelligible) church, and a big hole in the ground went way down and then further up, oh, fifty yards or so—(unintelligible) floor went down on (unintelligible) hole you could crawl through and a bigger room, you know, and turn around and jump back or slip off and go around a crawl and nobody—(unintelligible; wind noise)

MLHP: Bill said they'd take a lamp, lantern and the first person in the line would have the lantern and you'd have to lay it on its side to get it through. And he said you'd hold on to the heels of the person ahead of you. There'd be four of five of those kids going down through there, and nobody knew where they were.

WAP: We'd slip off and do it.

MLHP: I'm claustrophobic and that just nearly makes me choke thinking about it.

WAP: (unintelligible; wind noise) Come out and you can turn around and go back—(unintelligible; wind noise) I wouldn't want to do it now.

(interruption in taping)

WAP: I went to school at Gatesville one year from over there, and I rode the school bus, and the roads were muddy and the creek and rivers would get out and you couldn't cross, and I used to catch that school bus at four o'clock or 4:30 in the morning to go to school. It would go way up this away and it couldn't cross and gather up and go way back this away and we'd go way down south of Gatesville and there's a bridge we crossed down there and then we'd come back. And I'd get up and I'd walk about a mile through the pasture and I'd get up and walk to get to school. And when I started to Ewing School I rode a horse. We went to Ewing, used to be to a school over here that taught three through ninth grade. And went through the seventh down here. And then I went to Ewing, and it was six or seven miles around the road that way and I started riding a horse. And you had to tie him out to a tree and all that sort of stuff. And then I started walking, I could cut through and it was only about five. And it wasn't long 'cause you'd pick up some more kids and then it wasn't—and what's wrong with me is everybody carried their lunch in a syrup bucket and I've been knocked in the head a lot of times with those syrup buckets going to school and back. (MDF laughs)

MLHP: Bill always has a cute rejoinder for everything, and that's when he is bound to have gotten it. (laughs)

WAP: But, went over there two years, and then went to Gatesville one year and rode that bus. The driver was my daddy's cousin. And he was kinda cranky like—

MLHP: What was his name?

WAP: Millard—

MLHP: Millard, he's in one of these annuals.

WAP: And so we'd get stuck. The road's muddy and we'd get stuck, and he'd finally have to call on us boys. We's in the tenth grade and we's pretty good-size, and he's sit there and spin the wheels and all this sort of stuff and finally he'd call on us to get out and help push to get to going. And we'd all get out and push it off in the ditch.

MLHP: Especially if somebody was going to give them a test!

MDF: A test, I was thinking—

WAP: We'd push it off in the ditch and we'd stay there until we got bored and got tired of that and we'd all get out and we'd get it back up on the road and we'd go.

MLHP: Was Erin Carroll, was she your English teacher at Flat?

WAP: No, Miss Brummelow.

MLHP: Miss Brummelow.

WAP: But anyway, we used to do it that away and we'd then stay there thirty minutes, forty-five minutes or so and we'd get out and we'd put it back, push it back up on the road and we'd go on. (all laugh)

MDF: What kind of school bus was it?

WAP: What?

MDF: What kind of school bus did you have?

WAP: Well, it was similar to these, it was just a big box type, you know, dual wheels on the back. And it had, let me see, well, I guess it had the same type seats—row of seats on each side, like two people could fit on a seat.

MLHP: Some of those bodies in pictures look as if they're made of wood. Where they wooden?

WAP: I don't know. I wasn't interested in wood back then. (MLHP laughs) Had to cut a lot of wood back then, but I wasn't interested in it.

MLHP: Bill has told me about cutting cedar posts. Was that out here somewhere?

WAP: Number of places. Cut 'em and then a guy would come along the road that was, you know, come along in a wagon and buy 'em from ya. And—but you had to drag 'em out to the road. And I've cut those things, sometimes I'd drag 'em quarter of a mile to get a nickel apiece.

MDF: Was there a—were there any cedar mills around here? Or cedar yards?

WAP: Not then, no.

MDF: Now that would have been in the '30s when you did that?

WAP: Yeah, yeah.

MDF: Was there pretty heavy cedar coverage?

WAP: Oh, yeah. Not as heavy as now, but they was a lot of cedar then. But it'd be in the—it wasn't everywhere then. It'd be, you know, I mean it'd be a pasture with a lot of cedar in it. It might be a space, just a little bit. A lot of where the cedar is now used to be in cultivation, used to be cultivated fields. Now cedar just takes that in no time.

MDF: Where—the fellow who collected the cedar posts, where would he take those?

WAP: I don't really know. They had a firm maybe in Gatesville or somewhere. See we lived like twelve or fifteen miles from Gatesville. And didn't get to go to town too often, and when we did, we went in a wagon. We'd get up early and go to town, stay a little while and come back. Get up, seems to me like it'd be in the dark (??) home.

MLHP: He told me back he went to a funeral, when he was a kid, going in a wagon. Was it to that cemetery down at Moffett?

WAP: Yeah. Down the river bridge park that crosses Leon River down river down the other side of the Grove. And I remember we went down there to a funeral one time. Took all day. I don't even remember whose funeral it was, but I remember that long ride.

MLHP: And this is not the first band you had.

WAP: Huh?

MLHP: This is not the first band you've had to play.

WAP: No, no, I used to have a—had a band when I was a kid and we played over there at KTEM Temple on Sunday afternoon. We played for thirty minutes. And we didn't make any money, but we had a lot of fun.

MDF: So you played on the radio?

WAP: Yeah.

MLHP: The sponsor was—

WAP: W. T. Hicks. They don't—(unintelligible; wind noise) he paid for the time and everything and well, we played for thirty minutes.

MLHP: Who played with you?

WAP: Well there was Mann Kellogg and my Uncle Bill.

MLHP: They played guitar, both of 'em?

WAP: Yeah, and Garland Holt played the banjo. Joe Black played the mandolin, and I played the fiddle.

MDF: What kind of music did you play?

WAP: Just ol' country music. Back then we learned all of the new tunes on the jukebox. And there used to be a little place right where Andy's is in Gatesville. Are you familiar with it?

MDF: Unh-uh, I'm not.

WAP: That's where [Highway] 36 runs into [Highway] 84, there's a restaurant there.

MDF: Yeah, I know where that is.

WAP: That used to be a little place set there called the Dew Drop Inn, and it was a little building, and it had a juke box and it had a couple of girls in there and if you wanted to play the jukebox, they'll dance with you. And that's where all of the latest records came to, right there. Well, we'd save our money and we'd go in there, three or four of us, that played in this band, and we'd play three nickels and play that record three times. And one of those guys that played with me would learn that song. And then we'd learn it, and he'd learn the words to it and he'd play the guitar. And then we'd all learn it

from him, and then the next time we played for a dance or something, we'd all _____ (??).

MLHP: It's amazing to me, none of these—

WAP: I wished I'd learned some of the old ones.

MLHP: But they didn't learn it from the music. And to this day, if Bill can hear a tune and get it in his head, he can play it on his fiddle.

MDF: That's wonderful.

WAP: There's one of the best fiddle players in the whole country. See that big guy sitting right there in his overalls over there?

MDF: Yeah.

WAP: Boy, you're talking about a fiddle player. Now he can play one. He's bluegrass type.

MLHP: He's married to Bill's niece. Ramy Moore, and he straw bosses the bluegrass festival at Pearl on the first Saturday night every month.

WAP: Boy, he is really good.

MLHP: I think Bill's good. Bill doesn't fancy anything, but he does a good job of doing the melody, and doing it right. And he keeps good time.

WAP: I've always been—my band has always been known for dance music. Music that you can dance to. All kinds of dancing.

MLHP: Some parts of the band and Bill go to the nursing homes in Gatesville, three or four times a month and play.

WAP: I play four times a month, two times at each place, we play an hour.

MLHP: And it just fascinates the choir director at my church. He said Bill could play a couple of times.

MDF: Did you have one band all the way through the '30s?

WAP: No, just this group of boys that played with me. No, I can't remember about what year that we started, but we's about—I was probably about fifteen years old. And some of the others was a little older than I was. And uh, this went on for probably two or three years, and then they began to get scattered out. Some of them go to the army, and places like that. And then I didn't play anymore. A couple of times in the service played, and I played a little bit more. In fact, one time, I played with a group—(unintelligible; wind noise) that played all the USO clubs, which was a very good job. And I didn't play anymore, to speak of, until I retired and moved back here. About forty years I didn't play.

MDF: My goodness.

MLHP: Bill took his fiddle with him when he went in the army. He sent that and some clothes and things home when he was shipped overseas.

WAP: Well, I don't know whether I went overseas or not, but I shipped that fiddle home from _____ (??), Nevada. I still got that old case, and I still got that sticker on it where I was shipping it home.

MDF: So did you—did your group ever play in this area, or did you always go into towns?

WAP: I played for house dances all up and down this Owl Creek when I was—

MLHP: They called them house parties.

WAP: Yeah, they'd move the bed and furniture out of a couple of bedrooms and they'd invite the people, you know, and they'd come from all over and we'd play for 'em.

MDF: What did they do, did they bring food, or—what'd they do?

WAP: Well, naw, mostly just—sometimes they would, but mostly they just come to dance. Dance until twelve o'clock. We'd play "Home, Sweet Home," everybody'd go home.

MDF: They didn't sleep over? (speaking at the same time as MLHP)

MLHP: On Saturday night usually—(speaking at the same time as MDF)

WAP: Yeah—(unintelligible; wind noise)

MDF: But they didn't serve any food.

WAP: No, not as a general rule, they didn't.

MDF: Who were some of your neighbors through here?

WAP: Well, Tommie Shults used to live right down there.

MDF: Out to the—what's that the, northeast?

WAP: Road used to run straight down there—(all talking at once; unintelligible; wind noise) she lived right down there.

MDF: How far down there?

WAP: Well, I'd say it's about, oh, half a mile down there from here, and then it was probably a mile and a half from there to where we lived.

MDF: And you were on east of them.

WAP: Yeah, and then on down about a half a mile from there—(unintelligible; wind noise) and Ingraham and Ara Powell and I think they had three children—(unintelligible; wind noise) quarter mile due south—(unintelligible; wind noise) lived pretty close to them, their house was pretty close to them. And then there was another family, their name was Wilkinson, that lived due north of us, and I imagine they were three-quarters of a mile from where we lived. And that was about it.

MDF: So there was quite a distance amongst you all.

WAP: Oh, yeah, nobody lived close.

MDF: Where did you go to church when you lived out here?

WAP: Friendship Church, right over there on that hill by the creek.

MLHP: Did they have church every Sunday?

WAP: Sure did.

MLHP: And it was Methodist and Baptist or whatever?

WAP: (unintelligible; wind noise)

MLHP: Baptist church.

WAP: They had a Methodist church was, uh—I think it was, I'm trying to remember. They had one that was towards Ewing, and I can't remember—(unintelligible; wind noise) this was just the Baptists over there.

MDF: What were the main churches around this area, what denominations?

WAP: Well, Methodists and Baptists was about the extent of it—(unintelligible; wind noise)

MDF: Were there any Church of Christ?

WAP: I'm sure that there was, but they wasn't one right around where we lived. I just don't remember where the Church of Christ—closest one was (unintelligible; wind noise)

MDF: Somebody mentioned to me that there was a Primitive Baptist church in the area.

WAP: Yeah, uh—I can't think where that was. I think it was—(unintelligible; wind noise) pretty close to where—(unintelligible; wind noise) was down there, and I believe that was the one that was further on down the road a little ways from him, and I don't remember ever going there. I believe—(unintelligible; wind noise)

MLHP: Was the church at the Grove, the Lutheran church, was that the closest Lutheran church?

WAP: I imagine so. I think they had one in Coryell City but —(unintelligible; wind noise)

MLHP: So many of the folks around here are of German extraction. I think it's strange that they're not more—(unintelligible; wind noise)

MDF: So are there a lot of people who are of German extraction?

MLHP: Oh, sure.

WAP: Well, in different areas, that Hamilton is one, Hamilton up here. Uh, Shive and Aleman, and a number of communities.

MLHP: Well your family name is German. Mohler, Shults.

WAP: They didn't live in a German community.

MLHP: Right.

WAP: I was speaking of where they were all Germans, the Grove, Coryell City, were all German settlement. And then up here toward around Hamilton and all up there are German.

MDF: Were there any Mexicans or blacks who lived in this area, or came through, or worked on farms?

WAP: Very few. 'Bout all the blacks we seen whenever I was growing up, they used to come to the last day of Ewing School. They had a baseball team, and they'd have a baseball. They'd play somebody, you know, in the afternoon. They had a black team and they'd—everybody liked to watch 'em play. They put on a real good show.

MLHP: They were not local people.

WAP: No, they were from Gatesville. They'd always had a few blacks in Gatesville for a long time. They didn't allow any in Hamilton. Never did have any. They don't have many now. I wouldn't say there's not any, but they didn't want them up there. And Killeen used to be another, and probably ten million of them over there now with Fort Hood. But they used to not allow them there. There used to be a sign [saying] don't be here when the sun goes down. And now—and Hamilton is, I'm sure they could be there, but Hamilton never has had a very big black community there.

MDF: So if people out on these farms—did they ever hire folks to help them, you know, from outside their family?

WAP: Well, yeah, they did, but it was usually people in the community. There's always somebody in the community. I've chopped cotton, hoed corn, all that stuff, fifty cents a day, maybe seventy-five. I've picked cotton for fifty cents a hundred. I've done that a lot.

MLHP: Bill, did your parents own a place of their own?

WAP: Yeah. They owned that place that used to be over there.

MLHP: The one that was the Brown's?

WAP: No, it's the Gates place.

MLHP: Gates place.

MDF: Gates?

WAP: (unintelligible; wind noise) Other side of Owl Creek, there was a dam. They bought this about the time I went in the service. It was a real nice place, and the thing I remember about it is that it hurt my daddy's place, that Fort Hood took it and he'd bought it, and fenced it and everything, and he got about half what he paid for it.

MLHP: And he was just not many weeks away from making a money crop, a second crop, when they took it.

WAP: They just call you up and give you so many days to move out and they brought a bulldozer in there and pushed the house down and everything.

MDF: Were there many people who moved their houses?

WAP: No—

MDF: Took their houses with them?

WAP: Not many, not too many. I wouldn't say there wasn't anybody that did, but there wasn't very many of them. Most of them just didn't have time, didn't have they money and—(unintelligible; wind noise) and when I went in the service, I made $18.75 a month. I was supposed to get paid $21, but they took out a little bit for insurance, a little bit for laundry.

MLHP: And REA didn't come to this country until after World War II.

WAP: I went to school, we had kerosene lamps. We didn't have no electricity. My Grandpa Dorsey lived right down here, had a Delco—

MDF: Plant.

WAP: Electric power plant.

MLHP: Generator.

WAP: He had one of those. He was one of the few people in this part of the country.

MLHP: I've heard you talk about your Grandpa Dorsey being very self-sufficient. He had beehives, he had dairy—couple of cows for the milk.

WAP: He didn't use that—they didn't sell—now, my Grandpa Powell and them used to sell cream, but my Grandpa Dorsey, he was, he used to raise watermelons, and cushaws and pumpkins, and all kinds of

stuff, you know. He raised hogs for the meat. They always had a bunch of hogs, and it was farmed and everything. They did the light plant, he was a blacksmith, and so he had a lot of things he could do, and my Grandpa Powell—

MLHP: Very self-sufficient family.

WAP: My Grandpa Powell drilled wells all over this whole country. I told you that awhile ago. And my daddy used to go help him when he was growing up.

MDF: What kind of rig did he use to do that, do you know?

WAP: Well, he had a, just had an old derrick, a wooden-type derrick and everything. And I think they had a, some kind of a little ol' gasoline engine. I don't know too much about it, but I—

MLHP: Did the derrick let down?

WAP: Yeah, it had to let down—

MLHP: And took it on a trailer.

WAP: Yeah, it had to let down—

MLHP: With mules—

WAP: Mules and a wagon, or trailer or something. Yeah. Sure did.

MDF: Was the well around your house a dug well or was it a drilled well?

WAP: Our place we bought over here, they drilled one there.

MLHP: Let me ask you something—

(interruption in taping)

MLHP: They always had—they would be considered luxuries now, for a family that was just really self-sufficient. She said they never had any monetary wealth, but she said they ate very well. They didn't want for anything.

WAP: During the Depression, nobody—(speaking at the same time)

MLHP: This was before that, though, I'm talking about when Granny was a girl.

WAP: What I'm saying, during the Depression, I was old enough to remember when things were so tough and all, and we didn't have a lot of different things to eat, but I never did go to bed hungry in my life.

MLHP: I remember you telling me about the Christmas that you remember.

MDF: What was that?

WAP: Well, I had pneumonia and I was at my Grandpa Powell's, and I got a big, red apple for Christmas. Boy, it was about that big. And I thought that was the best Christmas I ever had, because back then there wasn't too many apples and oranges floating around down here. You'd get that and some peppermint candy, and all that sort of stuff.

MDF: Did your family keep orchards at all?

WAP: Uh, my Grandpa Dorsey had a pretty good orchard. That's another thing he had. He had—he always had an orchard and raised quite a bit of stuff, and my Grandpa Powell and them also had one. I

remember they had a couple of apple trees, which is unusual for this part of the country. And then they had peaches and apricots, and a pear tree and all that kind of—both of them had orchards.

MLHP: Did you wear store-bought clothes when you went to school?

WAP: Um, not until I got close to the—

MLHP: Graduation?

WAP: Yeah, last several years I probably did, but my mother made all of our clothes. She made overalls and shirts on a machine.

MDF: So she just bought the cloth in Gatesville or some place like that?

WAP: Yeah, bought the material.

MDF: Was there a particular business that you all traded with for that kind of thing?

WAP: Uh, I don't remember. They had two or three stores here. They had Alvis-Garner, and—which was a dry goods store, and Joe Hannah's was another one, but he mostly sold clothes. The _____ (??) store had different things. Uh, let's see—

MLHP: Was Rhodes'?

WAP: Uh, back then they weren't there.

MLHP: They came along after that.

WAP: I just don't remember. She ordered some things. You could order from a catalog. You could order stuff from Sears.

MDF: How old were you when you started working, when you started working around the house and helping your father out with fieldwork and that sort of—

WAP: I wasn't very old. I imagine by the time I was ten years old, I was driving a team plowing and doing all there was to do, about nine or ten. And when I was probably twelve or fourteen, that's when I used to hire out to go, you know, chop cotton and pick corn, and pick cotton and all that stuff. I was probably twelve or fourteen, I was doing that then, working for somebody else. You know when we get through with ours, well then I could go—

MDF: Earn money somewhere else.

WAP: And on Fourth of July, if all of the crop work was done, and there wasn't any fence to build, we could go fishing on the Fourth of July.

MDF: And where did you—did you have a favorite place to go fishing?

WAP: Well, no, just anywhere where there's water.

MDF: What did you used to catch here?

WAP: Well, there used to be a lot of perch, and some small catfish and all in that creek. And but usually you had to work. Usually everything wasn't caught up.

MDF: What about sorghum mills? Did anybody have a sorghum mill around here?

WAP: My Grandpa Dorsey had one. I forgot to tell you.

MDF: He had everything! (laughs)

MLHP: I mean it, I told you!

WAP: He had one and I used to—it used to be my job to help him. My mother and daddy used to run this mill for him. And they'd take—the people would bring the cane in, and leave it, and they'd make the syrup on shares. And they'd get paid in syrup. Boy, I got to where I didn't like that sight of syrup. We'd probably get about forty gallons. They got paid with the syrup.

MLHP: Well, didn't that go in your lunch?

WAP: Yeah, yeah, I've had it put in my lunch.

MDF: What did you usually have for lunch?

WAP: Well, we had biscuit with bacon, and all kind of meats, you know. They used to kill the hogs and hang the side in the smokehouse and all that sort of stuff. But my job at that syrup mill was that they had the horse that went around and around and around, squeeze the juice out. And when that stuff come through the mill, they used to call it pummins, you know, the juices out of it. And my job used to be to take a pitchfork and drag that and stack it out in a big pile there.

And uh, talking about the syrup, when I used to walk and take the school bus early, some people named Brown, and I used to stay with them sometimes when it was raining and all, and that old lady fixed my lunch. And she'd make big ol' biscuits like this and she'd put enough in for about three people. And it'd have whatever kind of meat that they had in there, and she'd take about two of those biscuits, she'd take her finger and punch a hole in them and pour them full of syrup, and she'd mash that hole up, and I used to call them syrup Os. And she'd put me about a half a dozen of them in. I'd leave down there going to school, and it looked like I had a twenty-five-pound bag going. (MLHP laughs)

MLHP: I remember you telling me about those big biscuits, pinchin' that hole.

WAP: Yeah, pour 'em full of syrup and then mash that hole shut, you know. And Mr. Brown was a great big man and he's bald-headed. He chewed tobacco, and she was a little bitty woman, I bet she didn't weigh ninety pounds. And she dipped snuff. Had a big ol' fireplace, and at night we'd sit in front of the fireplace, and she'd be over here and boy, she'd just be a sewing and she'd have a spit bucket over there, you know. He'd go spit in that bucket, he'd get right down over it spit, you know, and she'd be sitting over here and pttt—(imitates spitting) like that and hit that bucket. When I was there one time, sitting by that fireplace, it's cold wintertime and he'd bent over and spit in that bucket, and she didn't look and she spit on top of his head, you know, she spit that snuff on top of his head. He raised up and he said, "Well Mama, I believe you spit on me." (all laugh) I (??)—

MDF: That's wonderful.

WAP: But they were really good to me, those people were. I could stay, spend the night there any time the weather was bad, you know, in the wintertime. It was way before daylight when that bus come by. I tell you, every once and a while, the weather'd get bad and I'd stay with them. And they always fed me good, and they took care of me real good.

MLHP: Did you have to buy shoes?

WAP: Yeah, yeah, we bought shoes.

MLHP: Wasn't there somebody in your family that had a last and could make shoes?

WAP: Well, yeah, now I didn't make 'em. We used to repair all the time.

MDF: Grandpa Dorsey? (laughs)

MLHP: Probably!

MDF: Was there somebody who could make shoes?

WAP: Well, yeah, they'd—not in my family, but they used to be some people who could make 'em. But we use to buy the shoes and, of course, we'd go barefooted about eight months a year, you know, didn't have to have 'em for too long. But you could buy a pair—I remember the way the shoes looked. They had a regular work shoe, and it had this piece that come over the toe to here. I forget what they called those, but Daddy sewed on them, on the top. What it was two pieces of leather on here and put together in the middle. And then they had a deal over the top. And they cost fifty cents or a dollar a pair, I don't remember what it was.

MLHP: You all didn't play baseball much, did you? Chunked a lot of rocks—

WAP: Softball, we played a little bit when we went to school.

MDF: Did you—what time of the year did you start school?

WAP: September, I suppose. If all the cotton was out of—

MDF: So you'd wait until—

WAP: School started at the same time, but if we weren't through picking cotton, well, I started after the cotton was—and everybody else was that same way. You know, you had to help harvest the crop. You might be a week or two late with the school, but that's the way they did it back then. They had a certain date to start school, but everybody might not be there then. But they'd kind of catch up.

MDF: And then when did you finish the school year?

WAP: I believe—well, like it is now, I imagine about the end of May or something like that.

MLHP: Did you all shoot marbles very much?

WAP: Oh, yeah, I used to wear many a pair of overalls out crawling around on the ground shootin' them marbles.

MLHP: Where'd you get the marbles?

WAP: Well, some of 'em give to me, and then some of 'em, you know, you could buy 'em. For a nickel you could get a pretty good sack full of them, I imagine.

MLHP: Didn't your daddy make some?

WAP: No, I don't think so. But he—I inherited some from him.

MDF: Did you—you talked about, you know, if you got through with everything you could take off on July Fourth. Was there any other time when you—when you had parties or just got together with other kids?

WAP: Well, other than kinfolks, not much. And occasionally there'd be somebody else. The last day of school now was a really big thing, the last day of school.

MDF: What did they do?

WAP: Well they'd have a barbecue, a meal of some sort, and then in the afternoon they'd probably have a

ball game or something. And then that night, some of the younger adults would put on a play. They'd learn these parts in this play, and that was a big thing. We'd play right over here at the church house. They had a stage with, a temporary stage, and they put it right in front of the church house, and move all of the seats out of the church house, the benches out, put them out there. Used to have a play at the end of every year, they had this play.

MDF: Do you remember any of the plays they put on?

WAP: I don't remember the name of them. Most of them were, you know, comical deals.

MDF: They were humorous things, or—

WAP: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MDF: No serious stuff.

WAP: No, no, it was all funny—(unintelligible; wind noise)

MLHP: Was there somebody in the community who got the material for the play together, or—

WAP: Well yeah, I imagine maybe that the schoolteacher had something to do with it.

MLHP: Was a one-room school.

WAP: Yeah, we had—I went through seven grades in that one-room school. As you'd come in, there was a sign there that said pipeline crossing. All right, well the school used to be on the south side of that about a hundred yards of the pipeline. When I was going to school was when they put that pipeline in. And it had seven grades, and when it was your time to have your class, the teacher had a long bench in front of her desk and you got up from where you sit and all your class went and sat on that. And she had that class right there. She got through with you, you'd go set down and the next class, all in the same room.

MDF: Yeah, what did you do when you weren't sitting there doing your lessons with her?

WAP: Well, you had a desk, you know. You went and sat at your desk, and you could study, and do your homework, and do whatever. She'd give you something to do, see.

MLHP: She had to keep you busy.

WAP: Yeah, it's pretty hard sometimes. Pretty tough. (MDF laughs) See that great big guy coming right there? Coming in?

MDF: Yeah, uh-huh.

WAP: His name is Frank Black, and his younger brother is the one who used to play the mandolin in my band.

MDF: Oh, my. Did he grow up around here?

WAP: Yeah, they were about three miles on further east of where we lived, two or three miles.

MLHP: Did you tell me that Garland Holt was related to you?

WAP: Yeah, he's my cousin. He's Emmett's grandson.

MLHP: Emmett Powell.

WAP: Yeah.

MLHP: Grandson.

WAP: His mother—Emmett had a daughter named Annie.

MLHP: Okay, this is his grandpa. And he played in a band.

WAP: Yeah, he played the banjo. And the other, one of the older ones that played with me was my uncle. He's my mother's baby brother.

MLHP: Right. He's only six years older than you.

WAP: Five, five years older than me.

MDF: And where does Mr. Black live?

WAP: He—

MLHP: He lives now in Gatesville.

WAP: In Gatesville. I know him, I see him, talk to him once and a while—(unintelligible; wind noise)

William Ake Powell

Date of birth: 12 January 1921
Communities affiliated with: Ewing, Flat, Friendship
Interviewed by Thad Sitton

TS: This is Thad Sitton. Today is September 5, 2001. I'm interviewing for the first time William Powell at Mr. Powell's home in Gatesville, Texas. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University. [Mary Lou "Honey" Hudson Powell also took part in this interview.]

You know what we're doing with these. Tell me about the place where you grew up, the family farm. I've forgotten a little—it was in Friendship?

WAP: Yeah, I was born near the Friendship Cemetery. We lived there when I was just a little boy, I don't know just how long. But my daddy bought an old farm that somebody had let go back during the Depression, I suppose. Nobody had lived there for a very good while. And he and my grandpa built a house on it, a little bungalow. Four-room bungalow house, no ceilings, no screens on the windows, but it had a porch on it, porch on the front. And I don't know how old I was, then, probably six or seven years old when we moved over there.

TS: What year were you born?

WAP: I's born in 1921. And we lived there several years. We were still living there, I guess, whenever I went in the service. And farmed that place and helped my grandpa and grandma. They lived, I guess, about half a mile through the woods from where we lived.

TS: Were y'all renting? Was it on your grandfather's land?

WAP: No, my daddy bought this place, and he and my grandpa built this house on it. One thing I remember about it, it had laid out all those years, we killed forty-five rattlesnakes the first year we lived on it. Some of them good, too.

TS: You know, I've sort of had this same interview with people all over the eastern half of Texas, and people from Coryell County talk more about rattlesnakes than anybody I've ever talked to.

WAP: Well, used to be a bunch of them here. Not many here, now. They've hunted 'em and—

TS: Too many rattlesnake roundups.

WAP: Yeah, yeah. There's some here, but not like it used to be. Out there, where I lived out yonder for twenty years, I never seen a rattlesnake on my place. Big bunch of copperheads, no rattlesnakes. That was right on the end of a mountain. But they hunted a lot of 'em, so I guess they cut 'em down. Just take that gasoline and spray in there and run 'em out and catch 'em.

TS: The spray drives them out?

WAP: Yeah, the gasoline. They can't stand that. You take one of these little old spray things you spray your yard with, fill it up with gasoline, spray it in them holes, and they'll come out.

TS: Yeah, that's how they get 'em.

WAP: That's how the run 'em out, and they catch 'em, see.

TS: All this playing with rattlesnakes is a modern phenomenon, right? Y'all didn't play with 'em.

WAP: No, we tried to kill all of 'em when I was growing up. We went up to my Grandpa Dorsey's one Sunday afternoon, we went over there to eat lunch with all the kids and grandkids. And my daddy had an old Model T Ford that didn't have no top on it, had a little hoopy bed on the back, and we was coming through the woods, and a big old rattlesnake started cross the road, and he's going to run over it with that car, and that thing stood up, you'd see his head above the fenders on the front of that thing. Boy, it was hitting! But we were banging that thing, we finally got it killed, and it's well over five, close to six foot, long. And I remember, we tied a wire on it and dragged it back to my grandfather's to show it to everybody. And then about a year later, my mother and her sisters were going along there, and they killed another about that same size, wasn't fifty yards from where that other one was.

TS: Might have been the mate. They say that where there's one big one, there's another big one.

WAP: Oh, yeah. But we had a lot of rattlesnakes. They drilled a well, and 'course, we didn't have no pipe or anything, we pumped water with a gasoline pump jack. And I carried the water, me and my brother carried the water in a bucket for the cows. And, man, they drank a lot. (laughs) We had to carry it from that well up to an old trough, you know. Had to do those years.

TS: Young people don't understand how much water cows drink, right? If they don't carry it bucket by bucket, they don't know.

WAP: Yeah. My grandpa used to have a well, had one of them long buckets on a rope, you know, and it's about sixty foot. I guess that thing held three or four gallons, I don't know how much that bucket held. But he had a bunch of old Jersey cows. They sold cream and butter, that was one of their deals, and ever' week they took a can of cream and can of butter to town. They also had a milk separator to get the cream off. You had to turn that thing by hand, I've turned it a lot of times, too. And he had all them old cows, and we had to water them by hand when the creek would go dry, we'd have to draw that water. And, man, they'd drink it faster than you'd pour it in that trough. The time you got another bucket drawed, that trough was dry, it's bone dry, they're standing there waiting on it.

TS: So, that was part of your grandfather's weekly round. He had excess cream and butter that he'd sell in town, Gatesville?

WAP: Yeah, a place in town bought it. If I'm not mistaken, somebody used to come around and pick that up during the week. Yeah, I think so, but I don't know.

TS: How far were y'all out of town?

WAP: Oh, we's about twelve or thirteen miles, something like that.

TS: Pretty good ways.

WAP: Yeah. We used to go to town in a wagon, and we'd get up and leave early and it'd be dark when we get home. But, also, my grandpa had all those old cows, and in the wintertime we used to feed 'em the prickle pears. We'd build a fire, take a pitchfork. Burn the stickers off of 'em, and boy them old cows just loved that. That was another chore we used to have. I used to do that, too. And my grandpa

and grandma'd have a big garden, and me and my brother used to have to pick all them beans, and help shell 'em, and all that stuff. You know, they'd store the dry beans, and we'd pick 'em when they'd get dry and shell 'em and my grandpa'd put 'em up. And we'd have 'em all winter.

TS: This is your daddy's parents? What were their names?

WAP: Yeah, my grandpa's name was Sam, I think his name was Samuel Ingram, and my grandmother's name was Josie. And my daddy was the oldest child, so he was kind of—he lived there pretty close, and he was kind of the one that had to see after them. So, he handed it down to me and my brother, and we seen after 'em. But we just lived on that farm and raised cotton and corn. There's a lot of flint rocks, man, you never seen as many rocks. It's a rocky place.

TS: You know, this—I'll be truthful, Coryell County, most of it, doesn't look like the best cotton land I've ever seen.

WAP: Well, it'd sure grow it, but you'd sure wear out the hoes trying to get the cockleburs and the grass out of it. Yeah, it'd grow. That old place we had over there, it was kind of a reddish-black dirt and had a lot of flint rocks in it. Every time it rained, every time you plowed it, you plowed up a bunch more. And we used to haul 'em and build fences and everything else out of 'em, you know, pick a lot of 'em up.

TS: So, it wore out your hoes and it wore out your plow points.

WAP: Oh, yeah, it'd wear all your equipment out, wear you out, too.

TS: I mean, flint's about as hard as it—it's not sandstone.

WAP: Oh, yeah. And we had a lot of it and had a lot of post oaks, too. That's post oak country where we's at. After them post oaks all been cut down, you just cut them sprouts about two or three times a year. They'd come up and get about that high before you'd know it. We'd take a grubbing hoe and go cut all of them down.

TS: Had your grandfather been there a long time on his place?

WAP: Well, my grandpa was—it was part of a grant, I guess, that his people got after the war or something. Because my Grandpa Powell, he was the first one on upper Owl Creek. And then he had a brother named Bun. Bunyon, I believe was his name, and I'm not sure, but I think this is right, he was given the next place, next to my grandpa's, but he decided he didn't want to live there, so he sold his to a man by the name of Charlie Brown. And then on the other side of him was, I believe it was Uncle Jim. That was another one of my grandpa's brothers. And on the other side of him was another one, his name was Uncle George. And then on the other side of him, right next to him, was one named Emmett. And they was all Powells, brothers.

TS: Just side by side.

WAP: Yeah, right down that creek, right down Owl Creek.

TS: So, all y'all backed on Owl Creek.

WAP: Yeah. Well, some of 'em went across on the other side a little, but it was all Owl Creek. And Uncle Jeff—now, I left Jeff out. No, no, I didn't. But anyway, Uncle Jeff, he had the mill to grind the corn, and he ground everybody's cornmeal, and one of my jobs, about every other Saturday, was to go down to the barn and shuck and shell and nub this corn, get it where it's cleaned and everything—I'd nub it and then shuck it—and do a flour sack full, all you could put in a flour sack. And we had an old black mare, and I'd saddle this mare up, get that corn up front of it, and I'd take it to the mill and get

it ground. And he'd keep part of it for the grinding, and I'd bring the rest of it home. And that was about every two weeks, and it's always on a weekend.

TS: How much would he keep, what was his cut?

WAP: I don't remember, but I know he used to take part.

TS: That was just the deal wherever corn was ground, and every community had to have somebody, there had to be somebody reasonably nearby, to grind your corn, or you had a problem.

WAP: Yeah, that's right. Well, he used to have the mill and used to grind the corn. And my Grandpa Powell, he was a well digger, he dug wells. My daddy used to help him a lot when he's growing up.

TS: That's interesting, that's one of those—he's a farmer, but he's got a special skill.

WAP: Yeah, yeah. He used to have a well machine, he used to dig wells, he dug that one on the place where my daddy bought. And then my Grandpa Dorsey on my mother's side, he had almost everything. He did hay baling, he did threshing, all of this. He had the blacksmith's shop, he sharpened the plows and put shoes on the mules and the horses. And had bees, he'd sell honey. Had a lot of bees. And I remember one thing, he had the first Delco light plant in the whole county, he sure did.

TS: So, he was a mechanic, he had mechanical aptitude.

WAP: Yeah, he did it all, he had it all. And his place was the next place west of my Grandpa Powell's place. They joined. So, my mother and daddy was raised up next to each other.

TS: What was Mr. Dorsey's first name?

WAP: His name was—let me think. His name was William, William Henry Dorsey, I believe—W. H.—I remember, yeah, that's the way it was. People used to go by their initials. But he had a bunch of things that he did, he used to raise—he went down on the creek, and the land was a little bit rough, wasn't cleared quite enough for cotton and corn, but it's good dirt, and he went down there and cleaned it up, and made him a patch down there right on that creek, and he used to plant cushaws and pumpkins and everything right in there. It was good black dirt along that creek, and I've seen him haul them old cushaws and pumpkins out of there by the wagonload. Man, he raised some big ones down there.

TS: What is a cushaw? I know it's a kind of squash, but what does it look like?

WAP: Well, it's bigger on one end, it's kind of got a neck on it. Some of 'em are striped, some of 'em are yellow, and some of 'em have green stripes on 'em.

TS: Are they a kind of watermelon?

WAP: No, more of a pumpkin. What they did, they used to bake it. And you'd put sugar or something on it, bake it, and I remember them cutting it in squares. The meat on it would be about that thick, and they'd cook it on the shell, you know, they'd cut it and put the butter and sugar on it and all. And they'd keep, you could put them in the barn or somewhere, put 'em where they wouldn't freeze, and they'd keep all winter. And I used to pull the tomatoes, green, in the wintertime, before the frost got 'em, and put 'em in cottonseed. They'd get ripe in there, and they'd take 'em out right along.

TS: I didn't know that. So, they would ripen in cottonseed?

WAP: Yeah, yeah. And I've seen people wrap 'em in paper, and they'd ripen if they were pretty far along. But I've seen 'em put 'em in cottonseed. But when we came along there and got through with all this, I went to school at Owl Creek through the seventh grade. We lived, I suppose, a mile and a half from

that school and walked to school. The teacher used to board with us, stay with us, and we walked to school, me and the schoolteacher. Had to climb through some fences, some place there wasn't no gates. Went the closest way. And I graduated from there, then I went to Ewing School, which was the other way about—I don't know—maybe six or seven miles, pretty good ways. I started riding a horse. They didn't have no place to put your horse, just tie him to a tree, no sheds or nothing. And man, it used to snow a lot more then than it does now, here. Man, it's cold and wet, and I finally give that up and started cutting straight through, walking. I think it's only about four or five miles that away, maybe five. But it wasn't but about a mile or two that I began to pick up some more kids. They'd start to falling in, and it'd be a bunch of us before we'd get to school. Everybody carried their lunch in a—we called it a syrup bucket. It was either a half-a-gallon or a gallon bucket, and they'd punch holes in the lid where it would get air, you know. Had a handle on it, carry your lunch in that. And I tell everybody, that's what wrong with me. I've been knocked in the head too many times with one of them syrup buckets. You're always getting in something with some of them kids, that's the first thing they'd want to do, hit you in the head with that bucket.

TS: Well, you were walking back and forth to school with a weapon in one hand, that's what it amounted to. I've heard of people getting hit with a syrup bucket.

WAP: Oh, yeah, I've been knocked in the head with 'em. And I went there two years, to Ewing, eight and nine. And then they got the school bus along about that time, and I went to Gatesville one year, and I rode that school bus, and the old roads were muddy. My daddy's cousin used to drive that bus, and his name was Millard Powell, and he was kind of tough on us. He's a little older fellow, and he didn't put up with no foolishness from us. He'd pick us up, and we used to cross down there at a place called Straw's Mill down here. But in wintertime when it rained, that river would get out and get across, and you got to go way down south of here and cross and come all the way back up that way and pick us up. And he used to come by down there, I used to have to catch that bus, sometimes, 4:30 in the morning. That was after you done the milking and everything. Catch that bus about 4:30, and we'd go way back up this other way on the other side of the river to a little place called Turnover—maybe a little further, I don't know—and pick them kids up, and then we'd have to go all the way back, go down close to the Leon before we'd get across and come back to Gatesville. I think it was forty-four miles, as well as I remember. And the old roads was muddy, bad, and slick. We'd get a ways up close to Turnover or somewhere, and the bus'd get where it wouldn't go no more, the wheels was spinning and all, and finally Millard would ask us boys to get out and push. So, we'd get out, we'd all get on one side and we'd push it off in the ditch. (laughs) So, we'd stay there awhile. He's sunk, then, he couldn't go no more. We'd stay there awhile, and after we got tired of that, we'd push him back up on the road, get him a-going again, and we'd go on. We'd get to school about ten or eleven or twelve o'clock—eleven, sometimes, we'd get to Gatesville—have to go all the way back down there across the river and come on back. Sometimes it'd be real late when we'd get there.

TS: Was this a real school bus, or was it one of those early school busses? There were some homemade jobs.

WAP: Naw, this was a big yellow school bus. It was when they first got 'em. And so I went to school up there, and when I's—we's talking about my music, when I was about twelve years old, my daddy had always had a fiddle, but he didn't want me to play with it none. That was his—that was something that they didn't come by too often, he didn't want kids playing with it too much. And he'd never let me mess with his fiddle, and the grandkids come along, and he'd put them up in the middle of the bed and give it to 'em. But, when I's twelve, my Uncle Cecil Dorsey, which was my mother's brother, decided he wanted to play a fiddle, so he bought one or traded for one or got one from somebody. It was a pretty good fiddle, but he decided it wasn't cut out for him, so he decided he'd trade it to me. So, I plowed cotton for him ten days and furnished the team for that fiddle, and I've still got it today back yonder in a case in a closet. And that's what I learned to play on.

TS: What kind of a fiddle was it?

WAP: Well, it was a copy of a Stradivarius, named after a Swedish violinist named Oley Buhl.

TS: Yeah. You know, you showed me your grandfather's, we looked at your grandfather's last time. Your grandfather's is a—

WAP: It is a Hopf. H-o-p-f, Hopf, made in Germany. But I still got that other one back there, and I learned to play with it.

TS: Did you teach yourself?

WAP: Yeah, but I—my grandpa and my daddy both played, but they really didn't show me anything, and it took me awhile to learn how to play. The thing of it is, you didn't really have all that much time to practice. We got up early, and we went to work, we worked all day long. You'd come in about dark, you'd carry that water for them old cows, and you had to milk, and you fed the horses and the hogs and everything, and eat supper and everything. Well, man, it'd be nine or ten o'clock, time you get to here, well, you's pretty well give out, and you didn't have a whole lot of time to fiddle. But I used to get out on the porch, we had an old long porch in front, and I'd get out on the porch, and I know my mother and daddy got tired of that. Man, I'd saw that thing. And my mother says that the first time I hit a tune, well, I come running in there and wanted her to listen to it—first time I played one where anybody can recognize it. (laughs)

TS: The fiddle isn't one of those instruments that sounds too good until somebody starts to know how to play it.

WAP: Yeah, kind of squawky. But that's the way I started, and I finally got to where I played pretty good, got some cousins, first one thing and another, we got a little band up, called it Powell String Band.

We used to play at some of the house dances up and down the creek. The old people would want to have a dance, and they'd move the beds out of a couple of rooms, and we'd go play, and, man, they'd have a big time. We got to playing for a few of them, and then, later on, Mr. W. T. Hicks, used to own Western Auto here in Gatesville, so, we didn't make any money out of it, but he paid for the radio time, and we used to play over KTEM, Temple, on Sunday evening, I think from three o'clock to 3:30. And they'd put us all in a little old room about the size of that refrigerator, there. No air conditioning, and, man, was it hot! And we'd get in there, and we'd play for thirty minutes. On regular, and have a big time, you know. That was big time, then. We wasn't making no money, but we'd go and have a big time, and lot of people'd listen at us. And we did that. After I learned to play, I couldn't even tune my fiddle, I'd get ready to go play for a dance, I'd take my fiddle to the field where my daddy was, and he'd tune it for me before I'd leave like it'd supposed to be.

TS: What would happen at one of those house dances? What would they be like?

WAP: Well, they'd get these two rooms, and they had somebody, we used to call 'em the bookkeeper. They'd have somebody, and people would pay to dance, they'd have so many sets, and they'd have enough people on a set that they'd be plenty of room in those two rooms to dance. So, when they'd call your number, well, you could dance. And they used to play two sets for a quarter, or something like that. And you didn't dance unless you were on a set, and they had a guy to kind of see after all of that, make sure everybody danced when they're supposed to. And I'll tell somebody, money was hard to come by, and sometimes we'd end up with knives all kind of stuff they traded, you know, to get to dance. We had an old boy used to see after all that for us, and he'd take whatever they had.

TS: Now, this would be going on in a private home, right? They'd move the furniture out.

(MLHP enters room; interruption in taping)

WAP: Yeah, this would be in people's home. They didn't have no other place to have it, so they'd want to have a house dance, so they'd just move the furniture out, say hi to everybody, and get cranked up.

TS: But, then, the musicians would be getting the quarters, right? That was your pay for coming there.

WAP: Well, no, we didn't make any money.

MLHP: Play him "Faded Love."

WAP: Aw, naw, not now.

MLHP: Well, before he leaves, I want you to play "Faded Love."

TS: I've already planned to ask that. I talked to the Wolf brothers, and the Wolf brothers said that they went to some house dances as kids where their parents told them, Now, if they start throwing rocks again, you get under the wagon.

WAP: Yeah, I played for some of 'em like that. There used to be two bunches of them Wolfs. One of them was Tama Valley down there, and the other bunch was way down on Owl Creek, where it runs into the lake.

TS: I think this was the first bunch.

WAP: Yeah, and there used to be a Wolf family and used to be a Whatley family, and they was kind of feuding, but they always come to the dance, and they always had a fight or two while they was there. They always paired off to about the same age, they always got into it like that. Maybe two of 'em would get into it, and then the next two, they'd take it up, sometimes they'd be three or four or more at one time, you know. Just go outside and fight awhile.

TS: So, they kind of picked the appropriate person. A young guy wouldn't—

WAP: They didn't all get on one, they picked the one about their caliber, and that's the way it started. And sometimes it'd pick up a little bit and they'd be three or four of 'em going. But they never did all jump on the same one. Fair fist fight, they called it. And I remember one guy, I think his name was Francis Wolf, but he wore suspenders, he'd get out there and want to fight, and his wife could hold him back with those suspenders—he never did break a-loose! (TS laughs) She'd hold him by them suspenders, he never did get in a fight, but he's always ready. He knew just how hard to pull, he wasn't going to break them. We played for a dance one time at Leon Junction, a big old two-story house, and I guess they got too much home-brew or something. But anyway, there was a rick of cordwood out in the front yard, and had a big old porch all the way across the front, had a tin roof on it, I think, and they got to throwing that cordwood on top of that house, made a terrible racket. I remember that, I never will forget it, 'cause that scared me to death.

TS: So, when you gave one of these house parties, you had to face the possibility that—

WAP: That something like that might happen. Oh, yeah, sometime it would. But I played for those all up and down the creek for a long time. Then, I went in the service, and I got away from it a long time. And I retired, and I moved back up here, well, I kind of got with some of these guys and got to playing again and now I got a little band called the Country Ramblers. We don't play for anything much except senior citizens things. And they don't drink or smoke inside, and we get to go home by ten o'clock, something like that.

TS: How would the family get the word out that they were going to have one?

WAP: Oh, well, they'd get it out, it'd just pass by mouth. Or on the telephone, some people had telephones, then. They'd start a week or two ahead of time, you know, that they's going to have one, and word would get around.

TS: What would y'all play? What did people want you to play?

WAP: Oh, well, just whatever. We used to learn a lot of the newer songs. Now, Grandpa, he played all old breakdowns and all that stuff, that wasn't really good dance music. I used to want to learn all of the new songs, because I played for the dances. And it's the same way, now, I don't play in these fiddling contests 'cause I don't play that kind of music. Because I still play dance music. But I wished I'd have learned some of those old songs from Grandpa, now.

TS: What about your grandpa as a fiddler? You said that one of your earliest memories was that he would sit out on the porch and play. And he was loud, too, I believe it was.

WAP: He's hard of hearing, and he played loud, anyway. You could hear him for two or three miles up and down the creek, people could get out on their porch and listen to him play. Yeah, he'd get out there, he'd get through with all his work, and he'd get out there about nine or ten o'clock, and he'd really bear down on it. That's about all the playing he did that I remember. And my daddy, he never did play for dances, my daddy didn't. They'd have a last day of school or a picnic or something, and they'd get a bunch of 'em to play, and my daddy would play.

TS: Those end-of-school things, virtually every community, every person I talked to, has mentioned them. That would be that school closing thing, right?

WAP: They'd have a picnic, and we used to have a play that night. Adults would get a play-type thing, and everybody would pick whoever they wanted for the parts, and all of that. They had to memorize all of that, and they'd practice a few times, and then they'd put that play on for 'em the last night. I remember they used to build a stage that fit in front of the Friendship Church house. They built a stage out front, and that's where they used to put the play on. That was the last day of school, but they did it in front of the church.

TS: Would they tear it down after it was over?

WAP: Well, I don't remember if they tore it down or just moved it, put it somewhere, but they took it away, the next day it'd be gone.

TS: Yeah, they'd move it in especially and set it up for the play at the end of school.

WAP: For the play, that's right. I remember quite a bit about it, that play thing was a big thing. Back then, people come from all over to see that. It was kind of like the theater they have now, you know.

TS: I mean, people were starved for things to do, and they would come to those school affairs.

WAP: All adjoining communities would come to one of those last day of schools. And they used to always have a big barbecue for the dinner that day. And some of 'em would get together, my daddy used to help barbecue, he's pretty good at that, they'd barbecue and all the women would bring dishes. And they'd have that spread at dinnertime, and you talking about eating, now, there's plenty to eat. Didn't cost anybody, it's all free. They'd have a big thing, sometimes they'd get the—when I's going to Ewing over there, they used to have a baseball game in the afternoon, and had a black team here in town, and boy they's good, and they put on some kind of show when they'd play ball. Everybody loved to watch 'em, they had a good time. Well, local people would get up a ball team, or they might have one that played sometimes, but they'd play this black team. And this black team, they could cut all kind of capers while they were—throwing the ball or doing this, and everybody just loved—and,

man, they'd have crowds for things like that, people'd come from all over to see it.

TS: So, kind of a Harlem Globetrotters' baseball team.

WAP: Yeah, they'd put on a good show. And they'd feed 'em all, didn't pay 'em anything but they'd feed 'em all and maybe have a big watermelon feast after they got through and all that sort of stuff. I remember that's what they used to do over there at Ewing when I's going over there.

TS: Well, the baseball used to be, the community baseball games used to be, just as big as the school events. People cared about it, every community had a team. Right?

WAP: Yeah, they used to be real serious about that baseball. They may have played out in the pasture somewhere, but they's serious about that playing. And a lot of times they'd go late Sunday afternoon and play ball. Might be playing two teams from the same place. They'd choose up sides and have a baseball game.

TS: There's a great old photo of two teams in, I think, Fayette County, from about the turn of the century. Most of the players have on cowboy hats. There's a ball and a bat and that's it. There's no gloves on anybody's hands. There's like twenty people out in the field and twenty people into bat. And I don't know how hard the ball was, but there's not a glove in sight.

WAP: I know it's a hard ball, just about like the ones they play with now. Didn't have all those fine gloves that they got this day and time.

TS: Well, you know, you had these two grandfathers that had all these side occupations going on. What did you help out with? Did you help out with the well digging, did you help out with the haying?

WAP: Whatever they needed, you know.

TS: You sound like you were close enough to be constantly drawn in.

WAP: Yeah, I used to work that hay baler all the time, haul hay and put it in the barn and all that.

MLHP: You and Aunt Roxie used to run a race picking cotton.

WAP: Yeah, I got an aunt that I lived with them a couple of years. They farmed a big old place, and my aunt, she's still living, she liked to work me to death trying to pick as much cotton as she could. And ever' other day—it took about somewhere around twelve hundred pounds to fourteen hundred pounds to make a bale, depending on the kind of cotton. My uncle, he done the farming but he didn't do no cotton picking. And damn, I had to pick that cotton, and ever' other day you took a bale to the gin, then. Me and my aunt picked a bale of cotton ever' other day. And it wasn't anything unusual if the cotton was good for her to pick four hundred pounds a day. And we went out there and stayed all day.

MLHP: I know Aunt Roxie wore gloves. Did you wear gloves?

WAP: Naw, I never did wear no gloves.

MLHP: And you wore a cotton sack, and it dragged on the ground. Aunt Roxie made them?

WAP: Well, either that or my mother made 'em. My mother made 'em for us at home.

TS: Some people wore gloves that left their fingertips out, so they could still—because you needed to have that—

WAP: That feel, yeah. I used to try to pick as much cotton as she could, and boy it just killed me, but I don't think I ever did.

TS: Yeah, well, there was a lot of—if you had something that hurt real bad, like a back, you were never going to be as good as the people that didn't.

WAP: Well, some people didn't have a knack to gather the cotton. And there just wasn't hardly no way to get as much as they could, you don't care how good yourself. Some people could just pick a lot more cotton than others.

MLHP: Aunt Roxie had to get up way before everybody else, because she had breakfast and dinner, lunch, to fix.

WAP: Yeah, and we'd carry the lunch with us. My uncle, he'd get up early and go out to the barn and kill two or three chickens and dress 'em and bring 'em, and my aunt would fry those chickens, make a big bunch of biscuits and a big bunch of gravy. And man, that's good eating, you know, fried chicken and gravy and biscuits. We had 'em for breakfast, sometimes.

TS: Those chickens would walk out of the hen house, first little glimmer of light, and they'd be snatched up, right?

WAP: Yeah, yeah, they didn't know what they had waiting for 'em. But she'd fix lunch, carry it with us, sit down for a little time at dinnertime and eat, then hook up that cotton sack and go again.

MLHP: Did you already talk about when the grandkids and kids would all go to your grandpa's house?

WAP: No. They used to all come in the summertime, to visit in the summertime. And my Grandpa Powell, he called it a gallery, it ran all the way down the south side and the west side of the house, and he had a bunch of grandkids, and they'd put pallets out there on that. And just look like cordwood, you know, that whole porch would be full of kids, sleep out there at night. We had one of 'em was a sleepwalker, he used to keep all of us awake. He'd get up, walk all over everybody, go out the gate, somebody'd have to go get him.

TS: Well, what would y'all do when everybody visited, just play around?

WAP: Yeah, we'd just do whatever we—sometimes, they'd be something with, but this was mostly a visit time. It'd be for two or three days a week in the summertime, we'd all go to Grandpa's house and spend that time after school's out.

TS: There were enough Powell families around to totally fill up the gallery, is what you're saying—cover the floor.

WAP: Yeah, kinfolks, grandkids. One of my aunts had nine, nine kids, and there's several of 'em had four or five. And you put all that bunch together—

MLHP: There was eight children in the Powell's.

TS: So, your grandmother was like feeding a whole Boy Scout troop.

WAP: Right.

MLHP: Did you all play marbles?

WAP: Yep, I wore out a many a pair of overalls crawling around shooting marbles.

TS: My father used to live in Nacogdoches, he wore a hole in his thumbnail shooting marbles.

MLHP: Bill has some marbles that his daddy made.

WAP: Well, I don't think he made 'em, but they were his. They're old. But I've got a bunch of marbles, I got

a whole jar full of marbles.

TS: What about fishing? Did y'all go fishing?

WAP: Well, when we had time.

TS: You got Owl Creek right there behind—was it fishable?

WAP: Well, there's some places. There wasn't too many big fish up there. The kids used to fish in there and everything, but if you're going real fishing—if it rained on the Fourth of July and all the fences was fixed, well we could all go fishing. You know, get in the wagon and go fishing, everything is caught up.

TS: Things were laid by about that time, right? And if the fences were up—

WAP: Yeah, you know, we didn't have to build fence, or something, was an emergency, and all your crops was laid by, were through with all of that, we get to go fishing.

TS: What about—I'm interested in the well-digging rig. Was it a—? (makes drilling motion with his hand, suggesting a modern well-drilling machine)

WAP: Oh, no, no, it—(makes linear, up-and-down, striking motion with his hand and arm)

TS: Okay, it's not something I know about. How did it—I understand hand-dug wells, okay, and I understand the modern screw digger, but this is something else you're talking about that I don't understand.

WAP: Well, had a big old bit, big old heavy bit. It's run by a gasoline engine, and this engine had a deal on it that it'd go over this way one time and it'd raise that thing up. When it'd go so far that way it was short on that side and it'd let it off.

TS: So, the bit was just plunging, there was no rotary motion to it?

WAP: Yeah, and they had some kind of a pipe or a hose or something down in there that they run water in there, and then they could pick that up and pump it out, and the old white clay and stuff, you know.

TS: So, that softened it up in front of the bit, and the bit just went on down through—

WAP: Yeah, and they ended up pumping that out ever' so often. You know, get it out of there.

And he dug a many a well.

TS: Would he do that when the crops were in, like in the winter?

WAP: Well, it would depend on how bad somebody had to have a well.

TS: I got you. Yeah.

WAP: If they could put it off to a better time, well they did. But sometimes people had to have one right away, and they'd just go dig, and sometimes you'd quit work on the farm during the middle of the day and then go late in the evening and then work until after dark digging on a well. And if the weather wasn't permissible to work in the field, they could still dig 'em a well.

TS: How much would he charge?

WAP: I don't have any idea. I doubt that any money changed hands, sometimes. They'd trade work and all that sort of stuff.

MLHP: Did you already talk about the Kinseys?

WAP: No.

MLHP: There's two of those girls that live around pretty close. From what Bill has told me, it was harder than hardscrabble for them, 'cause their daddy died, and their mama raised them on the farm.

WAP: They lived on my Grandpa Dorsey's place, and they worked for him. He helped 'em some, you know.

TS: I have interviewed one of the Kinsey sisters, Zell, and she said the people in the Friendship community were real good to 'em. But they had it—they were in a bad situation. All those girls and the father dying suddenly.

MLHP: What I remember about them is what Bill tells about the boys. See, it was years before I knew there were Kinsey girls, because Bill talked about the Kinsey boys.

WAP: Well, there was G. W. and Troy and Seth and Vincent and Taylor, there was five boys. And I went to school with—well, the two older ones was pretty far ahead of me, but I went to school with all the rest of 'em, went in the service with one of 'em—two of 'em. We'd go to school, and my grandmother would have their supper fixed in an old pie safe out on the back porch. And I'd take them Kinsey boys through there, and we'd take all of the supper down to the creek and eat it, you know. And then she got to cook again before supper. We'd gather all that stuff up, I'm feeding them boys. Hell, we's all hungry, so we'd go through there and get it. But those—they had a tough time, but they made it, there. Some of 'em worked after they got big enough to work. But they's all—it's about five or six of 'em of an age to go to school. They's all pretty close together.

TS: We went to—Prewitt and Associates went to the Ewing reunion. Were you there?

WAP: No, I didn't go.

TS: It was, uh—you know, this is part of the operation, to copy people's photos that they bring in, and both the sisters were there, Josie and Zell were there.

MLHP: You were talking about pictures of the end of school. Did Bill's mother show you that picture of her classmates when she was in the second grade? A year ago, she could go through and tell you the names of every one of the children in her second-grade class. I thought that was phenomenal.

WAP: Then, after I went this year to Gatesville—I played basketball, I lettered in basketball at Gatesville, I played football, but I never had been around this football, all my life, I'd lived out in the country. And we'd played a little basketball with some of these other schools, but I went out for football, and they had two coaches, and one of those coaches, the defensive coach, he put me to playing defensive end. And I weighed about 125 pounds, I guess. He told me, "Now, I'm going to let you in on a secret that nobody else may know." He said, "So-and-so is gonna get the ball, and he's coming right around thisaway." He told me right where he's gonna be, and he said, "I want you to get him now." He said, "I don't want you to let him get by." I said, "I'll do my best." But he didn't tell me about that two-hundred-pound guard that was coming around there ahead of him! Whooh, that guy knocked me about twenty feet. And that was my introduction to playing football, right there. All I was watching was the guy that was going to carry the ball, I didn't worry about none of the rest of 'em. But I should have.

TS: This is six-man football, right?

WAP: I'm getting to that. I played at Gatesville that year, and they wanted to organize a six-man football at Flat. They come got me, I was about the same distance from the Flat, I transferred to the Flat, and come to play six-man football with 'em. They didn't have enough people. So, I played six-man

football with 'em two years at Flat and graduated from down there in 1940. We didn't have a very good team, but we played all of 'em, anyway. So, I graduated from Flat.

TS: Well, the six-man football, there's got to be a lot of running and—you make a lot of yardage in six-man football, right?

WAP: Yeah, you get knocked a lot.

MLHP: The place where they played is on that kind of sloping place just behind the Baptist church at Flat.

WAP: Flat has a lot of rocks.

MLHP: And he has the scars on his knees to prove where every rock—

WAP: Yeah, that's where we played, that's where we practiced, that's where we played. Didn't have a football field. I remember one time we had an old coach, his name was Harry Morman. And he had some kind of speech deficiency, sometimes he couldn't get the words out. But we played somebody one time, they knocked me plumb out. They drug me off to the side, and he come over there and shook me up, got me up, he said, "Where we at?" I told him. He says, "Well, who we playing?" I told him. He said, "What the hell you doing out here, get back in there." (laughs)

TS: That was the spirit of six-man football, right?

MLHP: Nineteen thirty-eight was the first year that the state had an organized six-man football program, and they printed that rule book. Bill's got it in there in the other room.

TS: (reads) *Six-man Football, the Official Handbook for Players, Coaches, and Schools* by Stephen Epler. So, it had some special rules, it wasn't quite—it was different, in other words.

WAP: A little bit different, yeah. You had different positions, you know. You just had three men in the line and three men in the backfield, and that was the size of it.

TS: So, a lot more one-on-one, sort of.

WAP: Oh, it was sure—man, it was tough, there's a lot of skinning up going on on that. We played Jarrell, do you know where Jarrell is out on the highway? I remember we played them one time, and they played in a cotton patch. (telephone rings) The cotton had been cleared off, but it was an old cotton field, and they played out there when it was muddy, and that old red dirt and all that stuff. Man, you talking about skinning you up! You'd hit the ground and it'd just rake the hide, and we didn't have too many pads, then, anyway. You didn't wear too many pads when I was playing it.

TS: You had helmets though, right?

WAP: Yeah, we did have helmets. Long about that time is when they first started making the Spalding helmets, and we had those. That was a Bohemian settlement, and those boys called signals in Bohemian. I never will forget that. (laughs)

TS: Well, you couldn't break their code. They could come right and say, Run right.

WAP: So, they called them signals in Bohemian, you know. It's the first time we ever played anybody like that. But we played on that old hard field out there. Man, I'll tell you, I didn't have a bit of hide on me when I got home.

TS: Well, I've seen those old uniforms, and there just basically—it's like somebody playing rugby with a helmet on. There's not much padding.

WAP: There wasn't hardly any. Had a couple of little pads on the front of your legs and back here where your tailbone is, one of 'em back there, and a little old light shoulder—

TS: The, uh—I've got a lot of—let's see—what about baseball, did you play baseball?

WAP: Well, I never did play baseball, except—I never did play on no baseball team, but I played at school. We'd play during recess and all that, we used to play baseball and softball and all that stuff. But football and basketball was my two things, and I lettered in basketball at Gatesville. But the way it happened, well, they had two old boys that was real good, but they wasn't too good on their studying. So they failed and I played, I played because they weren't allowed to play, and I lettered. And I wasn't very big, and the coach used to tell me when a fellow got the ball, I was guard, he used to tell me, said, "You're not very big, hack 'em when they come down, they won't call it on you." (laughs) When I played I brought the ball up.

TS: Yeah, yeah. Would y'all be playing outside, or did you—

WAP: At Gatesville we had a gym. We didn't have no gym down at Flat. Everybody that played down there played outside. And the girls down there used to have a real good basketball team, they went all over the place. We had a pretty good basketball team, but our main thing was football. Concentrate on that football.

TS: But the people coming out of the countryside didn't have any previous acquaintance with football of any kind.

WAP: Naw, it's all pretty new. I never had had much experience with it. My daddy used to tell me, said, "You can play football all you want to," he said, "but when it comes Saturday morning I want you able to pick cotton or do whatever we got to do."

TS: Don't come limping around—

WAP: No, I've picked cotton with broke ribs and everything else. (TS laughs) Yeah, I've been all skin up and could hardly walk, but I always showed up. He wanted you to be able to work, that's right.

TS: What all did your Grandfather Powell have on his farm. I'm sure he had cotton and corn.

WAP: Yeah, they had cotton and corn—they called it maize, then. They raised some maize. They'd head it, cut the heads off, and it'd keep. Put it in the barn and feed it like corn and stuff.

TS: Cut corn tops, maybe?

WAP: Aw, man, I've cut a lot of them. A lot of corn tops—tied 'em. My daddy'd make them strings, tie a loop end up. Tie one around your waist, and put all them others on there and get that loop, pull it out, you know, and wrap it.

TS: 'Cause the idea is to go as fast as you can.

WAP: And we'd haul 'em. We'd shock 'em up. When we get through tying 'em up—they'd cut 'em and then maybe the next day, or however long it took 'em to dry, until they want 'em to dry—you'd first cut 'em and lay 'em on the ground and let 'em dry. Then, you go gather up a bundle and tie you a string around 'em. And then you shock 'em in a shock.

TS: In the field.

WAP: Yeah. And they stayed out there two, three days, ever how long it took 'em to dry like they wanted, and then you hauled 'em in. And they usually made a stack outside, they'd stack it where it'd be kind of waterproof. Yeah, stack 'em outside.

TS: Would they stack 'em around a pole?

WAP: Yeah, I've seen 'em stack 'em like that. I sure have. Yeah, I've cut them old corn tops, many a one of them.

TS: The ears would have been made. It was okay to get the top at a certain point, the ears would have been fully formed, and so then you'd cut the corn tops.

WAP: Yeah, yeah, you didn't cut 'em until a certain time. Had to be a certain time to cut 'em. But they made that fodder out of 'em. Used to cut 'em, shock 'em, haul 'em in, and stack 'em again. Had to handle that stuff quite a few times. Wasn't worth that much but you had to do a whole lot to get it where it was going.

TS: It's just another way to use the corn. The corn tops are good fodder, and if you treated it like this, it didn't hurt the ears, didn't hurt the formation of the—I've interviewed these people, these Germans, in Fayette County and Washington County, and they'd would get the corn tops at night. Did anybody up here do that?

WAP: I don't think so.

TS: They would get 'em at night, and the reason they would get 'em at night was—I'm not sure I know, but it was just customary to get 'em at night. And they'd tie 'em up, got a little dew on them and the corn tops, one of the tops would be flexible enough to tie. And I never got a better answer from any of those people, I kept asking, "Why did you—?" They'd talk about snakes, you'd reach down and feel something—

WAP: That old—(unintelligible) will get at 'em when you cut 'em down to the ground. I used to work at the—one of the funny things was, when I was growing up, I was still going to school, was work at the threshing machine, the thresher. And there used to be an old man down here on Henson Creek, he had a thresher, and he worked for everybody in the whole community. And he would, uh—we had a little old team of mules, and he'd hire me, several of us, to run these bundle wagons to haul this stuff in the thresher. And I remember they used to give you, I don't know, two or three dollars a day for you and the team. And they'd feed you and the team. They'd feed you at the cook shack, had a cook shack, and you'd sleep out on some kind of a bunk deal, that you hauled with you. You slept out on the ground, bedroll of some sort. And we's close to the creek somewhere, about dark, we'd all gang up and walk to the creek and take a bath, go in swimming. But I worked, I could make quite a little bit of money, that thing run two or three weeks, you know, and at two or three dollars a day, that's a whole lot of money, then. You could buy all your school clothes and all kind of money.

TS: What grain would—would it be wheat or oats, and what machinery was involved in this?

WAP: Oats. I don't know about this, they had this big threshing machine, and it'd be set up in a field, and it's got a conveyor belt on it, and it'd take this stuff where it needs to go, and it goes through there and it gets all the grain off, and it goes through these shakers and it gets all the dirt and stuff out, and it blows the straw out somewhere in a pile.

TS: So, it does the whole deal, it just walks through the grain field cutting the grain, and—

WAP: No, this thing was stationary. And then we had a wagon, they called it a pig pen on it, a built thing on the wagon that got bigger on the top. And you go down—the oats and stuff was shocked, there was shocks in the field, and you go down through there and you load it all, get your wagon full of it, and then you go up there and pull up alongside this thresher, and you took your pitchfork and you took it off a bundle at a time, and you put it in there ever how often as the thing could take it, and unload it. And then you had a guy that sacked it all up, sewed the tops and all this

over here where the grain come out, and it blowed the hay way up over here out through the pipe. And it was run by an engine.

TS: It was hauled into place on a farm, and it just sat there, and you shocked the grain and brought the grain to it.

WAP: It stayed right there. So, that'd last maybe three, four weeks. He'd go all over the country and thresh everybody's grain. And he took part of it, just like the grinding of the corn, he took part of the grain for it, and he paid us cash money—that hauled the grain to the thresher.

TS: So, if you were sleeping out there in the field, it could have been daylight-to-dark sort of work.

WAP: Yeah, it was. And they fed us, had an old—what do you call it? They didn't call it a chuck wagon, they called it something else. But anyway, they had a couple of women that cooked, and they'd feed you a little breakfast and a big dinner and supper. This wagon, the sides raised up on it, and a deal made a table around it.

TS: I see, the sides let down and they would prop up, and so you had—

WAP: Some of it'd prop up, some of it'd let down. The ones that let down made a table, and they'd put the stuff out on that table all around it.

TS: I see. So, he had the whole—this was his operation, it probably was serving all sorts of people, all the farmers who grew grain. He was operating out of Friendship?

WAP: Well, he lived out a little bit towards Ewing. He threshed this grain for anybody that wanted it. He'd plan his route. He'd go this away as far as he could and get it. Then maybe he'd cut back and get all up thisaway. He'd go all the way around, and get it all.

TS: It was kind of slow compared to the modern machine that I described, where just one big machine walks across the field and does the whole thing.

WAP: Oh, yeah. He might be two or three days at one farm, at one place.

MLHP: Did you all keep the bags that they put the grain in from year to year? Some of them are—

WAP: Oh, I don't know, I don't remember, I guess so. Oh, you mean—

MLHP: For the oats and wheat and stuff?

WAP: Oh, yeah, yeah, they saved those burlap bags, they didn't throw none of them away.

TS: How was the grain cut?

WAP: Well, they cut it with a—they called a row binder—it's a reaper. It cut it, it had a sickle on it like this, and it carried it over here and piled it up and tied it with a string.

TS: And then there was the job of taking those shocks of grain or whatever you called 'em and putting 'em in the wagon and—

WAP: Yeah, that's what I used to do. They shocked it off. And when you'd be loading that stuff, sometimes you'd reach down and get one of them bundles of oats, and you go to put it up there, here comes a snake down that pitchfork handle, right on top of you. You'd have it right on you.

TS: Well, you kind of lived with snakes. If you picked cotton, there were snakes, and when you chopped cotton, there were—and the corn-top people always talked about snakes in the corn tops. You leave 'em lie there to dry, and the snakes get under them.

MLHP: What time of year was the harvest of grain?

WAP: The fall of the year, just before—mostly, school used to start a lot later than it does now. This was usually just before school started.

TS: What do you remember about the gins? Where did y'all gin your cotton?

WAP: Well, we hauled our cotton to a gin between here and the Flat. Henson Creek crosses there, and right above there the gin used to be on there—right on that creek. And a guy named of Evans owned that gin. We get twelve hundred or fourteen hundred pounds, ever what it took for a bale, well, we'd go to the gin. I used to like to go to the gin and to get to ride in a wagon full of cotton. Go down there after you get it all in the gin, they put your seed back in there. You know, you'd get to ride home with the cottonseed. Took the seed home and fed 'em to the cows in the wintertime. And when we'd get through, usually my daddy would buy some summer sausage or bologna and some crackers and maybe three or four bananas and all that sort of stuff, and I'd eat up in that cottonseed and eat all the way home. I liked to do that, I liked to go to the gin.

TS: Well, that just sounds like a recreational excursion compared to everything else that is going on at that time, which is picking cotton in the field.

WAP: It was, it really was. I remember one time—they had that big old sucker that pulled that cotton into the gin. Had a vacuum on it, you know, always running around in there [the wagon bed]. Sometimes they'd let you do that, if you wanted to. I had a brand new straw hat on. I imagine it cost fifty cents, might not have cost that much. My hat come off, and it went through there, and it was gone. I lost my hat that time.

TS: Those cotton gins were—was this a diesel gin?

WAP: Aw, I imagine it was an old gasoline engine, at that time. Gasoline engine at that time, I imagine.

TS: They were dangerous, gins were dangerous to the people who worked in 'em. There were so many people that lost their arm.

WAP: Oh, yes. Yeah, the people that used to have to run that other part of it, the inside machinery and all of that, they all did. All we had to do was to get the cotton out of the wagon.

TS: Yeah, you were outside in the wagon, it wasn't—and they'd work these long days, and they'd get tired, and they'd get careless.

WAP: So, it was really—that was something to look forward to, when you get to go to the gin. Because we always got something to eat, you know, and got to ride going and coming and didn't have to do a whole lot of work.

TS: So, your daddy wouldn't sell the seed. Some people sold the seed. You could sell the seed if there was a mill close enough, but sometimes—

WAP: But we always kept ours, because that was our cow feed in the wintertime—feed the milk cows those cottonseed. That's real good feed. I fed cottonseed the last, oh, I guess about ten or twelve years ago. I worked for a guy had a bunch of cattle, and he bought these cottonseed down here at the mill at Moody or somewhere. They brought it up here in an eighteen-wheeler, two or three loads of at the house every other day. I'd take a truck over there and fill the back end of it full of cottonseed and go on a hill, where it wasn't muddy over there, and scoop it out the back to them old cows. All I could put in the back of a long-bed pickup truck ever' other day. They're still feeding it, they go down there and buy it before they process it, just buy the cottonseed.

TS: Well, it's got to be real rich, it's just got all that oil in it.

WAP: Yeah, there's a lot of people still feeding it.

TS: Anybody—was there any cedar? Did y'all cut cedar? It depends on who you talk to around Coryell County, if they had cedar, you cut cedar posts along and sell 'em—you know, at the store.

WAP: Aw, yeah, I've cut a lot of them cedar posts.

TS: Talk about that a little, that's not the most pleasant job.

WAP: You had to get 'em out to the road, and they had a guy that'd come by and pick 'em up. And buy 'em from you, if you could get 'em out to the road where you could pick 'em up. And I cut those old posts, I cut them big ones, you know. Four-inch tops and six foot long, great big posts. Man, they's heavy, have to carry and drag them out to the road, it might be a pretty good ways before you found that kind.

MLHP: You had to trim all the limbs off them.

WAP: Oh, it had to be just right, but this guy would come along, he'd give you a nickel apiece for 'em. That's what you used to get for 'em, nickel apiece.

TS: This is for one of those big ones. And you'd have cut that up on the hill and hauled it down to the road.

WAP: Yeah, pull it, carry it, any way it'd get there. And put it along the side of the road, and if somebody didn't come along and get it before the man come along, he'd give you a nickel.

TS: In East Texas they used to do crossties, families would do crossties in just the same way and wouldn't get too much for 'em. Would also pile 'em by the road. You got this part of the year where there's not too much to do on the farm if all your fences were up, and then you can—

WAP: Do a little side work, yeah. We used to cut wood, sometimes, and sell it. And one time—my daddy was real tickled with his axe, he didn't want nobody else using his axe. He's gone one time, and somebody told me, I forget how much it was, a dollar or two a cord for wood of a certain kind. He's gone, so I took his axe, and I went to cut that wood and everything. I think I got about two dollars for it and took about two days to cut it, and I ruined his axe. The axe cost four or five dollars, so I didn't make no money on that deal.

TS: He was not happy when—

WAP: No, no, I ruined his axe. I hit a couple of rocks with it. He was real tickled with that. Had his razor, didn't want nobody messing with his razor—and his axe, the two things.

TS: Well, let me ask you, what was in the Friendship community? We got the school, Owl Creek School. Got a church?

WAP: Yeah, Friendship Baptist Church.

TS: What else? Any stores, post office?

WAP: No post office, had a mail route. They had some stores, but it wasn't in that community.

TS: Where were they?

WAP: Well, let's see. They had one down at Tama Valley, and they had one at the Ruth community, and they had one at Straw's Mill—there wasn't any there close to where we lived. But they had a little old store, you know, it'd be a little old ten by ten building with cheap 'taters and kerosene outside,

that sort of stuff.

TS: Well, the kerosene is always part of what those stores sold. I mean, the kerosene—if you were out of kerosene, you needed kerosene.

WAP: Yeah, you had to have it.

MLHP: That was worst than being out of snuff, right?

WAP: Yeah. We used it for everything. If you cut your foot or stuck a nail in it, you put kerosene on it. Used it for kerosene lamps, kerosene stoves—used for a lot of things.

MLHP: We have the lamp that Bill's parents had when they started housekeeping in 1920.

TS: They didn't get electricity out in Coryell County until pretty late.

MLHP: After World War II.

WAP: I went to school with a kerosene lamp, I never did have no electric lights. Sure didn't. A few of 'em had it, but we didn't.

TS: What about telephones? Was there a telephone system?

WAP: Well, there got to be one, I don't know just what date. I know they used to send me with a bucket of water, and run pour it on the ground wire where you could hear better.

TS: That's great.

MLHP: One couple didn't want to talk to their folks, didn't want to tell 'em they'd run off and got married—tell him, Bill!

WAP: Mannings that lived here, he just passed away not very long ago. When he and his wife run off and got married, they got worried about 'em, nobody didn't know where they's at. So, they called, and got ahold of my mother and daddy on the telephone, and my mother had to call everybody and tell 'em they was okay.

TS: So, she was authorized to distribute the news.

WAP: Yeah.

MLHP: Well, the Mannings, they knew they weren't going to fuss if Granny or Granddaddy called 'em. So, that's why they called Granny.

TS: They were chosen to be the ones.

MLHP: They were about—this couple was not much younger than Granny and Granddaddy.

WAP: They's a year or two younger. He just passed away not long ago.

TS: Yeah. But they felt that pouring the water on the ground wire made them hear better?

WAP: You could hear better, have a better ground, you know. It was always dry and all this sort of stuff.

TS: Did people listen in?

WAP: Well, ever' chance they got, I imagine. (laughs)

MLHP: Where was the telephone office for out there?

WAP: We didn't have no telephone office. I don't know where it was. I guess they had to have it somewhere, but we didn't have it out there anywhere.

TS: I worked for the—the summer I got out of the service, I worked for the telephone company in Lufkin, and we were putting in, extending the system to Wells, which is a little place way out. And the system which had been there, which they had bought, the wire would come down to the top of a barbwire fence and run all the way down beside a field, then come up over an oak limb, and drop down to the next barbwire fence. It was just run like that, that was the kind of system it was. And all the telephones were crank telephones.

WAP: I don't know, I used to have one of them crank phones.

MLHP: We have the one that came out of Granny's house. I don't know where it is, it's probably in the barn. But we've got the black one with the receiver and the phone in the front. We brought it the other day, it's out in the storehouse.

WAP: I bought it about thirty years ago and give ten dollars for it.

MLHP: We have an old, black rotary dial one, too.

TS: Those are collector items, too, now. You can't really use the rotary dial anymore, you know. You try to deal with anybody, you get put on hold and then you're told the code to punch, and you can't punch it.

WAP: Yeah, when you try to order something, this day and time, they'll give you four or five numbers to punch. It's kind of like one of them machines at Wal-Mart, when you go to get something for your car.

MLHP: All those menus are a pain in the butt.

TS: Well, were there any family feuds in Friendship? It sounds inappropriate, but—you didn't have any Wolf what's-it relationships?

WAP: Well, naw, but the Kinsey boys and the Warrens all had boys about the same age, and at school every once in a while the little ones would get in a fight and it'd always just kind of snowball, they'd all be a fighting. But you know, they all paired off just about the same size, they wasn't no big guy jump on somebody and beat 'em up like it is today. They'd fight.

TS: So, if two appropriate brothers got in a fight, that might trigger a fight between two other appropriate brothers.

WAP: Yeah, yeah, there might be four or five of 'em going at one time and sometime whip each other.

MLHP: Bill and I have one memory in common. The 4-H where he was—went to the Centennial on a school bus.

TS: The Texas Centennial in 1936.

MLHP: Yeah, that was the year I started to school. I went, my folks took me.

TS: Where'd you go? To Dallas, to the state fair?

WAP: Sure did, rode the school bus from Gatesville. I saved my money and I never will forget what I bought. I don't know what happened to it, but I bought me a Justin belt, made by Justin, cost fifty cents. I didn't spend anything on anything else, much, I probably didn't have over a dollar soaking wet. But that's what I paid down now, and boy, I's proud of that belt. It was a tooled belt, you know, with all that stuff.

MLHP: Close as we can figure, we both ate frozen custard, the first time we ever saw custard.

TS: Were you aware of each other when you were—

MLHP: Oh, no. We met when we were—I was in my midforties and Bill was in his midfifties, we met in Port Arthur.

TS: Ten years is too much, she'd just have been one of the kids on the bus.

MLHP: No, I grew up in East Texas, I grew up in Henderson. And my mother was—my stepfather was the banker from Cushing, Mr. Watt, and that's where I knew Sittons.

WAP: Have you got the picture of our band? Do you know where it is?

MLHP: Yeah, it'll take a minute.

WAP: I got a lady, sings in my band, she's five years younger than me, and I used to date her sister just older than her when we going to school. And I tell everybody I used to know her when she's just a little old snotty-nosed girl always in the way, always where she wasn't supposed to be. So, I tell 'em, "Yeah, I been knowing her since she's a snotty-nosed kid." And I'm going to show you, she's in the picture of my band.

TS: Let me ask you in the meantime, what about hunting? I know you're going to say there wasn't any deer, but did y'all go hunting?

WAP: Yeah, we hunted squirrels, rabbits, quail. There was not too many doves, I never did like to eat them.

TS: Was anybody a fox hunter? There was lots of fox hunting.

WAP: My daddy used to be a fox hunter.

TS: Would he ride after the dogs, or would he just sit around and listen to them?

WAP: They used to all just meet at a certain place, bring their dogs. They knew where they was most likely to, they call it strike a fox. You know, trail a fox. They'd all meet at this place and bring their dogs. They'd get out, get the dogs a-going, and then they'd build a fire and sit around the fire and listen to 'em run, listen to 'em bark at the fox. And if they treed the fox, somebody'd have to go jump it out so they'd run again. But they'd all worked on a farm, you know, and they'd all have to go home like two or three o'clock in the morning and get a little bit of sleep. And sometimes them old dogs would tree that fox, and used to be my job the next morning to go jump that fox out the next day, or go get the dogs. And one thing I remember about that, one time they treed not too far from our house, and me and my brother five years younger than me, we went down there to get the dogs or jump the fox out, and this big old fox was laying up there in the fork of a tree. And my daddy and them used to hold the old dogs and jump the fox out, and let the young dogs run it, 'cause they wouldn't catch it so easy. So, this was a tree that had a briar thicket all the way around it. And we got in there, and we called all them old dogs, and I told my brother, he had about three or four of 'em in his hand, I told him, "Now, you hold them dogs, I'm going to crawl up there and jump that fox out." Well, I climbed up there and got this limb, and I whipped that fox out. When he hit the ground, them old dogs run my brother through that briar thicket! He left a good bit of hide on it, he was some upset.

TS: He was too light to—

WAP: He couldn't hold the dogs, they took him right through them briars.

TS: Well, that sounds like it was grey fox, because they go up trees—and the red fox go in the ground.

WAP: Yeah, yeah, mostly it was grey fox. I see a red fox here every once in a while, now.

TS: They have coyotes here, now.

WAP: Yeah, you seldom ever see any of them. There used to be an old grey wolf every once in a while would come through. You know, they didn't stay too long, but they'd be a-going from one place to another. And there used to be a panther used to come through every once in while and shake everybody up, they'd hear it scream and raising sand.

TS: Texas Parks and Wildlife used to say, Oh, no, no, they're not panthers, but now, even in East Texas, they admit they're some of 'em. They've got a panther study going.

WAP: Yeah, well, that's what they used to call 'em. They used to have them cats, boy, sometimes you could hear 'em squall for no telling how long and make all kind of racket. And a lot of times, the dogs would go under the house or something when that panther would do that. Man, they weren't about to go where that come from.

TS: So, you'd hear the panthers squall, and the dogs would get in the crawl space.

WAP: They wasn't about to go to see what it was. They knew what it was, I guess. Ah, lot of funny things happened like that.

TS: How important was the livestock side of your grandparents'—you've got two grandparents there, in that generation was the livestock important to 'em? Did they have cows, did they have sheep?

WAP: Well, my Grandpa Powell didn't have nothing but cattle, because I told you earlier that they sold cream and butter. That was one of their livelihoods. And my grandpa Dorsey, he raised goats and horses.

(comments on photograph of his band that MLHP brought) This is the lady, she'd raised down there.

TS: The younger sister of the older sister you'd talked about.

MLHP: They were all musicians, weren't they?

WAP: Yeah, they were two sisters, used to play and sing all the time. She's got a grandson that's got a CD out now. I think he's, what, sixteen, now.

MLHP: Fifteen.

(Powell plays "Faded Love" and a couple other fiddle tunes from the Powell family band's Coryell County radio days; taping stops)

TS: This is a second interview with William Powell for the Fort Hood Oral History Project. The interviewer is Thad Sitton, the date is September 29, 2001.

Bill, I hope I'm not messing up the barbecuing, today. You have a little time?

WAP: No, I've got a little time before I put it on yet. I've got everything ready. How you doing?

TS: I'm doing just fine. I just wanted definitely to talk to you like this and get you to tell me something about—this was your Grandfather Powell who made the syrup, right?

WAP: No, it was my Grandpa Dorsey. He was the one that had the blacksmith shop and everything.

TS: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that, too. I didn't ask you about that. You know, some people have given me a little information about the syrup making, but most of them don't know all the details and didn't participate. Could you describe his operation? How did he do it?

WAP: Well, the people used to plant this kind of a sugar cane-type syrup, and it'd get up pretty tall, like six, seven, eight foot tall. And they'd go in the field, and they'd take some kind of a stick or something, and they'd knock all the leaves off of it. And then they'd cut the top off, and then the cut the bottom. And they'd bring it in in a wagon, it'd be stacked in a wagon. It'd be, I'm just guessing, six or eight foot long.

TS: The individual canes?

WAP: Yeah. And they'd bring it in in a wagon and put it out by the syrup mill. They had a place, and everybody would take a place and put his cane there. And they had the syrup mill, it was pulled by a mule. You know, went around and around and around. And you would haul these people's cane over there and turn it through this syrup mill—the mill itself would squeeze the juice out of it. And they'd catch the juice, had a place it come out to catch the juice, and that old cane come out. After the juice was out of it they used to call that pummins.

TS: Pummins? That would be like p-u-m-m-i-n-s, or something like that. Pummins? Was that used for anything?

WAP: Yeah. Well, no, I don't think it was good for anything like that, you got all that juice out of it.

TS: Okay.

WAP: And one of my jobs used to be to drag that off and pile it up away from the syrup mill. And I used to feed the cane through there, sometimes. And with the juice, they had to fill that pan with the juice, and they'd carry it and put it in the pan, where they'd cook the syrup. And the pan had dividers in it, where you could push it through, you know, with a paddle-like thing. You'd push it up, and it'd come back down—in other words it had to go through a long process going through that can, cooking it. Yeah, it had little dividers in it, and at the end it'd be open where it come back down the next one. It'd get over into the next one, and you had a deal to push it through there with.

TS: So, the juice, the raw juice, is going in one end, and the syrup is in different stages down the pan. You can have raw juice at one end and syrup just about ready take off at the other, is that right?

WAP: Yeah, yeah, you just had to know when it was ready to take off. And, while it was going through there, it'd be a cooking, they'd be some old, uh—they called it skimmings—they'd be some kind of green-like stuff that would cook out of it. You know, that'd come out of the cane itself. And this would get kind of thick, and they used to have a thing, it had screen on it, and they'd skin that off of the top of it. And they did that at different stages down through there, and, you know, that didn't go in the syrup. They got that off.

TS: Yeah, I see. That had cooked out of the juice. Kind of a froth, or I guess some impurities.

WAP: Yeah, it'd be kind of green, the color of the cane, see, when they'd squeeze it out of there. All of that cooked out, and they'd skim that out and disposed of it.

TS: Well, how many people would he have working at the operation at one time—when the whole thing is up and going? I mean, there somebody is feeding cane into the press, the mule's going round, somebody's feeding the cane. Uh—

WAP: Usually, my mother and daddy just about run all of it. And sometimes there'd be somebody else there, you know, me and my brother used to help. I's the oldest one, and I had to—they give me quite a bit of the responsibility to do that, I's old enough to do that.

TS: Well, somebody has to be—I've been told that some people made a whole lot better syrup than other people. Or, that was people's opinion. And people wanted to take their cane to somebody who

made good syrup.

WAP: You know, a lot of 'em's better, and they made real good syrup there. My mother and daddy used to run that syrup pan, you know, cooking it off and everything. And they knew how to do it, so—

TS: So, what people would be doing, they'd drop off their cane, and it'd be sitting there, ricked or piled up, waiting to get run. Just like waiting at the gin, right?

WAP: Yeah, had a little, make a little rick of it there, you know, and pile it up. And everybody knew who it belonged to, and all.

TS: Well, what was the deal? Would they pay him, or would he take a toll in syrup?

WAP: Oh, no, most of the time they took syrup for it. Back then, almost anything you had done you paid for it with—you know, like grinding your corn into meal. They paid for it with part of the—

TS: Do you remember what his take would be, his cut?

WAP: I sure don't. I don't remember how much.

TS: Well, if the end product is probably gallon buckets of syrup, it was a one-for-three or a one-for-four, something like that.

WAP: Yeah. But I wouldn't know, I don't remember exactly. I remember eating lots of it.

TS: I don't think people—I didn't understand, until I started to talk to people, how important syrup was and how much syrup families thought they needed for the year. You know, people talked about putting syrup on their fried chicken, and all.

WAP: And they used it to make pies, used to make syrup pies, and they used to use it for almost everything. I used to like those syrup pies. I don't know what all they added to it, probably sugar and eggs, I don't know. But anyway, those syrup pies was real good, I liked them.

TS: Did people raise different kinds of cane? Was there some variation in the kind of cane?

WAP: They'd be a little bit, 'cause people's always wanting to try something better. But as a general rule, it didn't vary a whole lot. They'd get something with maybe a little different taste, supposed to be a little bit better than that other, but I don't really think it's improved that much, back then. But it worked, it got the job done.

TS: Are we talking about sorghum cane, mainly, or ribbon cane, in that area?

WAP: Sorghum, sorghum molasses.

TS: You know, in East Texas on those sandy soils it's generally ribbon cane.

WAP: Yeah, but what they made up there was sorghum molasses syrup.

TS: The sorghum cane had a head in it, didn't it? It kind of looked a little bit like highgear or something?

WAP: Yeah, yeah, it's just like it. It's just a type of cane, it's a real lot taller, you know. They had to have the legs on it to get any juice out of it, if they get very much of it.

TS: Did your Grandfather Powell, did he grow cane, too?

WAP: I don't remember helping him with any of it, but I know he did. Everybody around there, just about, had a patch of cane to make syrup. Because like you say, it was an essential something for the wintertime, to get by.

TS: Well, you know, the Kinseys, being rent farmers, didn't have cane, but she had to arrange to get—the girls that I interviewed said that they had to arrange to get a certain number of gallons of syrup every year somehow. I believe I remember that Zell mentioned that she may have helped occasionally, maybe at Mr. Dorsey's. Your Grandfather Powell did not have a—

WAP: No, no. He did not.

TS: Well, you know, somebody in the community has to have a gristmill, or somebody nearby—

WAP: My daddy's uncle had one, right down the creek a little ways.

TS: And somebody needs to have a syrup mill, and somebody needs to be able to do blacksmith work. Now, what kind of a shop did your Grandfather Dorsey have?

WAP: Well, he had a what-do-you-call-it bellows that you'd pump and blow the air to make the fire hot. Well, it had that, and it had a big old anvil that had all kind of tools that fit that anvil, that you could put in there—heat stuff and cut it off and everything. And he fixed those horseshoes to fit. You know, you had to make them fit the horses' and the mules' feet. He had all of the things that you could bend those and make 'em just right. Put 'em on that anvil, and he'd heat 'em, and you could work 'em around anyway you wanted to, just about, when they's red hot. And then, he sharpened the plows, the sweeps for all the plows.

TS: Yeah, with all the flint rocks you had in that area, it was hard on—

WAP: Oh, yeah, he'd sharpen those. And shoe the horses and mules, they're a lot of mules, then, you know, to work the fields with. They done just about everything there.

TS: Would the neighbors come into get work done? Or, was this just mainly his shop for his purposes?

WAP: Oh, no, no, there's a lot of people came by there and got this stuff done. Bring those sweep by for the plows, bring 'em by there and leave 'em to be sharpened, they'd come back by and pick 'em up. And they'd bring their horses and mules over there to get the shoes put on.

TS: Well, you know, it's just absolutely essential that the community has somebody that can do that common kind of blacksmithing—that can sharpen the sweep and—you know, when the shoes come off the work stock, you got a problem. I mean, you got to go!

WAP: And get that thing, yeah. No, he used to do a lot of that, and one of my uncles used to do some of it after he got grown and come along, he used to help with it, too.

TS: Did he have one of those—I've seen those portable rigs, that once upon a time were sold through Sears Roebuck. There sort of a circular little table with a blower on it. It wasn't like a full blacksmith shop rig, but it was a rig for an occasional blacksmith, I would say.

WAP: Oh, he just had that one big deal. It was a big round—I think it was cement in the middle, but it had a big metal wheel-like thing around the outside of it to hold it altogether. And this thing was mounted in the middle, and you had had a foot-pedal thing, or a thing with, uh—well, a wood handle come out where you could pump air, and it'd go through this, and go up through the bottom come up through the coals that they used to heat that.

TS: Yeah, that's a bigger, that's a bigger outfit than what I was talking about. It was a little thing, that you could see it in the old Sears catalogs, but this is a real shop rig, that you just described.

WAP: Yeah, it's a big one, and I've pumped that thing a many a lick, pumping that air up through there, blowing that coal where it'd get real hot and heat the plow points and horseshoes and all that stuff. If

you was around, well, you got put to work.

TS: So, you didn't get to just stand around and look on. I mean, if you were in the family—

WAP: You had to work a little.

TS: Did people come around—to go back to the syrup making—did they come around and stand around? Would they sort of gather to watch it?

WAP: Yeah, every once in a while somebody'd come by and watch 'em go push this stuff all the way through that pan. So, there would be finished, finished product—

TS: What did the cane juice taste like raw? Did some people like it?

WAP: Well, it was kind of sweet, it had a sweet taste to it, but it also kind of had a green taste to it, 'cause you'd squeeze it out of all of that, you know—run the whole stalk through there and squeeze it out, and it taste like something green, like the green cane. It had to be pretty sweet stuff to make that syrup good.

TS: One thing I wanted to ask you about regarding Mr. Dorsey, you mentioned this before and then we got off on something else. He had goats, right?

WAP: Right.

TS: Now, these are hair goats, right?

WAP: Yeah, Angora goats.

TS: Doing most of my interviewing in East Texas, I don't really know that much about the goat business. How would he do it? If you had goats, would you run 'em in a particular pasture?

WAP: Yeah, the goats eat the brush. They eat all of the small brush and stuff. They clean—some people get 'em, they buy goats, just to clean a place up real good. They eat all of the underbrush and all of that, they clean it out. Eat all the leaves off of it and all. And people still do that, the still buy goats and put 'em in pastures sometimes to get rid of the underbrush and the weeds and all that stuff. They'll eat almost anything, including your washing on the line, if they can get to it.

TS: So, these are generally what they call mohair goats or hair goats. They're not those Mexican *cabrito* goats.

WAP: Naw, they're not the Spanish-type goats, there the ones with the long curly hair on 'em.

TS: Well, when would he get the mohair? When would he shear 'em? Did you ever help with the shearing?

WAP: Oh, yeah, I've helped. I don't remember what date, but they have a certain time of the year that they shear 'em. Used to shear 'em a couple of times a year, but I don't remember when. Uh, sometime in the summertime was one time they sheared, and then, I think, 'long toward the end of the year sometimes. But they had to shear 'em before it got cold weather because they didn't want 'em to be without any hair on them when it got real cold. They had certain times to do that.

TS: Yeah. Well, how do you get the goats out of the pasture to shear 'em?

WAP: Oh, well, they used to feed 'em a little bit, and you call 'em and they'll run over you. They'd get 'em in a pen whenever they'd want 'em.

TS: I see. Who would do the shearing? Was that a skilled job?

WAP: Sometimes, people would shear their own, that had enough equipment to do it. I don't remember exactly when I was a kid who did it all, but then there got to be somebody that that's all they did. They got the equipment, they had these clippers, kind of electric powered, you know, they run off of a little thing with a universal joint and all that we could move around, and they run off of a shaft that was pulled by a motor somewhere. And they had people that went all over the country and done that at a little later time.

TS: So, in later days, they'd come around. You'd arrange—they were semi-professionals, and they'd show up like the thresher man, in the sense that they'd come to you and take care of your business and move on.

WAP: Yep, yeah. And they still has people that does that. There's an art to shearing them goats. You had to be careful not to cut 'em, you know, and all that sort of stuff. And there's people that can really do it, really get the stuff of 'em and don't leave 'em bloody. But there's an art to that.

TS: Yeah. Now, Mr. Dorsey had—he raised corn and cotton like everybody did, and I'm sure he would have had a big garden. Can you talk about gardens for a—I know both of your grandparents probably had big garden operations.

WAP: Well, my Grandpa Dorsey used to have a sure enough big one. He always had watermelons and cushaws and pumpkins and all kind of stuff.

TS: Which a lot of people might not have, those.

WAP: And they also had bees and beehives, too.

TS: Oh, yeah, he was a beekeeper, too, and made honey, right?

WAP: Oh, yeah, yeah.

TS: Did he run a big regular garden?

WAP: Yeah, they had, you know, peas, beans, potatoes, and all of the standard things that they'd be to raise. They just had squash and all kind of stuff. Tomatoes. Yeah, they had a big garden, it was kind of between the house—well, it wasn't direct between the house and the barn, it's off to the side a little bit—and it's pretty good-sized. They usually got their corn out of the field when they planted the corn. They didn't plant it in the garden, they just got it out of the field. They'd have it planted for corn, but they'd get their corn to can and eat, they just—

TS: They weren't raising a special sweet corn, is what you're saying, in the garden?

WAP: Naw, they didn't. They got the corn they planted for the horses and the hogs and everything. When it got time for roasting ears, they just went and pulled a bunch of 'em.

TS: And it's perfectly good, the field corn that's intended to be grain corn makes perfectly good roasting ears.

WAP: Real good if you get it at just the right time. It's real good corn, I used to really like it.

TS: Did either of those families keep turkeys? Some people didn't want fool with 'em, some people did.

WAP: Well, I don't remember, I really think both of my grandpas used to keep a few turkeys. That was kind of a money crop. The old turkeys, you didn't have to feed 'em a whole lot. You had to follow 'em and find the nests and gather the eggs and do all this sort of stuff. But then when you sold 'em, you didn't have anything much but labor in the turkey raising, and they brought pretty good money.

TS: Yeah, I know.

WAP: Used to sell them along about Thanksgiving, and a lot of 'em'd get their Christmas money that way. Because it wasn't long until Christmas. That was something that you could go buy clothes and stuff with, you didn't have to put it back in the farming operation.

TS: Those turkeys would go around in the fall and would eat acorns, right?

WAP: Oh, they'll eat anything, just about.

TS: So, they fed themselves a lot of it, right?

WAP: Oh, yeah, they sure did. Grasshoppers, acorns, grass feed, and stuff that fell in the field where you harvested. Yeah, they kind of hustled for theirself.

TS: There was another thing—we're jumping around because I can't avoid that. You started to tell me about, I think, your family fishing trips. Now, this was when, if the crops were okay and there wasn't fence to build, y'all—where would y'all go? What about those trips?

WAP: There was several creeks around, you know, that was within wagon-going that had fish in 'em.

TS: Well, Owl Creek was right there, but it wasn't a big creek, right?

WAP: No, it wasn't too big, but it had a few places that had fish in it. Almost any creek, if had some big holes of water, had fish in it. Yeah, if it rained too much to work, and it's on the Fourth of July, and everything was caught up, we could go a-fishing. And several people would get together and go a fishing. 'Course, us kids used to fish on Owl Creek and all the branches and everything, just with a pole.

TS: Anything you could remember about those fishing, several-family fishing trips. Y'all would get stuff in the wagon, they'd be like overnight trips, right?

WAP: Well, sometimes they would, but a lot of times it'd just be go early and come home late the same day.

TS: How did you fish in the creek?

WAP: Aw, most of the times just fish with a pole—cork and hook. But if you went overnight, we put trotlines out. Cowhouse Creek was pretty good-sized, it had a lot of good fish in it. And that was pretty—eight or ten miles from where we lived, you'd go in a wagon to there.

TS: When we set up to copy those photos, both at Ewing and wherever that other place was, I think it was Temple—another reunion, I have never seen so many snapshot photos of Cowhouse Creek. Wading in Cowhouse Creek, fishing in Cowhouse Creek, and—

WAP: They used to baptize in Cowhouse Creek a lot, churches did. They had certain places the water was just right, the right deep and easy to get to and everything, and they used to use it to baptize in—

TS: But you could see that Cowhouse Creek was like the Disneyland of Coryell County back in those days.

WAP: Oh, yeah, it's a pretty good-sized creek and nearly always had water in it, a good place to fish, and everything. I guess that was the biggest—and Leon River used to be a place that where they all liked to trotline for catfish, there was big catfish in the Leon. They would not be as big in the Cowhouse, but there's lot of 'em. So, it just depended on what kind of fishing you wanted to do, where you went.

TS: But there were big catfish in the Leon?

WAP: Oh, yes, they still catch big ones out of there. Like, sixty or seventy pounds, every once in a while. They still catch some big ones, mostly out of Leon River.

TS: But these trips would often be, well, not all the time, but two or three families, right, would go?

WAP: Sometimes they'd get to be, might not all of the families go, but they'd be people from that many families that'd be in the fishing deal, the fishing group. And sometimes, just a bunch of the men would get together and go fishing during the day.

TS: Well, the only way you got fresh fish is if you caught 'em. And you couldn't preserve 'em once you caught 'em, so you had to eat 'em.

WAP: Had to cook 'em, yeah. I remember my mother used to like the perch, the big old perch. She liked those things fried. Man, fried real brown, that was her favorite. And 'course you could catch them out of nearly every little old creek.

TS: Some people in East Texas used to say, and it was sort of a saying, you know, If you can't fry it, I don't want it. (laughs) Well, I mean, they fried everything they could. They certainly fried fish, I don't think anybody ate fish any other way.

WAP: No, sure did. Put a little hog lard in that skillet and fry them fish brown.

TS: Well, I should have started off by asking you, have you thought of other things?

You did a good job of talking about the hay baling. And it was your Grandfather Powell that had the well-digging rig. So, one of them did that and one of them made syrup and had a blacksmith shop. The hay baling was the other guy, right, who would come through the community? It was like custom hay baling.

WAP: No, my Grandpa Dorsey, he had the hay baler. And he'd get some of his son-in-laws, and they'd just bale hay for whoever wanted it baled.

TS: Well, now, this is a different thing than what we talked about that you—no, no, I beg your pardon, that was threshing. I'm sorry. Tell me about Mr. Dorsey's hay-baling set up.

WAP: Well, he just had a baler that baled them small, square bales. Take this baler out there and set it up out there in the middle of the field. And they had a hay rake with the mules to it, and the person with the hay rake would go all over that field and rake that hay and drag it up to that baler. And dump it right there in front. And a guy would take a pitchfork and put in the table there, and then another guy would take a fork and push it down in that hay baler. And a mule was going around, and this plunger'd come back, and then it'd come back, and they'd put a block in front it, and it'd push that hay out through that baler. And when it'd get to a certain place, well, they had somebody to put wires around it where you could tie it. Push those wires through there at a certain place, and somebody on the other side would push 'em back, and when it'd be squeezed up real tight, they'd tie them two wires on it.

TS: So, it's coming down this conveyor, all squashed up in a square block, and the person that's working the end of it with the wires is essentially dividing it into bales and tying it up into bales as it comes out.

WAP: Yeah. See, that block, they put a block ever' so often, and this is a wooden block, and it had a couple of little channels through there that was left open where you could push the wires through. And when you'd get to a certain place, one guy would push the wires through there, and the other guy would go around the bale of hay and push 'em back, and then this guy on the other side would tie it. You know, pull it real tight. And they'd use wire, use baling wire.

TS: So, would Mr. Dorsey do this for his neighbors?

WAP: Oh, yeah, it was kind of a deal, sometimes, he'd do that for—they had all of his son-in-laws and all of his kinfolks and anybody else that needed baling. A lot of times they'd swap labor, you know. And he also had a reaper, he called it, to reap the grain with. And that was mostly for him, but he used to help anybody that needed it done.

TS: So, he was kind of a—one of my great-grandfathers was very much like Mr. Dorsey. He was sort of a jack-of-all-trades, really. He lived in the Douglass area. He made chimneys, he had some special skills, he made bricks, and he would build chimneys. Somebody had to be able to build chimneys.

WAP: That's right. But my Grandpa Dorsey, he had equipment, you know, just about everything to do it all.

TS: Well, you know, if you've got all that stuff, you almost need a blacksmith shop to keep it going, or you're going to be paying a blacksmith a whole lot.

WAP: True. Well, the thing there was is the time that it took to and take that stuff and get it done and bring it back. The transportation wasn't real good back in them days, and if you had to go to Gatesville to get it done, well, that was two days to go there and back—a day to take it and come home, and a day to go get it and come home. So, you lost a lot of time that away.

TS: What did this reaper look like?

WAP: Aw, it looked kind of like these combines they have today, only it was little, small. It had a big thing that dropped down and cut the stuff and something that takes it up—I don't really know all the procedures that it goes through.

TS: But it'd go through the field, and there'd be grain coming out something.

WAP: Yeah, you had straw blowing out one side, and the grain coming out somewhere else.

TS: And is this animal powered? So, the animals are pulling it, but it's an engine.

WAP: Yeah.

TS: Maybe a gasoline? Or is it just mechanical?

WAP: Well, naw, most of it mechanical, it run a bunch of chains and sprockets on it, and everything.

TS: I see. So, really, the mules are powering the whole thing. Whatever's pulling it is powering the whole thing.

WAP: That's right.

TS: It's not like—now, Grandfather Powell had—there was a gas engine on that well rig.

WAP: Yeah, yeah, he had to have some other kind of power for it. But, they did all kind of things.

TS: The mules and horses powered most things.

WAP: Oh, yeah, they was real important.

TS: Which is why, if one of 'em throws a shoe, you got to get a shoe on it. You can't wait until next week, a lot of times.

WAP: A good horse or a good mule is very important.

TS: Any mule traders or horse traders?

WAP: Aw, yeah, they come through the country all the time.

TS: What would they do? Would they be buying or selling or both at the same time?

WAP: Both. Most of 'em usually had something with 'em when they come through. They'd have three or four or five with 'em, just leading 'em behind.

TS: I heard what your wife said, a mule yard in Gatesville. But, still, it's the same old thing, you can't necessarily—they were coming to you, because it took a whole day for you to go to Gatesville to the mule yard to buy. They would say, Do you have any mules or horses you want to sell or buy?

WAP: Yeah, they just come through and stopped at every place. They had animals, they had some to sell, they'd buy some or trade.

TS: That's one thing—we're almost through with what I've thought to ask—the mule and horse men are really one of the kinds of peddlers that came around. What kind of peddlers came around selling stuff or trading for stuff?

WAP: The Rawleigh people, they used to come around, and what was that other bunch? Watkins. That's about all the peddlers that I know, but every once in a while they'd have a wild person coming through selling something it might not be too good. He wouldn't be there when you get more time to use it, he's already gone. I remember my Grandma Powell told me one time that a peddler come through selling stuff to kill bedbugs. He told her, "Don't open it, now, until you get ready to use it." So, he's gone, and in two or three days the weather's just right, and she's gonna dope all the mattresses for the bedbugs and everything. And said she unwrapped this package all, when she got down to the center of it, it said, "Catch 'em and hit 'em with a hammer." (laughs)

TS: Well, you couldn't trust all the peddlers.

WAP: No. Every once in a while you'd have one come through like that.

TS: Any Gypsy peddlers in this area? Because there used to be—everybody in East Texas at a certain point can talk about Gypsies.

WAP: Yeah, I think that occasionally that they'd come through. They'd be selling, they made handmade furniture and stuff out of willow limbs. I think that occasionally they come through.

TS: You needed to lock the barn when they were in the area, too, according to what people told me.

WAP: Yeah, they'd have one a-selling you something, and three or four more looking for something to get. But they came through with their handmade furniture and things that they made. I've seen 'em come through. They'd have whatever they'd be a driving, their transportation and all, they'd have that stuff stacked all over it, you couldn't even see it. Had it piled up with their furniture and whatever they're selling. And I think they just kind of camped out and lived off the fat of the land, when they come through.

TS: Yeah. So, this was kind of rough outside porch furniture that they made from those willows, is that right?

WAP: Yeah. They made chairs and they made a little old settee-type bench or something out of it, you know. They'd bend that stuff around and make it. And every once in a while you still see some of it. I guess somebody's still making some of it.

TS: Yeah. Oh, one thing I meant to ask you, did everybody have their properties perimeter fenced? Or, was there free range? Was everything fenced up, or did some people run their livestock out? Were there some areas where every property owner did not have their land fully fenced?

WAP: Most people had their land fenced because when you raise cotton and corn you can't afford to put livestock in it. Most of the places—but there used to be, I don't know, several hundred acres that I really think at that time belonged to the state or somebody, open land. And it didn't have any fences, and there's several people that let their cows and stuff run on it. It was a big place, I don't know how many acres it was, but it was a bunch. Close to where I's raised, our cows used to run out on it.

TS: Well, you know, in East Texas and elsewhere, you had to fence them out, you had to have fences around your croplands, but there wasn't a stock law in some of those places until later. So, everybody would fence the stock out of their fields, and outside of those fields they just kind of ran around out there, earmarked or branded, and mixed up.

WAP: Aw, yeah. There's several people had their cows run on this land that I's telling you about. I know I used to have to walk and hunt out milk cows after I got out of school sometimes, and they might be three miles from the house. Just have to go get 'em and drive 'em home.

TS: So, they might be beyond your property line, right?

WAP: Yeah, they be out in this big area of open land, you know, that didn't belong to anybody. It didn't belong to any of us.

TS: Well, you know, the custom in East Texas was that you just let your stock run out, and other people let their stock run out, too. And your stock got on their land, and their stock got on your land, and it was customary that that wasn't a problem. And that was kind of the way it was—

WAP: Yeah, in this big area I's talking about. Yeah, it sure was. (MLHP says something off the tape) Aw, she wants me to tell you about—my Grandpa Dorsey used to raise a lot of corn and fed the hogs and the horses, and all, and those corncobs, they's all over that hill out there, from the house to the barn and all around, where he fed those hogs and everything. And in the wintertime, those things would soak up water and everything, and we used to chunk one another with them things. And they'd weigh about three pounds, you get hit in the head with one of them, it's terrible. We used to fight with 'em, throw 'em at one another.

TS: So, they'd just be all piled up there on the side of the hill?

WAP: They'd be on the ground, you know, wherever they ended up after they eat all the corn off of 'em. And my Grandpa Dorsey used to raise hogs, too.

TS: Yeah, I was going to ask about that. Most people would have had some hogs, right?

WAP: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, he used to raise quite a few, I think he used to sell a few. And, boy, he had some big ones. He had some of those big old—I think you call 'em Poland Chinas, the black ones with the white belt on 'em. Or something, I don't know what you call 'em. He had some big ones. Man, I've seen 'em when they's taller than the fence—you know, great big suckers. I've seen some of 'em that he raised I imagine weigh five hundred or six hundred pounds.

TS: A lot of people that have pasture hogs or hogs in the woods used stock dogs. Did either of your grandfathers have stock dogs?

WAP: Well, naw, they just had dogs, and they'd run the cows or whatever. But they didn't have the stock dogs like in East Texas where they train 'em. Down there, they have hog dogs to catch them wild hogs and all that stuff and special cow dogs. They didn't have the special kind, but everybody had dogs. They'd run the cows or the hogs or whatever you sicced 'em on.

TS: Well, you've had a heavy dose of East Texas. How many years did you live in Port Arthur?

WAP: Uh, I lived down there in that area about thirty-five or forty years.

TS: You've been East-Texanized, then, you know about the hog dogs and the hogs in the woods and—

WAP: Yeah, I know about all of that. It takes a pretty tough dog to corral them wild hogs.

TS: Yeah, somebody sent me—there was a little magazine published for a while about the sport of—you know, they do things like they drag race the hog dogs, they're little competitions and all such as that. But you go back into the 1950s, everybody that had stock out in the woods had to have dogs, because you can't get stock out of the woods without stock dogs, you can't ride on a horse and get things out of a thicket.

WAP: Naw, you couldn't. We used to have a couple of dogs, they's squirrel dogs and possum dogs. And they also would—you know, you used them to work your stock with. They's just all around.

TS: Yeah. Would people, would your grandfathers, when they occasionally butcher a steer, would they distribute beef to the neighbors? Some people have talked about that.

WAP: Well, I don't remember that much about that part of it, but they used to do that, and some places had what they called a beef club. Whenever one person killed a beef, well, they divided with all of the neighbors. Then, later on, it was time for another one to do that, and he did the same thing. You know, they didn't have places to freeze it and put it up, so when they did it they just divided it with all of the people.

TS: So, everybody's number came up. You killed one and contributed to the beef club, and then the next week or the next two weeks it was somebody else who contributed. Do you think Friendship had one of those?

WAP: Uh, I don't remember them having one specifically like that, but I know when they'd kill, a lot of times, somebody'd kill one, they always give part of it to the neighbors. They was real good about that.

TS: Well, you know, you can't eat the whole thing, and you can't preserve it. So, even if you don't have a formal beef club, you give it to the neighbors—

WAP: And they give it to you, yeah.

TS: So, you're really swapping fresh meat in a way. You know, all the ways that people helped each other out is interesting to me. No money ever changed hands, people swapped work for work and syrup for syrup, and—

WAP: And used to be, it'd come a rain, and everybody'd work on the road. They had what they called the public road. It was a caliche-type road, you know, it was handmade with the mules and them old slips and things, deals to move the dirt with. And it'd come a rain, and ever' so often, when it'd be kind of too wet to work in the field, they'd all meet with their mules and equipment, and they worked on that public road. It was all a donation, everybody'd give so many days a month on it.

TS: I'm glad you told about that. So it was a road—it had something to do with the road commissioners. But they're volunteers, I understand, and it's in your interest to get out there and get your road passable.

WAP: Yeah, yeah. My daddy used to give so many days a month or ever how often it was—take his team and go work on that road so many days. He'd volunteered so many days to work on it, see. So, whenever the weather was right and all, well they'd all go get with it.

TS: So, somebody would call around and say, We're going to work on this stretch of road on such and

such a day. Put out the word, and then everybody would show up, and would contribute their own work stock.

WAP: Yeah, yeah, they'd bring the mules and everything, and some of 'em had the other equipment to move the dirt with. And they'd get all of that there, and they'd all work all day on it.

TS: Do you remember people who were helping each other to build barns or fences or house raisings? What do you remember about that?

WAP: Aw, well, it wasn't anything if you had a fence to build, your neighbor'd just come and help you. And they'd help build houses, whatever there was to do. As a general rule, if you started something like that, well you had help. They'd come help. No money, you know, they'd just volunteer to come help you.

TS: That's a lot different from today, isn't it?

WAP: Not today. It's changed.

TS: I mean, if you go out and start working on something today, the neighbors, it's not going to occur to them to—

WAP: Well, there don't nobody have time to help no more. I mean, there's still a few people out there that'd be glad to help you, but they're too busy trying to make a living. They just don't have the time. Everything has changed considerable.

TS: Well, people would help out with somebody's crops if somebody got sick, right?

WAP: Oh, yeah. It wasn't too hard to find somebody to give a hand if it's needed. Yeah, I remember that happening, somebody'd get down sick, or I've seen people lost one of their mules, something like that, somebody'd loan 'em one where they could go ahead and do their work.

TS: You know, I almost forgot to ask, it fits in here. I got the sense from interviewing Zell Kinsey Copeland that your grandfather, and the people of Friendship, really helped them out. Now, they had all those young children—that Mr. Dorsey must have given them, when they were on his place, a particularly good deal. Is it your impression that they did everything to help 'em make it?

WAP: Yeah, and another thing is, I'm sure—I don't remember the exact what happened, but I'm sure they ate out of his garden, too. He always had plenty, and I'm sure that he helped 'em a lot.

TS: Well, you know, you were a real good friend with the boys and grew up with the boys. But I asked her, "How much cotton did you used to make?" Because that's got to be an indicator of cash flow. And she said, "Well, we always tried to make a bale." (laughs) Now, that's not very much.

WAP: Not very much, but they also picked cotton for money for other people. All those boys, they'd work for other people.

TS: So, the boys working out for other people is part of the way that family got by? Because that one bale of cotton is not going to buy clothes for school and—and she said she doesn't remember being hungry, she doesn't remember her mother not buying clothes for school every fall and starting out with new shoes.

WAP: Well, they always managed, I guess, with all of 'em doing a little work along. Now, they might not have the finest of everything, but they always had what they had to have to wear—you know, shoes and—I don't know, they might have had one pair of shoes and two or three people had to wear 'em, so one had to stay home one day while the other'ne wore the shoes. Now, I don't know.

TS: Well, you know, when the father died the oldest boy was nine, and they lived at Levita with her, I mean, the mother's, with Zell Copeland's grandparents. They lived with the grandparents there until the oldest boy got to fourteen.

WAP: His name was Taylor, Taylor Kinsey.

TS: And at fourteen, you can plow, I guess.

WAP: Yeah, you can plow. Well, earlier than that I did.

TS: Yeah, but, then she took 'em out in the country and they started rent farming.

WAP: They had Taylor and Vincent and Seth and Troy and G. W.

TS: G. W.? And then there were Josie and Zell, and that was a lot.

WAP: Yeah, six I guess, four boys and two girls.

TS: Some of them get together now, and they just wonder how their mother made it.

WAP: Yeah, there's not too many of the boys living no more. I don't really know, I don't know whether any of 'em is or not. I don't believe that any of the boys is still living. I went in the service with one of them, and another one joined and come to where we were at, come to California where we was at. I was in the service with them a little while, and then we got separated.

TS: Now, I know you weren't there when Fort Hood came in—you're gone. But how did your family take that?

WAP: They wasn't very happy about the way it took place, but they didn't have no choice. They just come there and told you how much they was going to give for your land and give you two or three weeks to get out and took a bulldozer and pushed your house down. And that's all there was to it.

TS: What did your grandparents—I know they've got kids and grandkids in the service, so I understand that, but still, their land is being taken away just like that.

WAP: Yeah, everybody wanted to do their part, you know, and mostly as a general rule they didn't raise too much sand about it, 'cause they wanted to be patriotic and do what was right.

TS: What did your grandfathers do? Did they reestablish some place else? What did they do?

WAP: Uh, no, I don't believe either one of them bought another place, but my mother and daddy did.

TS: So, your grandfathers just essentially retired from farming.

WAP: They just kind of quit, they was pretty old anyway.

TS: Did they move into town?

WAP: I don't think they bought—my Grandpa Dorsey and them didn't buy a place in town. My Grandpa Powell, he went—my Grandmother Powell died while I was in the service, this is long pretty close to that time, and he went to live with some of his kids at different places.

TS: And what did your father do? You said he got another place.

WAP: Well, he bought a place out at Coryell City and stayed out there couple of years. And there wasn't any road, and it's always muddy, you couldn't get in and out. He had a chance to sell it, and he bought the one that I'm living on out there at Pearl, now. Bought it in the 1940s, '44 or '45, somewhere along there. And he bought it, and he lived there on it, and we—my mother divided it and give me half of it

and my brother half of it, and I sold mine when we got ready to move to town. I sold my land, I still got a house and five acres out there. Got a big house and five acres.

TS: Where is Pearl?

WAP: Well, you go out of Gatesville, you go due west out of Gatesville, and go to a little place called Purmela. And [Farm Road] 183 crosses right there, Farm Road 183 starts right there. Turn left on it, and about five and a half miles, I guess, five miles my wife said, to Pearl. A farming community, and they had a school and they got some churches. They got a couple of churches there.

J. W. Shults

Date of birth: 16 July 1930
Communities affiliated with: Ewing, Friendship
Interviewed by Marie E. Blake

MEB: This is Marie E. Blake. Today is Thursday, September 13, 2001. I am interviewing for the first time, Mr. J. W. Shults. This interview is taking place at Mr. Shults's home in Gatesville, Texas. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

Would be a good place to start. Okay, yeah, we're running now. So maybe if you don't mind telling me when and where you were born?

JWS: I was born in the Friendship community on Owl Creek, July 16, 1930. Uh, I was born in the home, as were all my sisters. And I was the second of four children. My dad and mom were both raised in that community. And my mom's dad and mother had six girls and four boys. And my dad's parents had four girls and six boys. And except for one of my dad's brothers, they all married girls around fairly close. Well, actually, two of them. One of them was never married and one of them went to West Texas when he was in his early teens and married a girl in—from San Angelo, or around the San Angelo area. But my mom's brothers and sisters, except for one girl who was never married, they married around close in that community.

And my mother's grandfather came here in the early 1850s. Had quite a bit of land on Owl Creek, and he started the first school. And I didn't know this until I read it in this Fort Hood history book, that he built the first school building in Coryell County. But my dad's dad came from Fort Worth after the Civil War. He had gone to the Civil War with a unit from Fort Worth. And before that, he had a freight line from Fort Worth to Freeport, Louisiana, with ox wagons. And then after the war, well he came back and—he had a wife and a child when he went to the Civil War, and when he came home he couldn't find them anywhere. And anyway, he sold his land in Fort Worth and came on to Coryell County because he said land was too high in Tarrant County, it cost fifty cents an acre. So he could buy land in Coryell County for a nickel an acre, so he came here and started over.

And then most of—my father's father died before I was born, as did his mother. So I knew none of my grandparents on that side. My mom's dad and mother lived until—well, my grandmother died when I was six, and then my granddaddy lived until, in the late '40s, so I knew them and we had a lot of family get-togethers at their home at Christmas, New Year's, Thanksgiving, that sort of thing.

And there wasn't, we probably weren't—fifteen, eighteen miles from our house to town, and we probably went to town once a month. And we raised nearly all of our groceries other than flour and meal and coffee, sugar. Other than that, we raised nearly all the things that we ate. We raised a lot of garden, and my mom canned it. And we'd kill hogs and cure the meat in wintertime. And we ate a lot of wild animals, squirrels, that sort of thing. Ate a lot of chicken, fried chicken.

But nobody had any money. This was shortly after the big Depression, the big break in '29, and up

until '42 there wasn't anybody that had any money. I mean, there just wasn't any money. And anyway, it was—times was really tough, you know, financially. But there wasn't anybody—I mean everybody was in the same predicament. They didn't anybody have anything more than another one. So, and everybody was happy. We had a lot of fun, and most of the toys we got at Christmas were homemade, as was our, most of our clothes. Except for—and in the fall when cotton was ready to pick, we'd pick cotton for the neighbors that had more cotton than we did. And we'd make enough money to buy our new fall school clothes for when we started school in the fall.

And then we raised sheep, goats, and hogs, calves. We had our own milk and butter, that sort of thing. So everybody had plenty to eat, it was just the fact that it wasn't—it was all the same thing most of the time. But nobody complained because it was, nobody was any different. And in the summertime, lot of time we had—somebody would go to town and get a block of ice, and we'd have homemade ice cream with some of the neighbors or kinfolks.

And then in '41, when they began to talk about war, there was very few radios at that time. I won't ever forget, there was a gentleman lived at Ruth, which as not far from Friendship, and he had a radio, but it had earphones, and only one person could listen. Or a headset, I should say, not earphones, but a headset that only one person could hear it at a time. But about, I guess in 1940, my dad bought a radio, and it had a dry-cell battery. And then they began to talk about war. Germany had begun to do all these things to those little countries over there, and England.

Then it begin to be rumored about Fort Hood, and it was finally became reality. And it was mass confusion for—because we'd get a letter from the Department of the Army, and say you have thirty days to evacuate your premises. And then the next day you'd get another letter that said you had ten days to evacuate. And everybody was running just anywhere. It was a heyday for the real estate people, and land began to double in price because there was—and a lot of people bought land in places that they didn't really like, but they had to have somewhere to live. And people scattered every direction.

Then, even after—some of the people didn't accept the offer that the government made them for their land, and so eventually they condemned it and took it anyway at the price that they offered. But then it was—to go buy a place, and we'd have to go to a bank and borrow money with the promise that when the government paid us, we'd pay them. But the government paid us no interest for our money, and we had to pay interest to the bank for their money. And it was over a year before they got around to paying us for our land that they had taken. But nobody—well, there was a few of those people, the older people that really resented it, even though it was a thing, it was patriotic and they knew that, but it was still a resentment because of the way that it was done. And I had two aunts, they and their husbands had just built new homes, and they didn't let them keep them. And then when, after they had moved, they came by and set fire to them and just burned them. A lot of those kind of things that happened. And we were going to school at a little school called Ewing, and they needed that school building, they said, for officer's quarters.

But at the time, we had all the rations, things that were rationed. Coffee was rationed, sugar was rationed, gasoline was rationed, tires was rationed, shoes were rationed, beef. You couldn't buy beef without stamps. If you had a pocketful of money, it didn't do you any good if you didn't have—the same with gasoline. And the ration board was lenient with the people who were moving because they would get their regular gas stamps that was equivalent to the gas they would normally use plus another book. It was kind of an emergency-type thing that—when we were out trying to find a place to live. And then in the moving process we had to have the—what we would normally use was extended far beyond that, so we had to have something and they gave us.

But some of the things that happened, I remember my uncle had a 1936 Chevrolet pickup, and

nobody had pickups really at that time. And he was helping all the neighbors to move because he could haul more on the pickup than they could haul in their cars. And over a period of time, he wore out his tires. So all the neighbors go with him to the ration board and say, Mr. Shults needs some new tires. He's worn his tires out helping people move. So the ration board granted him two new tires. But they said, Because he's hauling for other people, he has to buy a commercial license to go on his pickup. And they said, But he's not charging people to do this. And they said, It doesn't matter. He's hauling this for other people. He has to have a commercial license. And those kind of things, you remember them because it's so typical of the red tape that happens when you're dealing with other than an individual. But it was serious and it was funny also. But there was a lot of those kind of things.

But a neighbor of one of my uncles had told him that he would not ever move. And they said, Yeah, you will have to move. And he said, "I'm not going to move." And at the time, they would bring out soldiers with trucks and they would help you haul your furniture and things, anything except livestock. They wouldn't haul livestock. But when they drove into his house, they had—you would put your name on a list, and they would tell you what day that they would be at your house to help you. And you would tell them what you had and they would bring a certain amount of trucks because of it. And this man had made the arrangements, and they were going to be at his house. And when they pulled into his driveway, he was sitting on the front porch and he had been sharpening his pocketknife all morning. And he reached up and cut his throat and died in his front yard. And he had told them that he'd never move.

And there was, you know, several bad things that really happened. But it was mass confusion because people—and it got to be kind of a cutthroat thing also. You know, I would find a place that I would like to have, and I said I, but it wasn't—I was, when I said I, it was just hypothetical. But if you found a place that you liked, and you'd say, "Well, I want this place." And you'd go back to town. And the next day you go back to finalize the deal, and somebody else had already offered them more money and here you had to start over again. So it was very traumatic and for the most part, there was a lot of people—I don't think there was anybody that really benefited. There was some people who found better places to live than they had, but they also cost a lot more money, and that sort of thing. And it wasn't that they were worth any more, it was just the fact that the government appraisers didn't appraise the land that they were taking for near the value that people had on their land that you had to buy, and those kind of things.

School, when I started school at—we lived at the Friendship community, but the school was called Owl Creek. And it was a one-teacher, one-room, and six grades. And you listened to the first grade, you listened to the second grade, you listened to all the way through. And you took all the lessons. (both laugh) So, and one teacher taught all, everybody. And we, at that time, you know, it was—they didn't say school starts at a certain time, books took up at a certain time. Books took up at eight o'clock in the morning. Ten o'clock you had a fifteen-minute recess or thirty minute recess maybe, I'm not sure.

Then at noon, and everybody carried their lunch wrapped up in a newspaper, maybe a couple of cold biscuits from breakfast with some bacon or sausage. Few of the kids would bring light bread with Vienna sausage or bologna or something of that nature, and then maybe a homemade fried fruit pie or something. But everybody carried their lunch. And then I think in about 1938 when we were—we had left Owl Creek School and started Ewing School, and they came out with the hot lunch program. And lunches, at the beginning, cost a nickel a plate. And there was three ladies, and after I've got older and thought about it, I suppose that this was a, kind of a welfare program for these ladies because they were all widow women who had families to raise. And I don't know what they were paid, but it was a government program with the lunches. But we would pay for our

lunches with, when we had money, but in—when there was vegetables, we would trade vegetables to the school and they would cook the fresh vegetables, and that's the way we would pay for our lunches. And then later on, probably been going a couple of years, and the lunches went up to seven cents, but it was those kind of things.

School busses were—had one wooden bench down the center of the bus and one on each side, and no padding, and no heaters, no air conditioning. So you just wore extra coats in the wintertime, and let the windows down in the summertime. And roads were not very well maintained, very few paved roads. Bus would get stuck in mud holes and we'd have to walk to school, and that sort of thing.

So it was kind of a fun time in a way, and—but at the end of the school term, it was always a big celebration. We had a big barbecue. A couple of the men, or three, four of the men in the community would kill a calf and barbecue the whole calf in an old pan barbecue. And then they would usually some of the younger adults in the community would put on a three-act play. And all the politicians would—each little community would have their last day of school picnic at a different time, and all the politicians would come around and do their speeches and their—get on their stumps and do their thing, you know. But then I think it was in '36, when W. Lee O'Daniel was running for the governorship of Texas, and they called him Pappy Lee O'Daniel. And he had a band, a Western swing band that promoted him. And they went all over the country with this Western band to all these picnics. And everybody, it was quite a time. And they'd have baseball games, and maybe goat ropings, and goose pullings.

MEB: What's a goose pulling?

JWS: They would take a goose and put axle grease on his neck and head. And they—guys would ride by on a horse and reach down, and get ahold of his neck and try to pop his head off with his neck greased. So it was tough. (both laugh) It was hard to do, but it was fun, something to pass the time.

And for school, for something to do, we usually didn't have enough kids to have a ball game. We played marbles, and we spun tops, and we weren't allowed to play marbles for keeps because usually if one of the big boys would get all the little boys' marbles if we played for keeps. So we weren't allowed to do that. And then we'd play Red Rover, and Drop the Handkerchief, and that sort of thing for a pastime. Climbed trees, all those kind of things.

But everybody was pretty much—they farmed, they raised cotton and corn, and some kind of crop to feed their animals through the winter. But the people, we could shear the goats twice a year and sell the hair. Sheared the sheep once a year, sell the wool. And we milked the cows and probably, and then we'd sell the calf, you know, whenever the calves get big enough to sell. We'd sell them. And then in the fall, we'd have a couple, maybe three bales of cotton, and that was our money crops.

And my mother always raised turkeys, and they'd be buyers that come around at that time. They'd come around to all these people and they'd buy the turkeys for Thanksgiving, to have them for Thanksgiving dinner. And they had a market for them somewhere. They'd carry them into town and they would be a produce truck pick them up and carry them to one of the killing plants, whereas now they kill turkeys year-round and have them in the grocery store year-round. Then it was a more or less fresh—they killed them and had them fresh for Thanksgiving, Christmas dinner. But—and then we always had chickens running around on the yard, you know. We killed a chicken whenever we need one to eat.

And we heated our house, cooked our meals on wood cook stove, heated our home from the wood. So everybody—there was never, even in the wintertime, then you always had something to do. You had to feed the animals, cut wood, and after I got about ten or eleven years old, I had—my mother wanted her wood to go in the wood cook stove split where it would burn better. And she had to have it just

right to cook biscuits. And she said it made the biscuits taste different, the way you cooked them. And I guess it did, but I don't know that. (laughs) I'm not a cook.

But then, the women, they'd get together in the spring when the vegetables—and they'd can the vegetables, work together. And then they'd also, about once a month, they would have a quilting. And they always had quilts that they would piece, and then they would quilt them as a little club. And they'd get together and all the ladies of the community, and they'd quilt. And that's kind of the way that we passed the time.

And then along after the war began to get—we had a, it was kind of a ritual, when we came in from school, me and my sisters, we had our chores we had to do. I had to feed the hogs and milk the cows while my dad—because in the school term, I didn't have time to get out and work in the fields. So I took care of all the chores, I fed the hogs, my mother and sisters would gather up the eggs, and do these sort of things. And most of the time on Saturday was wash day. That's when my mother would wash all of our clothes for the week.

But we could turn the radio on, we didn't have any electricity, and because it was a dry-cell battery, it would run down pretty fast. But we would listen to Jack Armstrong, and Captain Midnight, and then we had to cut it off. These were fifteen-minute programs. My mother had some soap operas she listened to during the daytime, later after she got an electric radio. But, and then we would come in and we could listen to the Lone Ranger then. And then my dad would turn the radio on after supper and there was a newscaster. A couple of them that I remember real well, Walter Winchell was a—he reported the war news, is what we called it then, the war news. And Gabriel Heater was another one that he reported. And he would always start his program, he would say, if the war was looking good in our favor, he would say, "Ah, there's good news tonight." And he would continue then with what the good news was. Or if it was not looking good he would say, "Ah, there's bad news tonight," and then he would—and then we would listen to Lum and Abner, Amos and Andy, and Mr. District Attorney, and then we'd cut the radio off and went to bed.

But, on Sunday, everybody went to church. And even then, and like I said, there was no TVs and I was—election night on Saturday night in 1942, there was—I don't remember what the election was that my uncle, he was very interested in politics, more than a lot of people back then. But, or maybe he was one that I just noticed, I don't—because as I look back now, there was a lot of those old-timers that were really interested in politics. And I can go back and look at some of my granddad's children and grandchildren, the names that he gave them, and they were names of well-known statesmen. And, Robert E. Lee was a family name, Robert E. Lee, and some others. But we went to town to watch the election returns. And at that time, Gatesville had four movie houses. Two of them showed Westerns. And my aunt carried me and my sisters to a movie, the first one I had ever seen. I was twelve years old. But—and it really, I can almost recite it word for word today because it impressed me so much.

But, on—then after times began to get a little better, and my mother got a pretty good bunch of chickens, and it was getting, things were beginning to pick up a little bit financially. And she sold a lot of eggs and we milked a lot of cows, and she sold cream. So we'd go to town on Saturday, and we'd sell produce and we'd stock up on groceries that we needed, the coffee, the sugar, and the flour. But—and before that, before—during Fort Hood, my granddaddy had a mill where he ground corn for meal and he'd—wheat for flour. And on rainy day there'd be people come from all around, in wagon or on horseback or whatever, and bring their sack of corn. He would grind it, and if you didn't have money to pay, he would toll it. He had a little scoop and he'd dip it out of yours and put it over in his.

MEB: Where was his mill at?

JWS: It was on Owl Creek. And he also had a blacksmith shop, and people would come from all around and

have him do their blacksmithing. And that was just kind of the way of life at that time.

MEB: What are some of the family names in your family, like your grandparents' names and some of those people?

JWS: Uh, my granddaddy, my mother's daddy was named Jefferson Davis.

MEB: Great! What was the last name?

JWS: Powell.

MEB: Powell?

JWS: P-o-w-e-l-l. And—

And my dad's family, and I don't know—we have traced, they came from Germany, and there was one of my—back about four generations, there was a Shults that fought in the Revolutionary War, but he was a doctor. He was a corpsman in the Revolutionary War, and his name was Valentine Shults. Now all these, all the Shultses have Valentine, and Felty, and Akcels, and they shortened it to Ake, A-k-e, which is my granddad's name. But they all tended to have real short names. My granddaddy had Lawrence, Pete, Ake, Sam, and Jim. And Sam and Jim and Ake, and all these, that was the only name they had. And when they went to the World War I, they had to take a middle initial because the army doesn't recognize one name. You have to have a middle initial, so they took a—then my dad came along and he was the baby. They gave him three names, Thomas Edmund Watson. And these were—but it was all kind of—my granddaddy's name was Edmund Ake. And they didn't—it seems like they didn't tend to take the statesmen's names like my Granddad Powell did. He was more interested in politics, I think. But he was—they had Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis and all those names that.

And he also started, my great-granddaddy Powell, started the—it was a farm organization called the Grange, that's, I think, still in existence. And I have found out later that after he had built his first school building and he hired the teacher himself, and she stayed at his house. And the people that sent their kids to the school there paid tuition and then they paid the teacher. But he was—

MEB: Was this at Owl Creek?

JWS: Yes. It was the first—but it was also the first school in Coryell County. But it was Owl Creek School. And when we moved out of there in 1942, that old building was still there. It was just an old dilapidated kind of a shed out in one of my great-uncle's back yard. But it was the old school building and they had moved it later. But then in the—also in the Owl Creek community there was a Primitive Baptist church, which was what people called the foot-washing Baptists.

MEB: Okay, what's that? I've never heard of that.

JWS: You've never heard of it?

MEB: No, unh-uh.

JWS: Like the—like Jesus washed the disciples' feet? They did the same thing. But only the—I'm not real sure, I was so young. But I do know it was some of the ladies who were older, carried the title of Sister. Sister Jane or Sister Mary or Sister Laura, or whatever their name might be, they were sisters. Now I don't know how they attained that title of sister. Or they were Elder so-and-so or Elder so-and-so. And everybody in the church didn't participate in this foot washing. But on every month, on the months that five Sundays, they had a fifth Sunday meeting. And it didn't matter what denomination or if you were nothing, everybody went to fifth Sunday meeting at Little Flock, that was the name of the

little church. And some of the men that didn't participate in the—any of the worship, they stayed outside and told stories and visited, and talked about dogs and horses and whatever.

But most people went in for the morning service and listened to the—and then they would turn benches back to back and make a long table. And they'd put out food. It was some of the greatest eating you've ever tasted. And everybody would eat and then they would go back in after lunch. And they have the ordinance of the foot washing. And for a little kid, seven or eight years old, you know, you'd peep around the corner to see if you could see who, what was going on, you know. And it was quite a—but it was an experience, you know. And, in fact, my mother's parents were members of this. And they also were of the belief of predestination. And what was to be would be, regardless. You didn't change it. If was to be that way, you didn't change it. So, but everybody went and visited or participated, what—whichever they chose to do.

And they'd have a sing. And these people sang in a different manner than I'd ever heard anybody. And I've never heard people—the sang in a monotone kind of un-un-un-un (imitates the singing). But it was an experience. But everybody went because it was about the only time you had to visit or socialize of any, you know, in any way. And those kind of things were, that was just the general way of life as I knew it when I was—from the time I can remember up until twelve years old in Fort Hood.

MEB: So would you consider Owl Creek a community?

JWS: Yes.

MEB: Okay, so there was—what all was there?

JWS: A school and a church.

MEB: And that was it?

JWS: That was it. Now there were some of the little communities like Ewing that hat a little store with a gas pump that you had to pump the gas up by hand and it ran up there, and you drained it out gravity flow. But Brown's Creek, Owl Creek or Friendship—now Hubbard, which was a little community that joined Owl Creek, Friendship, it had a little store. And then of course, you got into the bigger communities like Flat. And they had drugstore, doctors, general stores, the whole mess. But little communities, Turnover, Schley, Spring Hill, all those, all they had was—most of them just had a school. Some of them had a church and a school. Ruth, which was just off the hill from Friendship had a—of course, Friendship had the cemetery, the community cemetery. Ruth had a—it had a church. It didn't have a school, but it had a gin, a cotton gin, and a little grocery store where you could buy bread and crackers and canned goods, and that sort of thing. There wasn't any—you couldn't buy fresh meat or vegetables or anything. It's all canned goods or non-perishables, I'll put it to you that way. But that was pretty much the extent.

And preacher that came around to these little churches would usually spend the weekend with—because they had to travel quite a ways, and they would usually spend the weekend with some of the members of that congregation, take their meals. And then in the summertime, they'd always have a week long revival meeting at these little churches, each one of them. And people would come from all around to these, and again, it was—that's where the young gentlemen went to meet the young ladies. Because that's the only place there was to go meet them, and that's just the way it was.

MEB: So how far away were Friendship and Owl Creek from each other?

JWS: Well, actually they were—the Owl Creek School and the Friendship Church were only about, uh, probably a quarter of a mile apart.

MEB: But they were considered different communities?

JWS: No, it was the same community. The church just had a different name.

MEB: Okay, I get it. I was just a little confused on that. Okay.

JWS: You know, I thought I made it—

MEB: Well, it's—you know, it's been interesting how people define communities, what things get called and, you know.

JWS: Uh-huh, it is.

MEB: It can be just a church and a bunch of houses.

JWS: That's it. And that's the way—but, and I was talking to a boy that I've known all of his life. His mother and dad lived in that community at one time. And there was two of his cousins, and if you remember when you turn—when you started up to the Friendship, when you turned and kind of went down a little hill and across a little—there's a grove of trees right there. And this guy, his cousin—and they were moving in the summertime. For at the last day of school they would move the church pews, which were just old wooden benches, they would load them on wagons, and they'd haul them over to the schoolhouse. And they had an old brush arbor, and they would put those under. And that's where they had the little last day of school speeches and that sort of thing, because it was so hot in the old building. But anyway, when he had his—he got his wagon loaded with the benches and he started off into Owl Creek there. And his team got scared and ran away, and it stuck the tongue of the wagon up in those trees, and threw him off and killed him. And then just a year later, his oldest son, the same team, went off another hill and killed him. But that's—it was the same community, it was just the church and the school had different names.

MEB: Let's see, how did it work then with the Owl Creek School and then the Ewing School? What was the transition from one to the other?

JWS: Owl Creek only had seven grades, Ewing had nine. So—and at that time it was quite a deal because of the way—when you, after you finished seventh grade at Owl Creek, then you would transfer. And you had to go to the courthouse because of—each student got a certain amount of money from the state to further—for their, to go to that school for their education. And you couldn't just pick up and go to another school legally without transferring. And that's—you didn't actually transfer you, you transferred your money. And then you could go where your money was. But after you finished the seventh grade at Owl Creek, you could go to Ewing. And not be—but most of the time, because the trustees had the last say, if you were an under grade, they wouldn't hardly allow you to transfer because they wanted to keep that money in their district.

And I have always, when I was a little kid and we'd go by these other schools and they'd all have their trees whitewashed up about this high. (gestures) And I'd ask my dad, I'd say, "Why?" And my dad was one of the school trustees. And I'd say, "Why do we not paint our trees at Owl Creek?" And he said, "Because we don't get state aid." And I don't know if you noticed it, but there's a pipeline, an oil pipeline, that comes across—we crossed it going to the Friendship Cemetery. And because that pipeline came across the school property, that oil company paid the school district a revenue for that pipeline crossing their property. It's an easement, I suppose. So therefore, Owl Creek didn't get any state aid money. So we didn't get to whitewash our trees. (laughs)

MEB: That's a tradeoff, I suppose. (laughs)

JWS: But we were also in a lot better financial shape than some of those other schools, too. Because I

suppose, and I don't ever—I wished I would've been old enough to have been interested in, or thought about those things, because now there's not anybody that I can ask. But I've always wondered how much easement they paid, you know, and the reason that we didn't have to—but evidently it was enough that it kept the school going pretty well. Because I know that they paid the teachers for that little small school, they paid the teachers more than most of the schools that size.

And then again, there was another thing, most of the teachers at those small schools like that, and they had—you know, there were, most of them were young ladies. And they would board with some of the families in the community. And that also got a lot of the young men's attention. And in fact, one of the teachers, when my sister was, I guess in first and second grade, and this lady—and she was from Temple. But Temple was a long ways then. And she boarded at our house. And one, my mother's baby brother, married her. But there was a lot of marriages made with the young ladies that came into those communities back then to teach. And the young men paid pretty close attention to who's going to be teaching school next year.

MEB: I bet! (both laugh) I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the farm you grew up on. So, did you guys just grown corn and cotton and that was it?

JWS: We grew some milo or maize, and usually we had a little small patch of sugar cane. And we made—my granddaddy also had a syrup mill, and we made homemade syrup. And then we had some kind of milo or something to make hay for the cows and the horses in the wintertime. And we had to have the corn to feed the horses and the hogs. And of course, the cotton, when we ginned the cotton we brought the cottonseed home and we fed the cows cottonseed. But the cotton was the money crop. Actually, that was the only crop that we had that we could sell at that time. Everything else was put back into—the corn, we used it to make meal, of course, but to feel the hogs and the horses. And then the cottonseed to feed the cows. And then we had, well, we'd usually feed the chickens, they just kind of roughed it then. But later on, like I was saying while ago, after _____ (??) my mother got more chickens, and better quality chickens, and she began to sell eggs. And then she began to buy commercial feed for her chickens because it was better than just what—but yes, it was cotton and corn, mainly.

MEB: And your family owned their farm?

JWS: Yes.

MEB: Do you remember how big the farm was?

JWS: It was about 180 acres.

MEB: And how many bales of cotton would you be able to get?

JWS: If a good year, probably three.

MEB: And how much of that would be in cotton?

JWS: Probably twenty or thirty acres. Because most of the time, it would make about a quarter of a bale per acre, so fifteen or twenty acres. And like I said, we had to farm it with mules. And with one man and a team of mules, you didn't farm a lot of land. It was just that. But the neighbors did do a lot of helping one another at that time, you know. Come help different ones to plant their crops, and gather their crops, and that sort of thing. And most of the time, back about that time, cotton—a bale of cotton is considered—a bale of cotton is considered to weigh five hundred pounds. And most of the time it would bring somewhere around ten cents a pound. So a bale of cotton would bring fifty dollars. Sometimes it brought even less, you know, seven, six, seven cents.

And along about that time is '30—I think '33 or '34 is when Roosevelt's New Deal came in. There wasn't any money, and he began to try to get some money circulating. And he started the CCC camp, which was the Conservation Corps, and gave these young men a job and they built roads and did everything.

(interruption in taping)

MEB: Okay, there we go.

JWS: And then they began to pay the farmers to not plant cotton, you know, just to get some money in circulation. And then they paid them to kill their cows because there wasn't any market for any cows. They weren't—they virtually worthless, so they killed a lot of them. And it did begin to get a little bit of money circulating.

And then, of course, after the war came in '42, then things began to—even though everything was rationed and, you know, you could—I did hear of some people who were black-marketing beef or whatever. They'd kill it themselves and sell it through one of the local stores as something else, you know, but it was actually, it was just black-market beef, was all it amounted to.

And then, of course, some of the farmers that had tractors—and my dad got a tractor in '48, I guess, and then they had a separate ration book for the farmers. They could get gas. 'Course a lot of those—and again, that's one of those things, you know, they would put their tractor gas in the cars. (both laugh) If they needed to go to town and extra time, you know, because most of—you didn't get, the ration board didn't look, they weren't too favorable about allowing people to have gas to burn.

Especially on a—in fact, in 1947 when I graduated from high school, we still couldn't use the school busses for anything except to haul to school or to a school activity. We couldn't go to ball games or any of that sort of thing on a school bus. And on our senior trip, so we could go on the school bus. We took a trip to Stephenville to Tarleton University, and spent the day. And came back and through Glen Rose and saw a movie and ate supper. And that was our senior trip. So it was real exciting. (both laugh) We did see *The Outlaw* movie.

MEB: Oh, hey, that's good.

JWS: You know?

MEB: Oh, yeah, Jane Russell, right?

JWS: Yes. (MEB laughs) So that was pretty exciting trip.

MEB: So during the Depression, were you guys ranching as well as farming? Did you have livestock then?

JWS: Uh-huh.

MEB: So did you guys have animals that got killed when the government was shooting cattle and stuff?

JWS: I don't think my dad did. My granddad did. But—and my grandmother, my dad's mother, raised horses. So they—in fact, as my dad inherited most of that place where we lived from his mother. Because he—my granddad was married actually four times, and I think I told you that at Friendship. Maybe I didn't. Told Martha, I know.

MEB: Can you tell me, too?

JWS: Yes. But when he went to the Civil War, from Fort Worth, and he had a wife and a child. And when he came home, he couldn't find them. So then when he came on down here, and he married a lady named Mary Jane Farmer. And they had three girls, and she died. And he married a lady named Mary

Jane White. And they had (counts to himself) five boys and a girl. And she died, so he married her younger sister. And they had my dad and another boy that died when he was just an infant. And they're all buried by him in Friendship Cemetery, three—his three wives.

But that's where my dad got the farm, was from her. But my Uncle Jim, who was—he was almost, he could have been a juvenile delinquent if he was living in our day today. But he was also very quick-witted. And my granddad lived on their old home place. And my grandmother, and this was where I was born, was four or five miles, but she still had these old horses out there. And my dad and Uncle Jim had to go out every day and, with a rope and bucket, draw water, and water these horses. And the story is that one of the neighbors had a stallion horse that was running with my grandmother's mares. And this old man went through there one day and he found his horse with a rope around his neck. So he goes and confronts my granddaddy. "Why did your boys rope my horse?" So Grandpa calls Uncle Jim and my daddy, and said, "Why did y'all rope Mr. Andrews's horse?" And ol' Jim said, "We didn't rope his horse." And he said, "But he's dragging your rope." And he said, "But I didn't rope him." He said—and my dad rode a mule—and he said, "This old stallion got after my little brother, and I thought he was going to hurt him." So he said, "I ran up and I hit at him with my rope, and it went on his head, and he got away." (both laugh) But he made him believe it, and he got out of it.

So anyway, those kids—and I still have my granddad's six-shooter that he carried in the Civil War. And one of my cousins has his sword that he carried in the Civil War. And they will be passed on to my grandkids, someday. But he and his brother both went to the Civil War with a—and I didn't even realize this until several years ago that they had national guard back at that time. But they went to the Civil War with a national guard unit from Fort Worth, and then came home.

But anyway, then all on my—my dad stayed home and took care of his mother and his dad until they died. And the rest of the boys left. And one of them who was even more of a juvenile delinquent, never did get married didn't anybody knew of, but he had lots of girlfriends. He was a ladies' man. He was big, stout, wore buckskin gloves all the time. He was a real good horseman, I guess a good cowboy from what I understand. But he went to California one time, and he worked on a dude ranch to be around the ladies. And he did a lot of things, but he—he was quite a character, I suppose. And he rode his horse in a café in Gatesville in 1932. On election night he'd had a little more to drink than he needed. And he told him he was going to show them how they did it out in the real west. He rode his horse in the café. Sheriff told him if he didn't go home, he was going to have to lock him up. So he went home.

But those kind of things, there was a lot of people that—back in the '30s when I was a young man, they was—over on Brown's Creek and over in Tama Valley, there was several of those old-timers who made their own whiskey back in those hills, you know. And everybody knew it. Nobody paid them a lot of mind. They didn't—

MEB: During Prohibition?

JWS: Yes.

MEB: Okay. (laughs)

JWS: Yes. They really didn't—I don't think they really sold a lot of it. They made most of it for—

MEB: Um, actually, I'd like to ask you another question about livestock. You said you guys had cattle, and you had sheep and goats as well. Did you have them all at once?

JWS: Um-hm.

MEB: Okay, did you have Angora goats?

JWS: Yes, ma'am.

MEB: Okay, so you—and you raised them for their, uh—

JWS: Hair.

MEB: Hair, yeah.

JWS: Yes. Sheep have wool, goats have hair.

MEB: Okay, I wasn't quite clear on that. (laughs)

JWS: Yes.

MEB: So where would you sell that kind of stuff?

JWS: Uh, there was wool buyers and—in almost every little town. Gatesville had, in fact, Gatesville had about three different wool buyers. And then when they got a truckload of it, they would either—and when I talk about a truckload, I'm talking maybe like what I could haul in my pickup truck. You know, because most times, you know, like with—we never did have a lot of—thirty or forty head of each one, you know, at any one given time. Because on a small farm with goats, sheep, cows and horses, all on one little—and hogs—you know, you can't run a lot of animals. But it would—then they'd either carry it to Brownwood or some of the western—most of the real big wool buyers, wool growers, mohair growers were west of here. And they would take it and sell it there. You know, to—but they, actually, we had to take, you know, whatever they'd give for us because they'd have to try to make their money also. 'Course then later when it got to be, when transportation got a little better, and we got better quality goats and sheep, and we could go to Goldthwaite or Brownwood or Lometa. Lampasas always had better wool buyers and they'd give more for it than we could get here 'cause they were more in the heart of the wool, mohair country.

And then in the fall usually, when we sheared our goats we'd take a couple of those mutton goats, put 'em in a lot and feed 'em corn for a few days. And then we'd butcher them and we'd make, we'd can the meat. Make chili or like stew meat, and we would—that would be part of our winter groceries also. But we'd can it just like—be kind of like, well, just stew meat, you know, or barbecue, whatever.

MEB: Did you guys ever have Spanish goats?

JWS: Not much back then.

MEB: Okay. Can you tell me what the difference is between an Angora goat and a Spanish goat, 'cause I know that they're different, but I don't—

JWS: Spanish goats only have short hair like a dog.

MEB: Okay. Regular goat.

JWS: Yeah. And now—and they're more for, of course a lot of times, you know, they have the—and now they've got the goats bred up to, a lot of people, you know, they were the old milk goats, the Nubians and the Saanens and the—all those. And really, some of the Spanish goats derive from those milk goats. They just, they're just smaller and most people use them now because, you know, there's a good market for them in Mexico.

MEB: So those are more if you're going to eat 'em.

JWS: Oh, yeah, yeah. 'Cause the Angora goats are not really that—well, they eat just as well, but it's the

fact that you've got to shear them before you can butcher them, that sort of thing. But now they're breeding those Boer goats, which come from—I'm not sure where they come from. Somewhere across the sea, and they're big, make—they're really beefy like a calf or something. But Mexico has a real good market for goats. And I'm not sure what we're using it for here in the States, but they're—

MEB: So it sounds like you had lots and lots of family around the Fort Hood area.

JWS: Oh, yeah.

MEB: Did lots of members of your family lose land to the acquisition?

JWS: Yes. Uh, my dad, two of his brothers, one of his cousins, then my mom's dad. And I think he had three brothers and two sons that all lost land in Fort Hood. Yes, quite a lot of the families.

MEB: Was that all up around the Friendship area?

JWS: Yes, up and down Owl Creek, because my dad's—my mom's dad, uh, and I think his daddy—I don't know how much land. I read in this book how much land. But when he came here, he brought his slaves with him. He and his brother, I think they had—in the 1858 tax roll or something, they had between the two of them, had eleven slaves. But he had a lot of land, and he left—let's see, there was uh, one, two, three, four, five, six—he had six kids, and he left each of them 160 acres right down Owl Creek. And I guess two of them kind of got in a financial bind, which wasn't—and had to sell theirs to a—

Do you remember Margaret Brown Smith, that was at Ewing picnic? When—well, up there where we went to the old, that old—no, you weren't there. I think Martha, we went to, at the Friendship—

MEB: People mix us up all the time. (laughs)

JWS: Well, I get, I get confused as to which one of you was at which place. But anyway, Margaret's, one of her great-uncles bought this place from these two Powells. But that's—yes, it was all kind of in the—and several years ago, when we were doing Friendship Cemetery, and then the army would usually send an escort in and make sure that everybody got in and got out without—and now they're not quite so particular. But anyway, one of these GIs and he was kind of, he was pretty interested in the history around, and he would walk through the cemetery in there. And after a while he came back, and he said, "Is everybody in this community kin to this Mr. Shults that's buried out here?" And I said, "Pretty much." Because when you have ten kids, and the only transportation they have is a horse or a buggy, you know, they have a tendency to marry the girls right around close. So, yes, nearly everybody right around here are kin.

And then Fort Hood scattered us. They went every direction. Some went, you know, pretty close around. Some of them went to town. The older ones that had kind of—in fact, my granddad, because he's, you know, he's getting ready to retire anyway, you know, quit. He moved into Gatesville. A lot of the older ones. The lady that her husband cut his throat, she moved into Gatesville. A lot of those people just moved into town. Some of them went as far west as—well, even some of them, because they couldn't find a job and they couldn't find a farm, they—a lot of them went to Odessa, or around out in that oil country and got jobs. Because jobs were more plentiful out there, they could go to work in the oil fields, you know, at that time.

So, in fact, this guy I was talking to, friend of mine, last week, he goes—he's a little older than I am. His wife had died a couple of years ago, and he goes to all these dances of the older people. And he had told me that he ran into a man in Hamilton a few days ago that knew my uncle that lived in Lamesa. And so, you know, there's a lot of those people, they just went everywhere. But it seemed like the most of them—very few of them came, and I don't understand why, very few of them came

north of Gatesville. And mostly went west, east, or south. I never have understood why. There was a couple of them that came to Turnersville, and then us here. But I don't know, there just wasn't a lot of them that came north of Gatesville. I don't know—was always one of those mysteries that you wonder why that they went west and south and east. All the ones down on the lower end went to Belton or Salado, Nolanville, back in that country.

MEB: So, do you know, when the government acquired that land, if any of your family members were given the option to move the houses or any of the buildings or anything off the property and take them with them?

JWS: The first acquisition, which was in December and January of '41 and '42, they had no option at all to take anything. Then in December of '42 and the early part of '43 when we moved, we were given the option to move, to keep our buildings. In fact, the house right over here that my mother lived in—that I, where we lived, part of it was built from the lumber out of old house in Fort Hood. And we moved, we got to keep the barbed wire, the fences, that sort of thing. And the buildings, tin off the buildings and that sort of thing. And then in '54 when they did the Belton Lake area, Brookhaven, that area, and part of the western part—and those people gave, the government was more liberal with them than they were at the beginning. They paid them pretty much what was a fair market value for their land, and allowed them to take everything they wanted off of it. But when we was moving and they was a lot of things that were stolen, and pilfering, you know, just—you'd leave one afternoon and have things that you were going to come back tomorrow and get. And you'd go back tomorrow to get it, and it wasn't there, you know. A lot of things.

MEB: That wasn't common before, was it?

JWS: No, no. It was just the fact—

MEB: The circumstances.

JWS: Yes.

MEB: Huh. Were there a lot of strangers around that would have—

JWS: Oh, yeah. See, about that time—and it was not long after we moved out here that they began to build the barracks in Fort Hood, and this house where we'd moved was actually three rooms. My dad, mom, and myself, and two younger sisters.

And we rented one room to a man from Jackson, Mississippi. And I don't remember, Marie, exactly—I think twenty-five dollars a month, but he was a carpenter. The lady right up the road rented—there was a man and his son, and I believe he brought his wife with him. No, he didn't. One lived right down the road here, but there was four of those men from Jackson, Mississippi, and they were all carpenters. And we rented them rooms. But they were living in wherever they—tents, whatever, because they couldn't find a place to stay. And they were—they were making more money than they'd ever heard of. I think probably a dollar and a quarter an hour, you know, which is unheard of. And people came from everywhere, and they was, you know, a lot of them were good people. But a lot of them just were like every other boom in—you know, when there's something booming, you get all of the trash along with the good people that come to make a living. You get the ones that would come just to skim the cream off, you know, and not work. But that's—it happened here during that time.

MEB: Um, so can you tell me about, a little about your siblings and what you guys were like as kids, what kind of chores you did around the farm and that kind of thing.

JWS: Well, I think I touched on that a little, awhile ago. But my sisters washed the dishes. Now my older

sister graduated from high school—in fact, she stayed with my granddad in Gatesville to finish her last year of high school. And then immediately after she got out of high school, she went to work in Gatesville. So actually, she didn't get into a lot of the farm chores after she was fourteen years old. She actually graduated from high school when she was fifteen. And she started school in the first grade, started back the next year in the third grade. And then, of course, they added the—when we started school, there was only eleven grades in high school. Then later on they added a grade, which made it twelve grades. But she and I were on the top end. They added a grade below us, so that just moved us up a grade. So actually, she only went to school nine years, you know. And then she went to work when she was fifteen in Gatesville.

But then during—when we'd come in from school, my little sisters would have to wash the dishes and start supper because my mother helped my dad in with the animals and with the farming, too. And cultivating season, they—we had two teams and cultivators, plowing crops weren't that hard. And those old horses and mules knew to walk down those furrows pretty well, and it wasn't a lot to do. But Mother would help Papa with the cultivating of the land. And then in the fall, she'd pick cotton and help him pull corn and that sort of thing. I'd help shuck the corn for the hogs and have the—milk the cows, and do those kind of things, gather up the eggs. And my little—and like I said, the sisters would wash the dishes and help Mother with the housework, sweep the floors and help her with those kind of things.

But then if we had—we usually had to keep the varmints and so forth, we'd have to shut the chickens up in a house at night. And we'd have to shut the goats up in a pen at night, and the sheep to keep the stray dogs and the varmints from getting them, and so forth. And then it was—I told them the other day, there wasn't any—I noticed that they're having a big deal now about a lot of the schoolteachers—and what is the medicine that they give the little kids for hyper, uh—

MEB: Ritalin, I think?

JWS: I believe. And they're recommending a lot of—

MEB: For being hyper?

JWS: Yes. Giving their—to a lot of the parents to give the Ritalin, you know, because they can't control them at school. Uh, we weren't hard to control at school because our dads and moms, we worked off our energy. And even if it was raining, like I said, if it was raining or cold, we had to cut wood to, to where we'd have wood to heat the house or to cook with. And, or we would clear out brush, whatever, we had something to do. It didn't matter how cold or how rainy, I mean unless it—if it was raining, but if it was just muddy, you know, that didn't stop—we had something to do. And, of course, raining or cold or whatever, the animals had to be fed. So, you know, but it's kind of amusing to me that these kids—and they're not any more hyper than I was, or don't have any more—it's just the fact that they don't have any way to work it off.

So, there's really—I have a lot of great memories about my childhood, and some of—you know, I hear people every day, I don't want to go back to them good ol' days. You know, well, there's some of it that I don't want to go back to either, but there's some of it that was great.

MEB: What are some of your favorite memories?

JWS: I guess getting to go with my dad. Uh, and later when I had—I had asthma real bad and it—they found out that, you know, I couldn't pick cotton. So I had to do these other chores. And I finally ended up washing the dishes and even doing those—some of the household chores so that my sisters and my mother could go. But if I got to go with him to the gin, or something like that, you know, get up early in the morning and leave, you know, before daylight, and then come in after dark, all day,

you know, gone. And those sort of things, I have great memories of those kind of things. Just getting to go to town with him for something, and those kind of things are really great memories. And some of the things that we used to do at—and my mom and two of her younger brothers were pranksters.

MEB: They were? Oh, pranksters, okay.

JWS: Yes, and when we would all be at my granddaddy's, like on Christmas or something, and we'd just—there wasn't any beds for all of us. I mean, so we'd just take a quilt and lay down on the floor, and we'd just be sleeping on pallets all over the house. And my mom and two of her younger brothers, they'd get up and they'd take ladies blouses, and they'd tie the sleeves in knots, and they'd tie the trousers in knots, and they'd do all these sort of crazy things, you know. It was fun, you know. Everybody was just—there wasn't any stress. You know, everybody'd kick back. Ain't going nowhere. I mean, there's work to do, but it had to be done every day so, you know, it was pretty routine. It could have been—I guess people would say now, it'd be a drag, you know, because it's all the same, same deal.

Doris Lee White Thomas

Date of birth: 1926
Community affiliated with: Spring Hill
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase

AED: This Amy Dase. Today is May 22, 2001. I am interviewing for the first time, Doris Lee White Thomas. This interview is taking place in her home in Gatesville. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

First I'd like to ask you a little bit about your family background. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

DLT: I have two sisters and one brother: Johnny Dee, born October 18, 1935. My brother Joe Kermit White, born July 14, 1938. And another sister born March 11, 1942. And I was nine years old before any of them showed up. I didn't even know she was going to appear until I came from school. She was there. You know, they didn't tell you things.

AED: So you were an only child for a little while.

DLT: Yes, nine years.

AED: And then it changed dramatically.

DLT: I mean to tell you it did.

AED: But you were the oldest.

DLT: I was the oldest. Just old enough to baby-sit.

AED: So that was one of your chores.

DLT: And that's the big thing I got that Christmas, we got a little red wagon. (laughs) So I pulled her around in it. It wasn't mine. It was for her.

AED: And what years were your siblings born in?

DLT: Let's see, I was born in '26, and then '35, '38, and '42.

AED: And you were living in Spring Hill at the time?

DLT: No, we had—Daddy had farmed out in this area, round in here, and then when Camp Hood was being built he left the farm and went to doing carpenter work. He helped build Fort Hood.

AED: Oh, he did?

DLT: Yes. He was a carpenter from then on.

AED: But he had been a farmer while you were growing up?

DLT: Raised on the farm, and I grew up on the farm mostly.

AED: And where was it?

DLT: In this part of the—in this southwestern part of Coryell County. I lived over in the camp area when I was smaller. And I can tell you one thing—two or three things that I remember even though I was just three years old. And one of them is we had to cross Owl Creek to go to Grandma Dunlap's house, my mother's mother. And farmers didn't go visiting until it rained. Well, we went in a buggy. I was just a little bitty three-year-old or something. And we got to that Owl Creek, I'll never forget it, and I'll never cross it again. Was in this buggy, and we got down there and the thing, the creek was up so high and a-rollin' and tumblin', all this muddy water going everywhere. And they stopped the buggy, Mother and Daddy was sitting there talking. Should they cross it or not cross it? And I thought, Let's go home. Well, two young men came up on their horses, saddled horses, riding horses. And Daddy went out, and they talked and talked for a long time. Then first thing I knew Daddy was reaching in that buggy, and he set me up in the front of one of those saddles of those men. And he says, "Grab that saddle horn and do not turn it loose for anything." He didn't say I was going across the creek. I might not have—I might have fell off the horse right there. But I said to me, Well, the man started across the creek. And I thought, Well, Daddy said to hold onto this horn. I said, "I am going to hold onto it no matter what happens." And that water—I guess men back then knew the strength of their horses. I don't know what else. Why anybody would have done such a thing. It washed us down a little piece. The fellow never said a word to me the whole crossing or anything. He was watching his business, I guess. We got across, and he turned around, and we watched Mother and Daddy and the other young men that was across the creek watching them over there. And they started to cross that creek, and that buggy washed around even with the horse, and they drifted way down. You know, I never was so scared in my life. And no way would I ever do anything like that. Nothing's worth that.

AED: Very dangerous.

DLT: Oh, yes. I thought it was terrible. I still see that water, just rollin' and a-tumblin'. It's like people trying to cross in a car now and get washed away. No, I wouldn't do that. It isn't important enough to get on the other side. Nothing. I mean, if there's somebody over there dying you couldn't—might not get to them. So, it's not worth it. Anyway, that's one thing I remembered.

And then I remembered we lived in this little house somewhere above that creek on a mountain. I think it was a mountain. It was high enough to be called a mountain out there. And the yard gate wasn't a yard gate. Now I tell you these revolving doors weren't invented recently. I tell you. (laughs) Because what opened that—what we had for a gate was a straight post with two boards crossed—two pieces of firewood across the top, firewood. And nothing could come in because you couldn't, and you just pushed on it, and you'd revolve right around. And I thought that was really neat. (laughs) I was three years old, to see something like that. But that's stayed with me, too. But I thought that was very interesting to see that kind of a gate. I'd never seen anything like that. I wasn't old enough to see very much yet. Anyway, but I remember that. And ask me whatever area you want to know.

AED: Do you remember about the home that you lived in? Can you describe it for me?

DLT: It was a three-room house. And that table in there in my living room is one I grew up with. I learned to count on that table with my grandpa playing dominoes. That's how I learned to count. And when Mother passed away I found it out in the garage behind Daddy's trunk, and it was all to pieces. And I thought, Gee, I didn't know we had a drop-leaf table. I thought it was a drop-leaf table, it was so many pieces laying there. So I took it, brought it over here and finally, after several years, I had stored it down here in the storage house. After several years I thought, Well I'm just going to take that over

there to Mr. Smith and see what he can do with it because it was absolutely the worst. Wood worms had got into it and all the varnish was gone off of it. And I didn't know what it was. I still thought it was drop leaf table. He says, "No, this isn't a drop leaf table, it's one piece." But he said, "I can refinish it," and he did. He filled in some of the wood worm places and some of them he left, for us to see. And he says, this is—what is that table made out of?

AED: Hmmm, it's dark. It's not an oak—or a cherry?

DLT: Cherry. He says this table is cherry wood. And—

AED: I wonder where they got that?

DLT: They must have bought it new when they married because they had it always except the last few years it was behind that trunk. It was all in pieces out there behind the trunk.

(interruption in taping)

DLT: You know, I know when my daddy and his brothers and sisters were growing up and probably before, they didn't have clothes closets in their homes. They each one had a trunk. The boys' were big trunks and the girls' were little dainty oval-top trunks. And that's where they kept their clothes, except maybe they had hooks to hang their suits and things on. So, that's why I'm saying the little table was behind the big trunk in the garage. That was Daddy's big trunk, and I still have it in the living room. It has lots of things in there, just like it was when I got it.

AED: And the house had three rooms, and what were each of them used for?

DLT: There was a kitchen, and you ate in there, and then just had one bedroom and the other room had chairs, and I remember that little table being in there. I don't remember a lot of other things.

AED: And it was made of wood?

DLT: It was wood.

AED: Log or wood?

DLT: No, it was wood that we lived in. It was old. It was old. It was old then. I don't know who built it or where it came from. And then later on, I had a friend that lived out there. She said, "Do you remember living in that house when you had a well on the porch out there?" I said, "No." And it had to be that house because I never lived in any other house, if she doesn't have me mixed up with someone else. A cistern, I guess. Something like that.

AED: So that would have been your water source?

DLT: Yeah, but I never saw that, that I can remember. And I think if I'd have seen it at that age I never would have forgot it.

But Daddy did take me hunting. Daddy liked to hunt squirrels and kill squirrels. He grew up hunting out there, and they killed squirrels. And he had to cook them because Mother wouldn't. She said it was dark meat, and it wasn't clean. (both laugh) She wouldn't eat it and she wouldn't cook it.

AED: He took you hunting with him?

DLT: Yes, we went hunting. And you get a lot, you get a lot of—you pick up a lot of things from your father doing those kind of—hunting and things like that or fishing. I never went fishing with him, but he'd take me with him hunting.

AED: Did he have any hunting dogs?

DLT: We always had a dog. It was just a dog. He was a guard dog. A dog and horses was my father's special thing. They were a necessity when he was growing up.

AED: Did he have other livestock as well, besides horses?

DLT: We had cows, and we always had hogs, people always butchered hogs. Everyone did in the country and still did until forty years ago. We never did butcher a calf, but they could have. Some people might have. We did later on, after I got older they did, but at that time they didn't. And then my grandparents—if you've ever been down to the White Cemetery along the Henson Creek—

AED: Does it have a sign on it now?

DLT: No, it doesn't and some people can't find it. It does on the graveyard fence, but not out on the Georgetown Road.

AED: Because there are some cemeteries that have signs.

DLT: It's right down below, on the same road, down below the Walker Cemetery. Just before, just as you cross Henson Creek. Don't go up the little hill. It turns off to the left and goes around behind there.

AED: I haven't been there. It was part of the family property though, wasn't it?

DLT: It was. It's on the family place. And they—I know that they hunted, up and down, up and down that creek, and up on the mountains. As the boys got older they helped keep clear that field in front of the house. See, they were still clearing that field. Pulling up the tree roots with their horses and things. They broke horses to ride and to plow. And, they tell me that my Grandma White was scared to watch them break the horses so she'd get behind the door where she couldn't see them. (laughs) She'd best not to look.

AED: Where did they live relative to where you were living when you were growing up?

DLT: They were nearer Spring Hill. In fact, the Spring Hill School was on their property. And the Spring Hill Cemetery is on their property. My grandpa, John Laurence White is buried there, and one great-aunt, Eveline Saphorina White.

AED: Tell me your grandfather's name?

DLT: John Laurence Nicholes White married Rachel Huff. They had seven boys and one girl and the youngest was the girl. So you can imagine what they did with that one. The children were Laurence, Allen, William—Bill, Burr, Floyd, Ted, John Dee, and Mary Alma. They all grew up in the Spring Hill community.

I've got a lot of the information from the elder people that lived out there, the neighbors. And, you know, I got really worried because after I would interview them and talk to them something would happen, they'd get sick and pass away. And I got really worried. I said, Gee, what am I doing. You know? And then somebody says, You're not doing anything, you're just lucky to get there when you did. And I got some pictures from them. Like the school pictures and things. And I was really happy to see them.

AED: Did you go to school in Spring Hill?

DLT: No, I never went there, but my cousin did. She's told me so many things about the Spring Hill community.

Now, our great-grandpa, Thomas Laurence, I've looked on his records on the, what they call the Police Records at the library. And he was quite active in the town and community. He was on the jury quite often. And he hauled freight. When they came here in 1854, there was only one trading post in Gatesville. And from 1855 to '59, something like that, there was a bad drought. So he hauled freight with his ox wagon, team, I mean, from Houston to this trading post and it would take him from six weeks to two months. He borrowed a black slave from his neighbor, to stay with Great-grandma Mary Ann and her children. The black woman's name was Ester.

Thomas Laurence White married Mary Ann Jacques, which was known as Jacks locally. They came to Spring Hill, Coryell County, Texas, in 1854, with their first six children from Many, Louisiana. The children were Amelia Catherine White, born March 13, 1845, Melissa Adeline, born July 27, 1846, Sarah Ann, born 1848, Mary Jane, born June 9, 1849, Martha Ellen, born October 24, 1851, and Caziah, born July 10, 1853.

After they came to Spring Hill they had Susan Armenda, born March 14, 1857, Joseph Laurence White, born October 1859, Eveline Saphronia, born 1861, and John Laurence Nicholes White, born April 23, 1863. Possibly another baby was born before Susan.

All but two are buried in Fort Hood. Sarah Ann White Jeffries, Joseph Nicholes Laurence White, and possibly an infant are buried in the White Cemetery. Mary Jane White Shults and Susan White Shults are buried in the Friendship Cemetery. Caziah White Bruce is buried in the Bruce Cemetery. Eveline Saphronia White and John Laurence Nicholes White are buried in the Spring Hill Cemetery. Amelia Catherine White Kinsey is buried in the Gatesville Cemetery. Melissa Adeline White Kinsey is buried in the King Cemetery in Coryell County. Martha Ellen White Brown Bacon is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Coryell County.

One night, while Thomas Laurence was away, well the little dog, they always had a little dog out in the woods like that, and he barked and he barked and he warned them that something was wrong. I guess they knew his bark from—dogs bark different when someone is coming up or if it's an animal. So they closed the wooden shutters on that log cabin. And the little dog, something happened to him, I don't know what, so he didn't bark anymore. Indians killed him. And, you know, those log cabins had a leather thong on their door to latch it. And it was latched on the inside, but always there was a little play in there. So this Indian stuck his hand into undo the thong and the black woman chopped his hand off with a hatchet. The Indians left. They didn't bother them. They could have burned them, I guess, but they left. Women have to be strong now and they were strong back then. We have to do what we have to do, you know? We just have to do what we have to do.

AED: That's an incredible story.

DLT: And, I thought—when I found that in a book in the book store in Gatesville—and I have the book, too, but I found it in the library. It's in the *Vignettes of Coryell County*.

But there was one more story that I know of. Mary Ann, that's Thomas Laurence's wife, was up on the little mountain or somewhere picking berries. She had her little red-headed daughter with her, Martha Ellen. And she looked down and there was a band of Indians going by. So she hurriedly covered up the horse's head so he wouldn't make any noise to let them know they was there, and then she hurriedly covered up the little girl's red hair. Because if they caught a glimpse of that red hair, they loved it. So she hid her hair. They had to watch out for everything. You know? They just had to watch for those things. Because she was by herself all the time. Just she and the Negro slave Ester.

AED: That was in the 1850s?

DLT: That was in the 1850s. Between 1854 and the time that Thomas Laurence was killed.

AED: He was how old then? Or what year was he killed?

DLT: Let me see, 1864, May the twenty-fourth.

AED: And he was from Indiana originally?

DLT: And Ohio, and Louisiana—Many, Louisiana. He was from Many.

They had lived in Indiana. He was born there. I had a time because it gives the place of where they came from. His parents was from New York. And in the next census we see that some of them were born in Indiana and some of them in Ohio. Back and forth, back and forth. I know those people did not move back and forth. It like to drove me wild trying to figure out why this one was born in Ohio and that one over there in Indiana. Well, I got my history book out—it wasn't a state! It was a territory. And when the state was formed, the state line came down through their farm. So the doctor, whichever way he went, he recorded in that state. But that, I worked on that for months. I said, These people did not do that. (laughs)

AED: How confusing.

DLT: No way that they did that. But that's what it was.

AED: Tell me what you know of his death.

DLT: All I know is what Fort Hood told me. That's it. He did frontier duty is what he did. He was already forty-two. Something like that when—every man in Coryell County had to be used in someway. But he did frontier duty in the southwest part of Texas. To keep the Indians and the Mexicans back from stealing the cattle and all that and protecting the families. And undoubtedly he was wounded. He must have been wounded, six weeks before he died. And there wasn't any facilities out there to take care of him. No nothing. So they brought him home, but he just lived six weeks, and he died. So he had to be wounded. That's what they tell me. I have no family records of anything. I can't even find, I can't even find the place where there might have been a battle. I read of battles, but I don't know if he was in it or not. I haven't been able to find that. He was in the Confederate Army under W. S. Gouldy, Company K, First Regiment, and was discharged April 6, 1864, and died May 1864.

AED: Could have been a skirmish.

DLT: But his horse is recorded as being—the army has it down as being valued at eight hundred dollars at that time. And his saddle a hundred dollars, and his gun fifty dollars. So he did have a fast horse. And I notice in the county tax list that he had, always had, horses was priced real high on the tax list, and his cows, too. So they were horse people. They liked them, all his grandsons.

AED: How many horses did he have typically, do you recall? Was it a large number or enough for everybody to have transportation?

DLT: I think he had six. It's on this tax roll in 1861. I believe it was six. And then he had fifty-some-odd cows. He had six horses. Sixty-five cows. The horses were worth $370 apiece—I guess that was total price, $370 for the six. And sixty cattle at $325 was what they put down for the tax roll inventory. And that was 1861. Later they had sheep. I guess she had sheep later on. Probably for the wool, and made clothes out of it.

AED: You said they—that when he would drive to Houston, he would borrow a slave, but he didn't actually own any slaves?

DLT: Ester. No, he didn't own her, but she stayed with them always. When the war was over and she was free, she stayed with them always until she died, and she's buried in the White Cemetery.

AED: And her name was—

DLT: Ester.

AED: And it was just her? No other—

DLT: Well, after the war was over and they were free, her sister that lived with the same family that had owned her, she came to live with the White family. Now, I don't remember what her name was. And possibly she is buried out there, but Ester had a headstone. She is buried by the little boy that died real young.

AED: Joseph? Was that his name?

DLT: Joseph. Joseph Nicholes Laurence died before he was ten years old. Part of the headstone is gone, and we can't see it all, but he died before the next census roll. We figured it out. So we don't know the exact date.

AED: You were born on Fort Hood lands, correct?

DLT: No, just across the highway from it. Because Mother was at Grandma Dunlap's house, her mother's house.

AED: And that was the three-room house?

DLT: No, that was later when they moved off by themselves.

AED: But your grandparents lived at Spring Hill?

DLT: Oh, yes. My grandparents, Whites. They lived there always. Thomas Laurence came in 1854 and bought the land in the Fort Hood area. And then he died. He died in 1864. Well, all his children grew up there. And all his grandchildren. And some of the great-grandchildren, but I wasn't one of them. But they've told me some different things. So, we were there. It meant a lot to us.

I didn't really know where it was for a long time. Daddy kept saying way down in the camp area, and I thought, Well, they won't let me in there to see it. (both laugh) But it is not in the firing range, so I got to go out there. I got out there in time to take pictures before everything was graded down. They told me about the trees. There was two big trees on either side of the house, that was the east and west, I think. And on the east side there was two big trees, and one of them always had their swing in it. And we found the limb. It fell off. It had the scars from the swing.

AED: And this was your grandparents' home?

DLT: Yes. Great-grandparents' and grandparents'.

AED: Both generations lived in the same home. Do you remember what it was like? Can you describe it?

DLT: Yes. I've got a picture of it. It was four rooms with, I call it a hall, but maybe they called it a dogtrot. (gets out illustrations)

AED: That one, I remember. (looks at illustration of cabin)

DLT: Of course, I don't know if it was that neat or not.

AED: But that's roughly how it looked.

DLT: Yes.

AED: And these were two separate buildings? (points to illustration of house)

DLT: Yes. This was described to me by a Mr. Joe Witte that grew up with the White boys, and he said, "I sat on that porch many a times with my foot up on that railing." And he told me there was two large front rooms, two small back rooms, and I thought he said thirteen steps, but we didn't get that.

AED: And a stone chimney and lots of windows.

DLT: Well, there was two, in each—I remember. I've been in that house.

AED: So there was a chimney on the other side also? One on each end?

DLT: There was a flue and stone pipe for the kitchen. That was where they cooked. Now later on, after Thomas Laurence was gone and when John Laurence Nicholes grew up, well he had a sister that had five children and something happened to her husband, I'm not sure where he died or just disappeared, I don't know, I can't find that on the census. And there are no burial records. So John Laurence built a big long room across the back. This back here had been added on. Then that was for the kitchen and the dining area because there were so many of them. There was Mary Ann, the mother, six daughters, one son, and two black ladies living there. Sarah, the daughter had five children. There were fifteen people living in that house. They needed more room. They built that room across the back of the house. The mother Mary Ann died in 1885. John Laurence White married Rachel Huff in 1889. He continued to live in that house and raised eight children of his own. They did not have cabinets as we know them now. They had big, long work tables along the walls, and they made shelves above them, to use them that way.

AED: Open?

DLT: Yes. Sometimes they put curtains over them. I don't know if they did or not, I don't remember that.

AED: Do you remember if they had any plumbing or electricity?

DLT: Oh, no, no, no, no. No plumbing. No. Their water came from this well. (points to photograph) Can you focus in on that? That's in front of their house to the right. You can see part of the windmill right here. Well, right there had been a well before they got the windmill. A dug well. Right here, you can see the top of the log cabin, it was sitting right there. (points to photograph)

AED: So it was next to this house?

DLT: Yes, not too far from it.

AED: Telephones?

DLT: No telephones. Not for years. No windmills for years either. That was back, that was way up in the 1880s, I imagine, when they got the windmill. But they had to get water from the dug well for their house.

AED: The house you grew up in as a child had electricity or not?

DLT: No, no electricity.

AED: And no plumbing either?

DLT: No plumbing either.

AED: And telephone?

DLT: No.

AED: Radio?

DLT: No. Well, we finally got a radio. (both laugh) Finally had a radio. But I read. I've got many a spanking for reading because I should have been doing something else. But I've got many a spanking because I'd like to read everything that I'd pick up. I always did. And I like to write.

AED: How much time would you spend at your grandparents' home as a child? Did you go over there regularly? Was there a lot of family interaction?

DLT: My grandfather died three months before I was born. And so I never did get to see him. And everybody was married by that time and—off and, you know. So I didn't. I saw a lot of my uncles. My aunt married and left there. They were all happy people.

AED: Were they mostly farmers and ranchers?

DLT: Uncle Laurence, Bill, and Ted went to work in the oil fields. In Corsicana and Kilgore. My father, John Dee, worked there for a short time. The others farmed. Uncle Floyd was a cattle trader by trade.

AED: Or were some of them working in town?

DLT: No. There wasn't anything in town. You remember the town was bare. (both laugh)

(interruption in taping)

DLT: The entertainment when their children were growing up was neighbors getting together and singing at night, religious songs. They had parties in their homes. And they had Sunday afternoon singings at the—the schoolhouse was a church house, too.

AED: And this is the one at Spring Hill you are speaking of?

DLT: Spring Hill. They'd have the Methodist preacher one Sunday, and the Baptist preacher the next Sunday, but everybody went to both of them. Singing in the afternoon.

And I have to tell you the story they tell me about Grandpa when he got—when he got religious. He was out in the corn patch! I don't know whether he was hoeing or pulling corn, (laughs) I didn't ask them.

AED: In the corn patch—

DLT: I don't know if he was chopping, hoeing the corn or pulling it. But the Wittes lived near by and one of their daughters was telling me about it. And says he just got really happy and a-shouting and ordered somebody to go get the preacher. They had to stop work and go get the preacher and get him baptized or sprinkled.

AED: On the spot?

DLT: Right then. And I thought, Well gee, that was kind of—waiting all those years and all of a sudden it hit him, what it was all about. Whatever he thought it was all about at that time. But that was just one of those things. And on the holidays, at Easter, all the families in that area would get together and have a big Easter egg hunt. And they'd get together and have baseball games on Sunday afternoon. And that's the way they had fun.

AED: Very close knit?

DLT: Oh, yes, very close. Oh, yes. My Uncle Burr White, Daddy's brother, was the one that—after he got married and I have a list here, he had it in his little black book, and his daughter copied it out and sent it to me. (pulls out list) He broke horses for a fee. He broke them to be a saddle horse, a plow horse, or to pull a wagon. He kept a list of customers and how many horses he broke for them. His daughter

had this little black book with the names in it. You have that list, I believe. He has fifty-nine listed and—whose ever horse they belonged to and had their name and how many they got from him. I thought that was a nice list. And he kept a little black book with it all in there.

AED: Wow, he just kept all those names?

DLT: And that gives you the names of the people that lived in that area at that time. And there was something else I had. Genieva White Thomas, a cousin of mine, drew me up a map of Spring Hill and the list of the people that lived there, best that she could remember it. The only mistake I could see was that she had the Bruce Cemetery right down here by—right around further than the White Cemetery was, but it wasn't, and it was back over across the field from it. That's the only mistake—I didn't correct her.

AED: Do we have a copy of that?

DLT: I'm sure you do. If you don't, if you don't, well call me, and I will make you one.

AED: That would be very nice to have.

DLT: It would give you a list of people that lived out there that was neighbors to the White family.

AED: And during this later period, which we don't have that much information on.

DLT: Well, she could just tell you all of it. She's told me that right up from the White Cemetery, up there a long the fence line, was a big pile of broken glass, and she thinks that was the first schoolhouse that they had over there, and it burned down. Because I remember them talking about—I read it in one of these history books on Coryell County. That they had to carry their guns to church with them. It was Indians. The preachers carried guns.

AED: Early on.

DLT: Early back, in 1854 to the early 1860s, they had to bring their guns with them to church because the Indians would try to sneak up and get their horses while they was in service. They would try to steal the horses that were tied out front of the church. And I noticed on the police court records that my grandpa delivered supplies to this school, I can't remember the name of it. I never heard of it before, and I was just wondering if that couldn't have been the spot. I don't know, because I haven't heard of it since or anywhere else except in those court records. Isomed (??) School.

And then they built, after it burned, they built a wooden frame schoolhouse, and here is a list of the students that was in that 1908, that was in it. (shows photograph) That is the first Spring Hill School. And it burned later on after it was pretty old—and I imagine late '20s. They built the stucco schoolhouse. They built the stucco. And that one was there and active when Fort Hood came in. Part of it's still, part of the walls are still there.

AED: There's bits and pieces, and that was the former school.

DLT: Still there.

AED: You went there to church?

DLT: Oh, I'm sure I went there. We didn't live there, but we went to that church sometime just to be with everyone.

AED: The building that you remember would be the stucco building. Do you remember how many rooms it had? It was one story probably?

DLT: Oh, yes. And I believe there was just two rooms, but they were pretty big. I believe there was just two rooms.

AED: Do you remember if they had a building that housed the teachers?

DLT: No, they stayed with the trustees or some family.

AED: Because a few of them did have teacherages, but mostly not.

DLT: It was a little later, I believe, when most of those teachers just—teachers' buildings were built. I think it was later than that. And, at least they didn't have one there.

And also, I had another great-grandpa that lived at Turnover community. Turnover. That's it. And I didn't know that until just a few months ago, I found it in one of your books that you published, somebody published from Camp Hood. I wouldn't take anything for those books! I have learned more out of those. Because I knew the names, I heard my daddy, speaking of all those people and I didn't know where they lived. And I found Samuel Huff's place, so that was my great-grandpa, that was my Grandma White's father, Samuel Huff. And I wondered how they all got together and met and married because usually five miles was the farthest they traveled. They had a different little community every five miles because they didn't have any way to go but in a wagon or buggy or on a horse back.

AED: It was not easy traveling.

DLT: No. You didn't go very far. That was far as you—mostly that's far as you went for the day. You couldn't go away a good many miles and get back in one day—if you did you would have to stay a week. (AED laughs) You know, they'd—a lot of people did that, when they went back to see their parents or something they'd stay over maybe two weeks.

AED: So how do you think they met if they were that far apart?

DLT: At the church or a little social they had or something.

AED: A revival perhaps, sometimes in the summer?

DLT: Yes, they had that.

AED: And bigger groups would come together?

DLT: Camp meetings, we called them camp meetings. They would stay several days. And, oh, I read in one of those history books that were on Coryell County that one family brought their chickens in a coop and killed one each day for their meal. They'd put their meals all out together. They just brought theirs in a coop and killed them each day because they didn't have the way to store them, the meat would spoil. So, I thought, Well, there's always a way. It's real different, isn't it?

AED: In the '30s did your family, your parents belong to a beef club?

DLT: In the '30s?

AED: Is that something you're familiar with?

DLT: No, they didn't belong to a beef club.

AED: We've talked to some other people whose families were part of that.

DLT: Yes. No, we didn't do that. Not as far as I know, I can't remember. I wasn't very old. I was born in 1926. So, at that age I wouldn't have been listening too much to everything, just some things. Just listening, beginning to listen to some things. You know, people back then didn't talk in front of their

children. They did not tell them anything. Be quiet and get out of the way and don't bother and don't listen. They didn't say that, but you got the idea you're not supposed to learn anything either about what your grown folks are saying.

Oh, I have to tell you this funny thing. Now, this happened—it was close—this was in the Spring Hill community. Mrs. Witte lived out there and one of Daddy's brothers, Burr White, married Lula Witte. And one of my cousins said they was at Grandma Witte's and their house was up high a little bit. And she and another cousin decided they'd crawl under the house and listen to the women and their visiting and maybe learn something that they wasn't supposed to know. She says, "They never talked about a thing that we wanted them to talk about." They didn't learn a thing. And you weren't going to learn anything from them either. I'm telling you these parents back then wasn't going to let you in on anything.

AED: Do you remember anything about what you did as you were young or what your parents may have told you for medical care?

DLT: Well, I can tell you one that I do not like. Every fall and every spring, Mother gave me calamine tablets. And then she'd say, "You have to take this castor oil," or I would die. And, oh, it made me so sick. Anything oily I could never take. I'd always get sick, and it'd all come up. Then you have to take some more, or you'll die. By that time I was limp as a dish rag. Now that's one of the things that—that was one of the medicines when I was small. Isn't that something?

AED: Do you think it worked? After all that?

DLT: Well, it nearly killed me. (both laugh) It certainly didn't make me feel any better. After all that, I just couldn't see what it was going to do for me. I don't know if it did any good or not, but it sure didn't feel good right then.

AED: Or why you had to have it twice a year?

DLT: To clean out your system. We had to get ready for the winter and get rid of the winter in the spring. Whew, isn't that far out? That's what Grandma did, I guess, I don't know. Mother did it and she must've done what Mama did. I don't know. But I said, I said to myself, If I ever get married and have children, my children are not even going to know what castor oil is, and they don't. They don't. Because it didn't help anything.

AED: They benefited from your experience.

DLT: And I know they used a lot of sulfur, to rub on you for something, I don't know. Mother bathed me in lye soap. Kids would get skin diseases back then or something, but she'd bathe me in lye soap, nothing would live through that. (AED laughs) But my mother used lye soap until the—two years before she passed away—as long as she did her laundry at home. She bought a washing machine, but she would not have a clothes dryer. Hers was going to be hung out in the sun. And she made her own soap. They all made their soaps in the wash pots. But she learned to make it on a big dishpan on her stove, enough for her. And she'd shave that up and put it in her washer. And she had the whitest, best smelling clothes that you ever saw in your life. So it works. It kills all the germs. (both laugh)

AED: Did you help making the soap?

DLT: Yes, I helped Grandma. I watched them. I don't imagine I helped. I might have stirred with the—they had a big paddle, and would stir it and stir it and stir it. Looked pretty good in there. You know, it got thicker and thicker and thicker. But they had to make their own soap, and they had to make their own clothes and grow their own gardens.

AED: What do you remember growing in the garden?

DLT: Oh, yeah. I remember that garden. I remember having to walk—they set the tomato plants out and I had to carry water and water them. (laughs) I remember that. But farmers were self-sufficient. They grew their food, and they canned everything they could get their hands on. Enough to carry them to the next year.

AED: So you had tomatoes and what other things?

DLT: We had all kinds of vegetables. Oh, we had tomatoes and all kinds of beans. And Grandma, my mother's mother, made the best beet pickles. Man, I could just—she'd just hand the jar to me, and I'd eat.

AED: So they had beets?

DLT: The sweet and sour. Beet pickles. Watermelons. I know one time we had a huge watermelon in the garden, and Daddy was wanting to pick it. Mother said, "No it's not ready yet." So they argued over that watermelon for the longest. And finally one day he plugged it, and it was already rotting inside. So we didn't get to eat the big watermelon. But they disagreed on when it was ready. (laughs) I never did see one that big in the garden anymore. That was the biggest one I ever did see.

AED: And you had chores like watering in the garden?

DLT: Watering the garden. And my one chore that I didn't like, but it didn't hurt me, and I don't know why I didn't like it except I guess I had to mind, was when Mother canned, but she always saved her fruit jars from year to year, when she emptied them. My job was to wash them. And rinse them. They'd fix me a tub of suds out by the shade of the house, and then one to rinse them in. Then she'd take them in and she'd put them in boiling water and sterilize them before she used them. And I don't know why that bothered me so. It wasn't hard. The idea that I couldn't read, I think. Now, I did like to churn. The churn we had—the dasher went up and down in the churn, and I could read. (both laugh) That didn't bother me a bit. But standing out there doing the jars, I don't know why it bothered me. Just a kid, didn't want to mind, I guess.

AED: When they did their hog killing, were you involved in that?

DLT: I was there watching. Yes, they had to have that wash pot of boiling water and pour it over that hog and scrape the hair off and go from there. Then when they killed a beef, they'd make chili and all this stuff out of it, canning what they could.

And I remember in the '30s when the aluminum cans came in that you could buy to can in, they came in a big huge box. And one of my cousins was telling me about her cousin on the other side. She said the neighbors would get together because they had to have a, someone had to have a, sealer to can those, you know, to seal those cans up. So they'd all meet at one person's house to do this together and then they'd move on to another one. And they were snapping beans one day getting ready to can the beans and one of the cousins disappeared. They couldn't find her. Well, they found her sitting in one of these big, deep boxes reading. (both laugh)

AED: She had the same idea you had.

DLT: Well, I don't think she was reading the kind of things that I liked to read. She found a different kind of magazine. I didn't have any of those down around. I bet she had a love story or something. But I thought that was funny. They couldn't find her anywhere and finally they found her in that big, deep box. Out in the hot summer sun besides. Don't you know that was warm in there? But she was reading.

AED: Did your grandma have a smokehouse?

DLT: Yeah.

AED: And your parents also had a smokehouse?

DLT: Yes. They had a smokehouse. And we always had a storm cellar to get down in because a storm would come in.

AED: And did you store things in there as well?

DLT: Oh, yes, we stored things in the smokehouses, we did. In the storm cellars we did, too. We didn't have root cellar, but we had storm cellar. Some places had root cellars, but we didn't have one.

But, can you imagine back in the 1850s and '60s, being left by yourself, with one black woman to help you, with all those children? Like Mary Ann White was sent us a copy of a letter that a lady had written to another person, about the Whites—about Mrs. White, that was Mary Ann. She was a very ladylike, quiet, petite woman. She was very well thought of in the Spring Hill community. I thought, Now she had no boys, so the neighbors must've helped her at butcher—when they butchered—they must've helped her. They must've had some help with that, because that was hard. They worked their land. They raised their garden. And, hunted berries, like I told you, they got out and got all the fruit they could get together. And pecans. And there was wild turkeys to shoot. And there was fish to get.

AED: Did they have any fruit trees on their land?

DLT: I don't remember ever seeing any, but they could've had and I didn't—don't remember that. The house was backed up to a little mountain. I guess it was a big hill, but we called it a mountain. And down in front of it was this land, off down toward further, where the graveyard is. And Genieva White Thomas told me, she said that was the most beautiful thing, when that field was in wheat. Wind blowing that wheat, hundred acres of it. Blowing in the wind. Well, there was a hundred acres right in front of the house. There was other land around there, but that one field was a hundred acres in front. And Daddy had told me that they had grown cotton down there, shoulder high, just snow white, a hundred acres of it, just snow white, down through there. Of course the stalks were tall then, they grew taller than they do now. Because they have those automatic pickers to pick it now.

AED: You had nothing automatic back then.

DLT: No. It was hand by hand. And, oh, the girls, when Thomas Laurence's girls grew up and married, they still kept twenty-five acres of that, each. Or something like that. And Aunt Eveline never did get married. She started to once, she thought she was married. I'll tell you that in a minute. (both laugh) But she never did get married. She kept her twenty-five acres and she lived with one of her nieces, later on when everyone was gone from the home house, you know. And they always had a garden and put up food. And she had a cow and she sold a couple calves a year. And she made her living with that twenty-five acres. She put cotton on part of it and feed stuff for her cows on the other. And she made all of her clothing. You know, they came down to her ankle. And the long bloomers. She had the long bloomers, too. And she had plenty of them. Genieva told me. She had a big, a big drawer full of underwear made up. The night she passed away they had—I said, "Gee, what'd you all do?" She said, "There was plenty." She just had plenty of them there. (laughs) She had to have them.

AED: She made all of those?

DLT: Made all of those. Everything. And their aprons was over their dresses, you know, down to the ground.

AED: Where did they go to get the goods they purchased?

DLT: They would have to come into Gatesville.

AED: They had to come to Gatesville.

DLT: Yes.

AED: Because Spring Hill didn't have a store. I noticed in the Police Records A, volume one and two, Coryell County, Texas, in 1858, there was a meeting house at Spring Hill.

DLT: No, it didn't have a store or anything. Just a community.

AED: Just the church and the school? Were there other community buildings? A post office?

DLT: No. There wasn't one there.

AED: Did people vote there?

DLT: Yes, because on the tax roll it said he had one vote, or how many votes on that—

AED: Because that's what I thought, that it was a voting precinct. So they didn't have to go to town to vote. But if they were trading, or taking cotton in they'd go to Gatesville.

DLT: Yes. Now there might've been—I don't think there was a store at Straw's Mill. Might've been a store at Straw's Mill. That would've a little closer. Yes, because this woman, Ruby, was telling me, she was a Witte, she was telling me her last doll, she got at Christmastime, the last doll she ever got, she was expecting a great big beautiful doll because it would be her last one. And it rained so that her daddy couldn't even come to Gatesville in the wagon. So he got on his horse and went to Straw's Mill, and she said, "I got dolls." But they were three little celluloid dolls in a box. She said, "I was so hurt." But I—she said, "Papa was trying." You just couldn't come into town in the wagon to get anything. Rained and rained and rained and rained. And, of course I guess they waited—didn't come into town early enough to avoid that. And, like we do nowadays, sometimes I start my Christmas shopping right after Christmas because things are marked down. That's the best time to save money. But I don't shop as much as I used to for my family. When you start getting great-grandchildren you kinda slow up.

AED: It gets to be overwhelming.

DLT: Yes. But we still get together at Christmas. And I get around to all the little ones.

AED: And that's the good part, is being together.

DLT: Oh, yes. It's just getting them together.

AED: I think that was what was important back then, too.

DLT: Oh, yes. It was very important. Being together. And they were actually together more then than they are now. Because they move off and aren't close by. People were closer. I think people were closer then. And more caring for one another. If this one over here needed help, they went to help. And maybe if you need help, somebody—some of them don't even know it now.

AED: It's different. Tell me about your great-aunt who was going to get married.

DLT: Yes. It was Great-aunt Eveline. I can't remember the year. (telephone rings) It was soon after the railroad came into Gatesville, in the 1880s.

This fellow had been coming down to see her. In one place it says his name is one thing, in another place it says his name is something else. So I'm sure he didn't tell her his right name. That's the way I finally figured it out. Well, he would write to her, and he'd come down and see her once in a while, and they decided to get married. And the day before they was going to get married—the railroads had

already been put into Gatesville. That was in the '80s. She asked Grandpa, her brother—that's John Laurence White—to go Gatesville to the bank and take her money out. So she could take it with her. Well, he didn't like this fellow, and he didn't like what was going on, so he just brought her part of her money and said the bank was short of money that day. Well, they apparently got married in Gatesville and just got right on the train and left out. Well, the first town they came to, which would have been Waco, I guess, because the train didn't go very far west. They got off and got them a room and he said, "Now give me your money and I'll go put it in the bank." Well, she never heard from him, ever again. She waited two or three days, and she notified Grandpa, and he said, "Well, get on the train and come back home." And she still had part of her money in the bank, but she never ever married. So they went to the law. And Grandpa was very strict. I mean he did all his paper work, you can tell, everything is just absolute within the law with—proper, you know, it's all proper. And his daddy was like that. I found all of his in Louisiana. Everything is just so-so. And, so the law notified where he was from. And they said, Well, that's the way he made his living, conning young women. One place the name was Clay and another place it was Thrantham. So I'm sure he just had a different name wherever he went. Well, I'd finally decided, that's how he made his living, off of young women. And they never did find him. He went off somewheres else.

AED: Probably continued—

DLT: Yes. It's funny how back then they could even center out one that might have a little bit of something. It's funny how they could—I guess in dating her and talking to her he figured it out. Because she had her cotton money, and she had her feed. I guess she fed her—maybe two cows and a calf a year or something off the other half of it. And the soil was so good then it produced real well and it didn't take a big plot of land to live year to year. She probably could make her a dress for fifty cents. And her long slips. She made her slips. Well, they made everything.

AED: Did your mother make your clothes?

DLT: Yes. She made my clothes until I was in high school.

AED: Where did you go to school?

DLT: At Gatesville.

AED: All the way through?

DLT: No, not all the way through. I was in the—some of the country schools from time to time, different ones. And then, over at town, over at Gatesville.

AED: Which ones in the country did you go to?

DLT: I went to Pidcoke, and I went to Schley, and I went to Levita, and then I went to Gatesville.

AED: Did you move?

DLT: Daddy didn't own a place. He leased. And sometimes he would lease another one in hopes it would be better. And then sometimes he would stay there several years and sometimes he didn't stay but one.

AED: So you moved quite a bit as a little girl?

DLT: Yes. Mother thought that was disgraceful. That's they way she taught me to think. But it didn't bother me. And, you know, the military people now move all the time.

AED: He was just trying to find a better—situation.

DLT: Well, he was looking for a better situation. And, but somehow she thought that wasn't the way to do it.

AED: Moving can be hard.

DLT: Yes, it's hard. Maybe I just didn't realize what it was all about, but it didn't really bother me too much. I had many friends.

AED: Were the country schools one room?

DLT: No, it was always two rooms or more. Or larger ones than that.

AED: With the younger kids in one room?

DLT: Yes and then the other—the older ones in the other room.

AED: And they'd have two teachers?

DLT: Yes.

AED: What do you remember about those schools?

DLT: Well, I'll tell you one. Peabody, I went to a little school close to Pearl, Texas, called Peabody. It was a little two-room school. I had the sweetest teacher that ever was in this world. She was Miss Margie Upton at that time. I went back last year to the school reunion. First time I'd been back to the school building. But I always knew I was going back. But I had seen her the year before at another school reunion. And she was the sweetest person and the sweetest teacher I ever did know. I never heard her raise her voice to anybody or anything. And one day she said we were to write a poem for the next day. Well, I just died—it was the third grade. Because I didn't know anything about poems. So I didn't write one. I thought if you didn't know how, you didn't do it. And she—I'm sure she could tell I didn't have one. But anyway, she didn't say a word. Then all the other kids read theirs. One little girl said, "Well, Doris hasn't read hers yet." So I knew I was into it. She said, "Oh, she's going to read hers tomorrow." That's all she said. I knew I had to write one that night. I know it was silly. She asked me last year, she said, "Did you keep it?" I said, "Goodness, no, I didn't keep it that thing." I didn't know how to write a poem. But I've decided maybe I do know how to write something.

I wrote one when I went out to the home place in Fort Hood. First time I went out there after I started doing my research on this family.

AED: Why don't—would you mind reading it to me?

DLT: "Where the Wild Flowers and Texas Blue Bonnets Grow," by Doris L. White Thomas

Well, I'm happy and alive this afternoon
With tears in my eyes and smiling, too
All because of where I'm standing
Located in the middle of Fort Hood
Right smack in the middle of the
Big state of Good Ole Texas
Is where my great-grandfather's house stood.
Yes, over my head the skies are blue
And under my feet is where his home stood.
New green grass for my carpet
And my view from the top of this mountain.
I stand looking down in the valley
Below where Indians once roamed
Now beautiful wild flowers
And a blanket of Texas Blue Bonnets grow.

Booms from the guns at Fort Hood
Can be heard
As I stand on the green carpet
That was once my great-grandfather's home
Yes, the skies are blue,
The carpet green
Scattered with wild flowers
And Texas Blue Bonnets to be seen.
The blue sky for my ceiling
And the Green Grass at my feet
I look to the East, West, South, and North
I see the trees that once stood on either side
Of the house one oak limb still scarred
By the rope swing
That once stood by my grandfather's house.
To the South is a mountain
With beautiful trees
Is where his log cabin once stood
With the door latch a leather thong
It's a beautiful site to know
They had a place to come out of the cold.
Now wild flowers and beautiful Texas Blue Bonnets Grow.
I love these mountains,
I love the valleys, rivers and hills
And the trail that leads
To the family graveyard
On down by the Creek bank
It's strength for my soul.
It says once my people lived here
Where the wild flowers and
Beautiful Texas Blue Bonnets grow.

DLT: (reading another poem) "To Thomas Laurence White, Confederate Soldier"

Under the cover of these beautiful trees, we have come to honor thee,
Thomas Laurence White, who stood five feet, nine inches tall
With beautiful black hair and grey eyes,
Who passed away May 24, 1864, at age forty-three.
You did brave the wide open prairie so that we might be
Whomever we are today.
With your eight-hundred-dollar horse and forty-dollar saddle, you did bravely ride into battle
With only a few moments notice.
Your good wife, Mary Ann, and nine children
You did leave at home
While you went to chase the Indians and thieves
Back from where they did want to roam.
You left your family in care of Black Ester who had not yet been freed.
Mary Ann and Ester did till the fields,
Milk the cows, make the soap, and tend to the sheep,
Until Ester went to sleep and was laid to rest under these beautiful trees.

But you, Thomas Laurence White,
Were not to be,
For you fell before your enemy.
We know not who, how, why, or where.
We do bless the ones that brought you home
To be laid to rest May 25, 1864,
In the family soil beneath the cover of these beautiful trees.
For then, for now, for always, we honor thee, Thomas Laurence White.
By Doris White Thomas.

AED: That's very nice.

DLT: I just like to write. I don't know how, but I just like to write.

AED: Both those are really—they have the connection to the land and the people.

DLT: We are supposed to be doing a family book. And they will be in it. They always asked me to write the stories. (laughs) To me, they're just something that I know. I couldn't write about something I don't know. I'd have to really get with it and figure it. I can't write if I can't feel. I have to feel it in order write it.

AED: It is so great that you know of all of these things.

DLT: My children say, We're awfully glad you're doing this Mother, but we do not know what you're talking about. But when they retire, they'll get to wondering, and if I'm not here they can go look it up, if they're interested enough. They will find what they want to know. It won't be like me having to scratch it out from here and there. Of course I have some memories from Spring Hill, and I had some from Daddy talking about things.

And, in February, I had a cousin to pass away. And her children called me one night and said, We found an old picture in Mama's box we don't—it's a little baby—and we don't know who it belongs to. It gives her name on the back and says White. I said, "Oh, that's Uncle Allen's little baby daughter that didn't even live but ten months."

And I looked three years for where Uncle Allen was buried. Couldn't find it. One day I was talking to Dr. Jackson out at Camp Hood over the phone, and I wanted to check with him and see who all they had buried in the White Cemetery. And he says, "Why don't I just read you all the Whites, where they're buried out here?" And he was reading along, and he said, "Allen White." I said, "You've got Uncle Allen White?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, I've been looking three years. Where is it?" Well, it was up here at Pleasant Grove at North Fort Hood. So I went tearing out there because my cousins that went to the funeral. Uncle Allen lived at Moody, Texas, at that time, they had said, Way down by Moody in the woods. And there is no woods at Moody. So, I thought, Well, I'm gonna have to check every cemetery record, I reckon, between here and Moody to find it. So I went out there and he's buried there, and he had a little baby daughter there. And you can still read the stone real well. I can't remember what her name was now. But she was the fattest little baby I ever saw. But I was glad to get the picture. Now I know who's there beside him. It gives you a good feeling to figure this out, you know. The baby's name is Hazel.

AED: Put the pieces in place. Are your parents buried in the White Cemetery?

DLT: No, there's no one buried there after the first—Thomas Laurence White's family. Now, Grandpa's buried over in the Spring Hill—and Aunt Eveline is. Also, my parents are buried in Gatesville. My sister says, she isn't married now, she says, "Where am I going to buried?" I said, "By Grandpa,

because you have his name." Her name is Johnnie Dee. That John's been passed down through all the generations. I said, "Well, you know, I wouldn't have minded being buried here." It's so quiet and peaceful, and they keep it clean, nothing there, you can hear the birds singing and everything, but we already have our place ready. So I don't know if she meant that or not. I suppose you can still use it. They use the Walker.

AED: Some of them are still active.

DLT: So—they gave a big—it's a big graveyard. And it did have—a lot of people is buried in there that they don't know about because they don't have a head stone, they just had a big boulder. We went out there some time ago, and the graveyard had been cleaned, and the boulders had been throwed over the fence.

AED: Oh, no.

DLT: We didn't know whose they were anyway.

AED: True, but still.

DLT: Whoever was cleaning it didn't know what those boulders were for so they got them out of their way.

AED: Cleaned it a little too much.

DLT: This story goes with it. Spring Hill Cemetery. Wilma Earl Colvin Edwards tells me that her great-grandfather, Laroy Sunderlin Colvin, and great-grandmother, Julia Ann Brooks Colvin, lived in the Spring Hill area in 1887. Their water well went black so Laroy was down in the well cleaning out the mud and bad water and Julia Ann would pull the bucket up by rope and empty the bucket and drop it back down to Laroy. Julia Ann dropped dead and fell in the well on Laroy leaving six living children, twins had passed away, the youngest child was six weeks old. Julia Ann Brooks Colvin is buried in the Spring Hill Cemetery. As so very many graves in the Spring Hill Cemetery had small boulders for markers, so did Julia Ann's.

The boulders have been thrown over the fence so the graveyard can be mowed nicely. Wilma Earl plans to place a marker at Julia Ann's grave in the near future. Later Laroy Colvin married Mary Josephine Tipton, daughter of Benjamin Tipton. They had two children, Bertha and Henry, and Mary Josephine passed away. Laroy married for a third time to Mary—also known as Mollie—Connell and moved down to Boaz and had property there. To this third marriage, nine children were born.

DLT: They say, Oh, there's not very many people out there. I said, "Yes, there is." They were marked with a boulder. Because we have a huge boulder in the White Cemetery. A big one. And I just had the feeling that's the other black lady. Because they wouldn't have buried her anywhere else. And they didn't leave. They stayed with them until they died. So I just think that maybe that might be hers. Of course I'll never have—I have no way of knowing. I don't remember what her name was. And, I think, maybe why—when they came from Louisiana, I've read, and can't—I believe that there must've been someone went down there and got people to come settle here, a good many people come to settle up in here in this part of Fort Hood from Many, Louisiana. And, because there's too many neighbors that have the same name down there in that area where they came from in Louisiana. I've looked them up, and they came from there. And, one of them brought slaves with them from over there. This family had eight slaves I think. That was from Mr. Moorhead who came to the Fort Hood area from Many, Louisiana.

AED: Do you remember the name of the family?

DLT: Moorhead. Well, that's what I'm getting to. I think it was Ester because I saw a slave—I saw the slave

owners list down in Many, Louisiana, and this Mr. Ester had quite a few.

AED: Oh, so that was his last name.

DLT: Yeah, they always took their family's last name. And Daddy always said, Black Ester. And that's the only name that she ever—that I guess she ever had. And I'm just thinking, I don't have any proof of that, that she probably came from that family. It's spelled E-s-t-e-r.

DLT: And, I want to tell you something really strange, and everybody thinks I'm—something's the matter with me. (laughs) I worried about that Black Ester so long. I couldn't visualize her, I couldn't, I couldn't place her here. And one night I laid down, I just laid down in bed, and they said I was asleep. I said, "No, I wasn't." I'd just put my head down, hadn't even closed my eyes. And there she was, right over my face. She says, "I'm Black Ester." There she was. I can tell you exactly how she was. And then I didn't worry about her anymore. I don't know what you call that.

AED: Just something you were looking for? What did she look like? Describe her.

DLT: She was tall and thin. And she wasn't real dark, you could see some freckles underneath the brown. And, of course she had the dark eyes. Thin lips. Wore little small glasses. Had on her bonnet. Bonnet had a ruffle around it. Her voice was soft and nice.

AED: That's so interesting. That's a lot of detail.

DLT: Well, yes. And I said, "No, I didn't dream that. Because I wasn't asleep." I was wide awake. I don't know where it came from. Maybe I finally visualized her in my mind. I don't know what I did, but anyway, it just came.

And that's why I started working on this family history. I was going down to the kitchen one day, and something right over here behind my right shoulder says, Do it and do it today. I said, Okay. I looked around, and there wasn't anybody there. I'd been planning to do it for a long time. And it said, Do it, and do it today. So, I got started on it, boy did I ever get started on it. (both laugh) And, do you know, I just got there in time to get a picture of the home place before it was—well the tanks graded it down. And to all these older people, before they passed away. So I had to do it then, something told me to do it now. And, it was—I don't know where it came from.

AED: That's very interesting.

DLT: I don't know where it came from, but it came, and I said, Okay. (laughs)

AED: Well, it's a great gift to be able to be dedicated to something like this because it is tedious and time consuming and frustrating, but ultimately rewarding.

DLT: Oh, yes. This was great-grandfather's family, Joseph C. White and Catherine White. Like finding where one child was born in Ohio and one in Indiana. Back and forth. I know good and well they didn't move back and forth to have that kid. But, no, it was—wasn't even a county, it was a territory at that time. And he bought one place and it happened that the state line came through it and later on he sold that one and bought another one in Hamilton County, Ohio, and then came on down to Louisiana in 1838. And, I finally got that put together.

AED: Right, all those puzzles.

DLT: Oh, yes. It's lots of thinking to it.

AED: Where there any mills or gins in Spring Hill? Do you recall?

DLT: No, there wasn't anything there, but a school—that school and church.

AED: That's it.

DLT: Yes. As far as I ever did know.

AED: So they went to Gatesville to do all that?

DLT: Yes, to finish high school.

AED: To go to the cotton gin?

DLT: Well, at Straw's Mills seem like, I think they had a gin. Maybe, maybe, they maybe had a gin. I'm not sure. There must've been one closer.

AED: Than Gatesville?

DLT: I'm not even sure about that. When they first settled out there, there probably wasn't any gins, yet.

AED: Not the real early period, but later, during the railroad time?

DLT: No, there wasn't any yet. But later there was. But they didn't have all the land cleared, I guess they just planted feed stuff for the stock. And maybe some cotton for themselves because they made their clothes and things. They carded that cotton and—and got it ready to make their quilts themself. They carded the seeds out of there with a—something just like this. Looked like a brush, a wire brush. Get all the seeds out of it, made it soft and fluffy. Made their own quilts.

AED: Did your dad do cotton?

DLT: Yeah, he planted cotton. Yes, I never did have to pick any cotton, but I had to go to the field with them.

AED: What did you do while you were in the field?

DLT: I never could take the sun. I'd get so hot, and I'd get sick at my stomach. I'd sit under the wagon in the shade. (AED laughs) And one day he caught a little rabbit, a little cottontail rabbit. And brought it to me and tied it to the wagon wheel. He went on back to pick cotton. And that little sucker, went to jumping and a-squealin'. I went to hollering, hollering, "Daddy, Daddy!" (laughs) He had to come and get me quieted down, but he didn't do away with it until later on.

AED: So he'd be picking cotton—and were there other people?

DLT: Yeah. Neighbors would help. They helped one another.

And once, I remember at Peabody, my teacher had a younger sister that was just about a year older than me, and we played together a lot, so one day they were picking cotton for Daddy. I decided, well, I'd just go out there and pick, too. I guess I was eight, eight years old. (laughs) So, I just went lickety-split up that row, picking now and then to get up close to her. (laughs) Daddy said, "Now turn around and go back down that row and pick it right." So by that time they had turned around on other rows and she was far away from me. So that didn't work. But, he never did really get after me hard. That's the way he said it, "Now turn around and go back and pick that row right."

He was gentle, like Grandpa White, like John Laurence Nicholes. They tell me he was a quiet, easy-going man. And I showed you his picture. Look, sitting there in front of the house—he was a tall, thin man. And Daddy was built more like his mother, like me, short and round. And, as I said, he was a quiet, easy-going man.

But they told me a little story one time. One of his sons and daughters-in-law was visiting with him. And she made a flower bed by the front steps. When they came up in bloom, they were sunflowers.

Now this is what farmers fight all the time: to keep the sunflowers out of the fields. And I wondered, Was he quiet and gentle at that time? I just bet he wasn't very quiet. He might have said, Just pull them up, or I just wondered, Was he quiet and gentle right then, or had a fit? (both laugh) I don't know about that, but I bet they didn't get to stay there, might go to seed.

AED: Is there anything else that you can think of you'd like to speak about? If you do think of additional things, we can add them in. I have asked the things I was wanting to get to.

DLT: I think I pretty well covered my notes. There's always something that comes to mind every once in a while, you know. But I think the most outstanding things.

AED: Definitely what we are looking for. Do you have a final memory you could share? A good time you remember? A childhood memory?

DLT: I hadn't even thought about that. I really hadn't thought about that. Well, it's just being with the aunts and uncles and all everybody being together was good. I know my daddy hunted Easter eggs as long as he could walk, and that was in the spring before he passed away in August. But with the kids, he always hunted Easter eggs. And played baseball with them, too. Because that's what he grew up doing, playing baseball. And one of the older fellows I talked to after Daddy passed away. He said, "Dee always put that ball where he wanted it." Said, "He was way down close to the barn one day, and they was playing ball." And said, "He hit me right on the nose with the ball." Batted the ball and hit him on the nose. (laughs) But that's—just knowing that they had fun doing close family things. That's good and he shared those with my kids. He played baseball with them, and he hunted Easter eggs with them. And that was good.

And I was sorry that I didn't get to know the grandpa or the great-grandpa or any of them. And that's what I always thought, Well, gee, I don't know these people, I need to make a closer connection with them. And this has really helped. We are doing the book, but we wanted to wait until we got them picked up on New York and see where they exactly came from. Now, I don't know if we're going to be able to do that or not because we don't have the next name. But we do know that the great-great-grandpa in Louisiana was born in New York. Where? I don't know. And that he got married in New York in 1812. Where? I don't know. So we're looking for that. We may never find it. On all of my great-great-grandfather's census say he was a printer, publisher, or writer.

AED: Next piece to the puzzle.

DLT: Yeah, that's what we're working on. But I do know they were quiet, gentle people, kind. And that's good. You know? That's good to know. And I went back to Louisiana, and I went to the—first thing I thought I'd go to the tax office see if they have a map of where their home place would be. The young lady says, "No, we'd don't have anything that old." So I went on into the county clerks' office and copied all the records they had there. And started back down the hall, and I thought, I'll stop at this tax office one more time. And, you know they had all my material laying on the counter ready for me. The other lady in there had heard, and she got it together for me. And I went down to their place, and it was a wonderful feeling to be able to do that. To see where the next ones came from, you see. Make a connection there, to the ones that were here.

But during the Civil War, well, three of Thomas Laurence's brothers either died or was killed—one was killed and two died with measles and pneumonia. And another one was wounded in both legs and, up at Mansfield, Louisiana.

AED: So, they weren't doing frontier duty.

DLT: No, they were in the Civil War, the regular army. And the cannon could be heard in Many, Louisiana,

from the Civil War—from the guns, cannons, up there. They lived eight miles south of Many, Louisiana, and this place was, oh, it was twenty to thirty miles from Many, Louisiana, north, where the—maybe it's forty miles, I know I have records on it, but I don't where it is. But anyway, his wife was—said she couldn't hear the cannons anymore so she waited and waited, and he didn't come home. So she went on her horse and went and hunted for him. Left her children at home. Left the oldest girl to just take care of her children. And she was going around. Now, mind you, these were not Confederate soldiers that she was talking to when she was asking about her husband, Daniel White. Well, anyway, she was about to give up and come home. And she saw a little church off in the woods. And there was some soldiers camped there. And she called out, Was Daniel White there? And somebody up front said, No Daniel White here. And she started to ride off, well, she heard someone in the back say, Daniel White here. And he'd been wounded in both legs, and the doctor had cut out all the gangrene, and he was taken prisoner. He was a prisoner. Now, all these soldiers, and nobody bothered her, on horseback by herself. And they said, If you'll go home and get something he can ride in, he's not able to ride a horse, he can go back home and stay until he gets well, and then he has to come back and check in with us. Of course he was freed later. She took him home. She went back home and got the wagon and some man to drive them up there.

Her little four-year-old boy wanted to go with her to get his daddy. So she let him go. And they'd get tired of riding in the wagon, well, they'd get out and walk awhile. And she noticed he was stumbling and falling around in the ditches in things. She didn't know he was blind. He'd been sick while she was gone. Had had a real high fever and had blinded him. He was blind all the rest of his life. They didn't have any way of doctoring him except with cool cloths.

But they got him and took him home and she nursed him back to health.

And after, after that was all over they came to Spring Hill also, stayed several years. They had some boys to get married to people in Coryell County. Then they went on up to, up close to the border of Oklahoma and Texas with one of their sons up there, in Baylor County. They're buried in Baylor County, Texas.

But, now that was three, four, five boys they had in that war. Four of them are gone, one lived. But they had two others that had gone up to Arkansas. Far as I know they weren't involved in the war. I think they were older. I have records of them being there. And I have a copy of a letter written by a son, John White, that he wrote back down here to his sister. Now this was written in 1872. Most interesting letter that you ever read in your life. Because when you get a letter, some of it's just nonsense, you know. There wasn't any nonsense in there, it was all interesting news. And well written. Every word wasn't spelled right, but sometimes I don't either. (both laugh) But that was the history of before then. After Thomas Laurence came here. That's what happened to his family back there.

The boys' parents, Joseph C. and Catherine White, passed away, both of them in 1861. I reckon they must have had some kind of a epidemic of some kind of fever because they lived down on the bayou. It was marshy—now it's all drained off, but, and dry all around, but, and one part of it—it could've been, it was wet. And they must've had some kind of fever. Because one died one month, and one, three weeks later. Sounds like that's what happened.

So—see I was interested to know why Thomas Laurence White came to Texas and what his background was, that's why I went back and got that. And, I don't know, I don't guess Daddy and them ever went back Many, Louisiana. I never heard them even speak of it. I mean, I had—I had to dig that out, and I didn't know a thing about genealogy when I started, but I learned. And I wanted to know why we were here in Fort Hood, in this part of Texas. Why we were here. And I'm awfully glad they were here. It is good. I just wish Thomas Laurence White could've lived longer. But that's the

way it was. Mary Ann was a very strong woman, and she raised all those kids, except the one little boy. He died before his daddy left. He wasn't even—somewhere in before he was ten years old. Yeah, before he was ten years old.

AED: Were your grandparents alive when Fort Hood started?

DLT: My grandparents—my grandpa died in 1925. And my grandma didn't die until 1946.

AED: Did she still have land there?

DLT: Aunt Eveline was the only one left that had land. They had been gone from there a few years. They had gone—they had gone down to East Texas, one of the sons came for them and took them down there. Some of my cousins, the White cousins still lived in the house, but my grandparents didn't. And she was the only of them left that had a piece of property left there. But she had died, I believe she died in 1936. But the property was still in her name. Just twenty-five acres or so, something like that. And she lived there always. She was a petite lady like him, she was slim and petite like John Laurence Nicholes White. (points to photograph)

And I have a book here. This is a book that's just—we just reprinted, republished.

AED: I've seen an earlier version. It's very good. Lots of information.

DLT: I thought it was nice.

AED: Who republished it?

DLT: The Coryell County Genealogical Society.

AED: And that's good—an index.

DLT: Oh, yeah—that really—you can look at it right quick and find the names there that you're really interested in. I don't know what I have in here, I don't remember if I have anything.

AED: I think I've covered everything I was looking for.

DLT: I have the—the list of the church members from out there, Spring Hill, yes, I have a copy of it. The girl that had this copy was Caziah Bruce's great-granddaughter. And I asked her for copies of it, and she wouldn't share a thing. Well, her brother, she didn't know it, but her brother had borrowed that once upon a time, and he made copies of it. So he was nice enough to lend—to give me a copy.

AED: Tell me how Spring Hill got its name.

DLT: As far as I know, there was a spring across the road from the schoolhouse, and it never went dry, and that's where I think they got the Spring Hill because the school was up on a hill. And I think that's how it was named Spring Hill. And every year, the last day of school. Parents and students came. They had a play day, a picnic-like thing, parents and all. And Genieva White Thomas tells me that when they got old enough they would have partners, a boy they wanted to walk with, or something. So when she thought she was old enough to do that, well she went walking across the road over there to the spring and to get them a drink and come back to the schoolhouse. So they's walking along there talking, and she said, "I kept hearing some footsteps behind me." She said, "I wondered who was following us." She turned around and looked, and it was her daddy following her, (laughs) and listening to what they were saying. (laughs) Said, "He never did ever say a word, he just followed, just followed." And I'm going to tell you, that was Uncle Burr White, and I'll tell you something else about him. She said, "When we was anywhere with other children playing, like they got together on weekends or Sunday afternoon or something, playing, he always sat where he could watch his

children. And if we—somebody was—one of them was doing something they wasn't supposed to be doing or about to get into something, well he whistled. Then you instantly stopped that right then." He didn't have to tell them to stop or not do it, he just whistled. That's the way he kept them in line.

AED: And they knew what that meant.

DLT: Yes. That whistle meant, just, no. They knew what they were about to do. (laughs) And they had good kids. She was my best friend and my cousin, and I just—she's gone now and—I miss her so much.

AED: How long has she been gone?

DLT: Two years. And I just loved her to death. She had the sweetest children. She had two boys and two girls. And her husband, Weldon Thomas, was raised out there in the Camp Hood. And I'm sure, I called him, and they probably did an interview with him.

AED: I'll check and see. Weldon Thomas.

DLT: Weldon Thomas. That's no relation to my husband at all. But they were good, good people. But that's the way Uncle Burr corrected his children, watched over them and before they got into that trouble he whistled. (laughs) And she just told me many things through the years—

Murrel L. Thompson

Date of birth: 27 January 1928
Community affiliated with: Antelope
Interviewed by Martha Doty Freeman

MDF: This is Martha Doty Freeman. The date is November 27, 2000. I'm interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Murrel Thompson for the first time. The interview is taking place at the Thompson's home. Their home is located outside of Salado, Texas. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University. [Anna Ruth Thompson also took part in this interview.]

Who were your parents?

MLT: Ben Thompson, and my mother was Grace Mize Thompson. Are you taping me?

MDF: I'm taping.

MLT: Oh, my goodness. Well, my father was the youngest of the brothers. He had a younger sister named Ruby. And we lived on the old home place which is that place out there on Fort Hood.

My mother was Grace Mize Thompson, and of course, we lived on the farm there. We lived on the old home place where my Grandmother Thompson lived, and my grandfather was deceased. Daddy had an older brother Roy that also lived there. And so Roy and Ben farmed and ranched together, really. Roy had five or six hundred acres in the east part where he run cattle. My daddy was more on the farming side, and he was on the west side of where the house sat. We had about, uh, I guess, farmland probably 150 acres or something like that. And Roy would help him, and Daddy would help Roy. You know, they worked together and never had any cross words ever.

MDF: So did the two boys and their mother live in the house together to begin with?

MLT: Yes. When I was born, their mother and the two boys and my mother lived in the old farm house there. We sure did. And then Edwin and Anice and Lucille, they had a boy named Clements, but he was a senior at A&M and took pneumonia and died. But anyhow, they lived just south of us, about half a mile, maybe. 'Course, I used to ride my horse over there all the time. Well, we had to go over there to the road, the county road, which, of course, was a dirt road, but that was where we got our mail at the mailbox, you know. I rode my horse over there when I was, I don't know, I guess five years old, even. At six, well, I went to school. I was about five years old when I started riding by myself. When I was six, we rode horses two and a half miles to Antelope School and back. So we rode round trip about five miles a day. Nearly all the children rode horses or walked, if they were close enough to walk. And then, if they were within a mile or so, they might walk, you know. But, the rest of us all rode horses, girls and everybody.

MDF: Now, how many members of the Thompson family lived around—

MLT: In that community?

MDF: This place, or in that community?

MLT: Well, okay, that was Roy and Ben, of course, and then Edwin Thompson, their other brother, lived, like I say, about a half of a mile or something south of us. And then up near Antelope, Leslie Thompson lived, and then to the west, west of Antelope School and community, Euni Thompson had a place west of the school. I think he owned that place and then sold it and moved out to Levelland in West Texas.

MDF: Now, how was Leslie related to you all?

MLT: He was one of the brothers.

MDF: Okay. So your father was Ben.

MLT: That's right.

MDF: And then how many brothers did he have?

MLT: Well, he had, okay, he had Roy, Edwin, Leslie, Euni, and a half brother named Charles. I'm not sure where Charles lived. I guess maybe Copperas Cove.

MDF: Were there any girls in the family?

MLT: Yes. Ruby was the baby. Ollie was the older one, and Ollie lived in Electra, Texas, and Ruby lived in Corsicana. Ruby married Seth Miles, who was in the furniture business. His furniture store is still in business in Corsicana. Ollie had a daughter named Jimmy and a son named Bruce. Jimmy married a man in the oil business and they lived in Electra. Jimmy flew and had her own airplane. When she was on her way to Temple to see her doctor at Scott and White Clinic, she was standing in line at Love Field—Dallas—to board a plane to Temple when she had a heart attack and dropped dead right there. Bruce—see, he was a professional musician. He lived in California where he played the trumpet with the big bands. I don't know anything about his death. But, boy! We thought Jimmy was really something—owning her own plane!

MDF: Was your grandfather still living when they built this house, the one you lived in?

MLT: My grandfather was. Um-hm.

MDF: And what was his name again?

MLT: James Ervin. But his daddy was James Ervin Sr.

MDF: And how early did your family come to that area?

MLT: James Ervin Sr., my great-grandpa, and his wife, Mahala Mussett Costley Thompson, see, we have documents that indicate they came to settle on the Costley Survey between 1854 and 1855. See, Mahala was an heir to her first husband's estate which included this Costley Survey. Costley was shot and killed in Nacogdoches. All of that is a long story. Anyway, J. E. Sr., and Mahala came with their five children. They were Eliza, J. E. Jr.—my grandpa—Susan, Mary, and Thomas Bentley. So you see, Grandpa was raised in that part of the country, and died right there! He would have been about nine years old when he got there, and he preempted the place I was born on in 1871.

MDF: Now what year were you born?

MLT: On 27 January 1928. And I was born in one of the hospitals in Temple.

MDF: Was that unusual, to be born in a hospital?

MLT: Kind of, but a lot of children during those days were way out in the country. They were born at home, I guess. They didn't get to the hospital. But, if it had been bad weather, muddy, rainy, then the cars couldn't go. They'd have to go in a wagon. You couldn't make it. So they were just born at home, with the help of the neighbors. Of course, like I said earlier, the only way that I remember everybody got around was either in a wagon or a buggy or on horseback. There were some Model Ts. Our first car was a 1929 Chevy, and later we had a Model A. Next I remember having the '35 Ford.

MDF: Did your family have a car?

MLT: Um-hm. My grandmother lived in Nolanville, my grandpa was postmaster at Nolanville, and he gave me a little Jersey heifer that we brought home in the back of the '29 Chevrolet, and then we've had cattle ever since. That old Jersey heifer! Most everyone in our community had Model As or Model Ts.

MDF: Was it hard on the cars to go on those roads?

MLT: Very much so, because they were rough. They were just ol' dirt, rocks, and everything else. Always having flats.

MDF: How did you keep 'em repaired?

MLT: Well I don't really know how. But there were some mechanics around. At least they thought they were. Copperas Cove had a garage that worked on 'em. But when you're out, we didn't go to town, just maybe on Saturday. And not every Saturday. Just stayed home and worked. That was all.

MDF: How early did you begin working? How young were you?

MLT: Well, I know that my daddy had me plowing corn when—we had a cultivator and a team, you know—when I was just barely old enough. I couldn't reach those pedals that you keep from running over the corn, hardly. But I was, I imagine, six or seven years old, or maybe I might have been seven or eight years old, somewhere along in there. But we eventually got an old Fordson tractor, and in breaking the oat stubble, I would drive that occasionally. But I probably was about ten years old when I drove that tractor and broke the stubble with it. Of course, when we headed and gathered maize, or pulled corn, you know, I drove the team, pulling the wagon alongside the boys gathering whatever and they'd throw it into the wagon. I guess I was about six years old when I started driving the team and worked in the field. Daddy hired the McDonald boys to gather all the corn and head the maize and pick cotton, too.

I always liked to go with Daddy. We'd take the wagon, you know, with a bale of cotton, go to Copperas Cove to the cotton gin, leave early in the morning before daylight. It was about seven or eight miles there. After the cotton was ginned we'd leave the bale of cotton there to be sold, but the cottonseed was put back into the wagon and we brought it home. I'd play in the cottonseed and sometimes went to sleep in it on the way back home. I always liked that.

MDF: So you kept your cottonseed?

MLT: Yes, we sure did.

MDF: And what did you use it for?

MLT: Well we kept it there in the cow pen where, I think we fed the milk cow some of it.

MDF: Was that good for the cow?

MLT: Yes. I guess we mixed some feed with it and fed it to the milk cow. And then that was one of my other jobs. I had to get the cow, the milk cows every evening, and they were pretty easy, you know, they'd

come. But I'd have to go to the pasture sometime and get 'em. And I'd run and go barefooted, or get on a horse and go, and get the milk cow in. Then, as I got a little older, I milked the cows, too. And helped my mother gather eggs. Sometimes we'd find a chicken snake in the hen house. Lord have mercy! But we'd get a hoe and try to kill it. We had to carry all our drinking water from the spring in a bucket. That was my job, also, or one of my jobs. That was a job that I did quite a bit, was to carry a bucket of spring water.

MDF: How far away was the spring?

MLT: Well, I don't know how to measure, but I imagine it was probably about a hundred yards from the house, thereabouts.

MDF: Did you have a well or a cistern at the house?

MLT: No. We had a well near the spring with a windmill. My grandmother, in Nolanville, had a cistern with a pulley to draw the water out of the cistern. But we didn't have a cistern at that old house. We just used spring water. And when Mama washed clothes, we'd have to fill up two wash pots and build a fire under them and heat the water. Then we had a Maytag washing machine in later years. It had a little gasoline motor on it, and you'd push a pedal down and get it started, and it ran the washing machine.

MDF: Did it have the rollers on it?

MLT: Yes, the Maytag did. The rollers—wringers—up on top, you know.

MDF: And then, where did you hang 'em out to dry?

MLT: On the clothesline. I'll never forget, because I was little, probably five years old or thereabouts. And I always rode my horse bareback with a bridle. That's all I used. Mama was always getting on me for not putting a blanket or something on the horse's back 'cause it would be sweaty and I'd ruin my clothes. I always rode in a hurry, loping, and going fast. But anyhow, I run under the clothesline, and it caught me right under the chin and jerked me off. Now that hurt, it really did. And of course, she saw me, and she thought, well, I'd cut my head off, I guess. I don't know. But I always remember that clothesline there. And I knew it was there, but I just didn't think. I was going pretty fast, you know, and run under that line, and it caught me right under the chin on my neck and pulled me off.

One other time, before I, I was sure not five, I don't think. But I'd go down to the horse lot, you know, down at the barn, and I'd get the horse, maybe, get him up close to the fence, and I'd crawl up on that board fence there, and get on him. Then I'd just ride around, no bridle, no saddle, no nothin'. Just ride around in the lot, there, just kicking him and making him go. And one day, I did that, and I don't know why, I forgot to close the gate. And I guess the wind blew the gate open, and that horse took off out of that lot and went all the way across the front of the house, and Mother was out there hollering at me. Of course, I was just holding on by the horse's mane, you know. No bridle, no saddle, no nothing, just on that horse. Loose, and running. He was really going. I stayed on him until we got to the branch down below the pig pen, and that horse went down there and stopped suddenly, and Lord I went, I just went a-tumbling off over his head. I landed on the other side of the branch. Mama thought I'd been killed. I was a-cryin'. I got up. I tried to lead that horse back by the mane. I guess I got him back. I don't remember now, but she—that was one thing she really got on me about.

And then she got on me for smoking when I got old enough, smoking grapevines and stuff. She whipped me more for that than about anything. And then Joe Insall my neighbor friend and I always ran around, you know.

MDF: Yeah. Did you boys get together a lot and run around?

MLT: Quite a bit when we weren't working, you know, in the summer. Part of the time we were working, you know. All of us were. But yeah, we'd run around maybe on Sunday evenings, or times like that.

MDF: What kinds of things did you do?

MLT: Do what?

MDF: What kinds of things did you do?

MLT: Well, mostly just, well, we'd go squirrel hunting and rabbit hunting, and we'd go swimming in the creeks. I don't know. I suppose that was about all we did. We might play ball or something, if we had a ball, but most times we were just going somewhere, just going wherever we could. Maybe try to go fishing. We didn't do too good at that. Just get together, play marbles, you know, and all that.

MDF: Yeah. Did you ever get into trouble?

MLT: Well, I guess we did. Every once in a while.

MDF: Nothing you want to tell about.

MLT: Well, I don't—I know we found some trouble. But it wasn't any bad trouble, you know, it was just mischievous stuff.

MDF: Did you have a gun?

MLT: Uh, yeah. Well, I used a little Winchester .22 pump gun, and it wouldn't shoot anything but shorts, .22 shorts. And it belonged to Roy, my uncle, but he gave it to me to use, and I'd shoot rabbits and squirrels, and sometimes doves with it. They'd be sitting up on a dead tree limb, and I could hit, boy I could hit with that thing. But that's what I used it for.

MDF: Was there a fair amount of game out when you were growing up?

MLT: No deer. I never did see a deer. They didn't have any deer for some reason. But I guess, there was lots of squirrels and rabbits and possums and armadillos and all that kid of stuff. We found an armadillo hole, sometimes we'd try to get the armadillo out of it.

MDF: How did you do that?

MLT: If we get ahold of his tail, we'd try to pull him out. But they're hard, you can't get 'em out. But we'd work and work trying. Just things like that when we were going around.

MDF: What kind of farm equipment did your father have, and your uncle?

MLT: We had cultivators, breaking plows like a double disk, and a triple disk for breaking land. And then the cultivators of course, to cultivate, plow the row crops. A grain drill to drill the oats in, and then a reaper to cut oats, and I think we had a row binder to cut maybe hegari.

MDF: Were they gasoline engines?

MLT: No, no.

MDF: Or were they steam?

MLT: No. They were pulled by mules. Yeah, until we got that Fordson tractor to pull the triple disk. But we'd use four mules to pull the double disk.

MDF: So how many mules did your father have?

MLT: Well, we had four mules that we used all the time, and then a couple of horses that they used also. And then we had riding horses. We had two or three of those that we rode.

MDF: Did he use horses to pull equipment?

MLT: Uh, yes. We had some horses that we used, but they weren't riding horses. Uh, you could ride 'em I guess, but we had separate horses that we rode, than the working horses.

MDF: Do you know where your dad bought those mules and horses?

MLT: No. I'm guessing maybe First Monday sometimes, or he put the word out maybe that he was looking for 'em, and somebody would come up with some.

MDF: Where did he keep his equipment? Was it outside, or was it under?

MLT: No, no. All of it was outside. Everything except the tractor, and it was in the old buggy shed. That was where we kept the tractor.

MDF: Now, why did he put the tractor in there?

MLT: To protect the engine from the weather. There wasn't any shed for the reaper. But all other equipment sat outside.

MDF: Tell me about First Monday. Where was that?

MLT: Well, they had First Monday in Belton. I guess the lot there east of Cochran Blair and Potts I think was where they had First Monday.

MDF: And it was next to what?

MLT: It was across the street from where Cochran Blair and Potts is, that department store.

MDF: And what would you do there?

MLT: Uh, people just bring horses and mules, and maybe wagons, and I don't know what all. They just have items that they wanted to sell or trade or—just things like that.

MDF: Was it mostly farm equipment?

MLT: Well, I don't know remember too much about it other than I know that there were lots of horses and mules and wagons. And of course, the people come in those things, too, but they had every kind of item, I think, you know, just kind of like a flea market, on that order.

MDF: Were there First Mondays in Copperas Cove and Gatesville, too?

MLT: I don't remember. The one I remember best would be in Belton. I don't remember ever going to one in Copperas Cove. It was always Belton.

MDF: Tell me about the crops that your father grew.

MLT: We grew cotton, corn, oats, maize, and cane.

We had probably around twelve fruit trees in that one side of the garden. Then east of that orchard, what we called our orchard, was our garden. The whole thing would have been more like seventy-five or eighty feet wide. I might be wrong on the size, but it was pretty big.

MDF: Pretty big. And where did you sell peaches?

MLT: Well, we used a lot of 'em. Mama canned peaches, made jam and preserves and cobblers. Some of our neighbors and some other people that would come by, they'd know we had peaches. They knew we had our peaches, and we'd tell 'em at church, maybe, or, or at the school, you know. It was just people who knew we had an orchard. Just like we knew who had bees and honey, and we'd buy honey from the Kindlers which was between our house and Antelope. Daddy'd buy his honey, he liked honey. And they'd know we had peaches, and they'd come over and they'd get some peaches, if they didn't have orchards themselves.

MDF: Did you have any other kind of fruit trees?

MLT: Oh, we had maybe one or two plums. But we had more peaches than we did anything else. And of course, we'd make grape juice out of wild Mustang grapes. We'd go out in the pasture and pick grapes. We always made grape juice. We liked that.

MDF: How did you do that?

MLT: I don't know.

MDF: Did your mother do that?

MLT: Uh, yeah. I used to gather grapes. I'd go on my horse sometimes and take a bucket, get the ones up high. We drank a lot of grape juice, mix it with tea, or just plain grape juice. Mama'd make grape jelly and jam. We kept it all the time. We raised nearly everything that we ate. I remember when we'd sell some crop, or portion of a crop, we might have a hundred dollars, and I remember Daddy saying, "Maybe we can make it another year." You know, people just didn't have much money then, and a hundred dollars was pretty good. We paid a dollar a day for labor and fed them, and some stayed the nights with us. If they stayed the night they'd help with the evening chores, like milk, feed the horses and mules. They worked from daylight to dark.

MDF: Who were some of the boys who did that?

MLT: The McDonald boys. And incidentally, their daddy just couldn't take losing his ranch. He was born and reared there just like my daddy. When the time came that he actually did have to give it up, they found him in the sheep shed where he had shot himself. That was real sad, I tell you.

MDF: Are any of those boys still alive?

MLT: Only one. And there were five boys and three girls.

MDF: Where did they live, do you know?

MLT: They lived west of Antelope.

MDF: Do you know where the boys live now?

MLT: Wayne, my friend, lives in Houston. Their mother lived to be way up there, in the nineties. And my mother was ninety-eight when she passed away.

MDF: What else did she grow down in her garden?

MLT: Oh, okra, beans and peas and onions. Well, also, tomatoes and squash, and, you know, we'd grow nearly enough potatoes to last through the coming winter. We'd dig 'em, clean 'em, and spread them out in a dry, cool place, and they kept pretty good. Oh, well, Mama planted all kinds of vegetables. She did a lot of canning.

MDF: Did you ever help her with the canning?

MLT: Oh, a little bit. I didn't much like that.

MDF: Where would she store the—

MLT: We stored them in the storm cellar. It was cooler down there.

MDF: Did your dad build the storm cellar, or did he have somebody build it?

MLT: I think my grandpa and the boys built it. I'm sure they built it, and it's still there. You can see where it is. I can remember going in that thing one or two times at night when we'd have a storm, and we'd be afraid.

MDF: How big was it?

MLT: Well, it was about eight by eight approximately inside.

MDF: And then, how tall, how high?

MLT: Well, you could stand up in it.

MDF: Was it lined with anything, or was it dirt?

MLT: Rocks. Big ol' flat rocks.

(telephone rings; interruption in taping)

MDF: The storm cellar was lined with rock and then had—

MLT: Well it had some timbers, I guess old oak logs, timbers and stuff.

MDF: Across the top.

MLT: Yeah. And dirt, of course, was all over it piled on top outside.

MDF: Did you have storms pretty frequently?

MLT: Well, similar to some we have now. I mean, I don't know that there's too much difference in, it just seemed like they were worse. I don't suppose they were. I don't recall too much hail. I guess we had hail at times, but I don't remember just off hand. But thunder and lightning, you know, and wind some.

MDF: Now, you've got this picture of the house and there's the front here. Which way did that face?

MLT: It faced south.

MDF: And then, on the left-hand side was the kitchen?

MLT: That was the kitchen and dining room. Pretty good-size dining room for ol' country. When Daddy's sister would come from Corsicana and maybe from Electra, Ollie and them, then the other brothers and their families would come. They'd all come home. And then for sure, when my grandma was still alive, see, we had lots of company. And then that smokehouse back there, that's where they would kill hogs and fix the hog meat and smoke the ham and the bacon. Boy, it was good.

MDF: And then, what is this addition over here on the right?

MLT: That was the bedroom. Well, there was two bedrooms and then that screened-in sleeping porch. Now that's where we slept in the summertime, or I always slept back there, and I think Dad and Mother did, too.

MDF: Was there a space upstairs in an attic?

MLT: We didn't have an attic to use that I know about.

MDF: You didn't use it.

MLT: No. And of course, we had a cooler for the milk. You know what a cooler is, don't you? Have sheets, wet sheets that come down the side. And then we had an ol' icebox. The ice man came sometimes, and we'd get a block of ice, bring it in. And I can remember that. I always enjoyed the Watkins, the Rawleigh man was what I called him. I always liked for him to come.

MDF: Why did you like that?

MLT: Well, he had something that I liked. Of course, we always kept that brown salve he sold and used it on everything. He might give me chewing gum or candy.

MDF: Where was the cooler?

MLT: The cooler? It was in the corner of that dining room.

MDF: And would it be up against a window?

MLT: Well, kind of. It seemed to me like it was just right beside a window. In the dining room. And then the icebox sit opposite to the doorway coming into the dining room. And the cooler was on the left and the icebox was on the right, and the dining table was right—

MDF: In the middle?

MLT: Yes. With the chairs around it. And then we had one of those china cabinets, old china cabinets. We still have that. It sat over in the far corner of the dining room I think. We had a wood stove in the kitchen. Mama cooked biscuits nearly ever' day—crank that fire up. Summer and winter, it didn't make any difference. And she'd make biscuits about every meal.

MDF: Tell me about some of the food she prepared. What kind of meals did she fix?

MLT: Well, we'd have chicken and chicken-fried steak. That's all. I didn't know there was any kind of steak other than chicken-fried steak. And then we'd have all kind of vegetables, you know, especially in the summertime when we had our garden. She'd cook cornbread and dried beans, you know, and sometimes when we'd go to town, we'd get bread. I liked what I called light bread. It was factory bread, you know. And potatoes, and all that kind of stuff. We always had good meals.

MDF: Did she have any special food that she fixed?

MLT: I don't know. We'd have gravy and potatoes and always had ham. You know, there's a gravy that ham leaves. Red gravy's what they call it, I think. Boy, that was always good. 'Course nowadays you're not supposed to eat all that stuff. But it, it was really good eating I'll tell you. And hog meat. We always killed our own hogs. So there's all kinds of—roast and chickens. We had chickens, and we'd always have fried chickens. Sometimes chicken and dumplings, but you know, it varied. She'd switch around.

MDF: Did you keep turkeys?

MLT: No. Never had any turkeys. Just chickens.

MDF: How did you light the inside of the house?

MLT: How did we light it? Well, we had kerosene lamps, was what we did. By today's standards, they were

just like not having any light, practically. But anyhow, we used the kerosene lamps, and when time moved on, we got what they called an Aladdin lamp. Boy, that thing gave a lot of light. It had a mantle and everything. And that's all we had.

MDF: Did you ever have a Delco plant?

MLT: A Delco?

MDF: Um-hm.

MLT: What you talking about? A radio, or something?

MDF: No. It was a way to produce some gas that you could light in the house.

MLT: No. No. Now my Uncle Leslie, I mean, Edwin and them, they had a wind charger that charged batteries, I think, for the radio. I remember when we first got a radio. It was about eight by eleven, and it had a whole bunch of batteries under it. And when we first got it, Edwin and his family, they come over on Saturday night, and we'd listen to the radio. Amos and Andy and some of that stuff. They thought that was something, that radio. I did, too. Daddy wouldn't let me play it 'cause it run the batteries down. But they'd listen to it at night.

MDF: What, what programs did you like to listen to?

MLT: "Grand Ole Opry." Whatever they wanted to hear, I guess, and Amos and Andy.

MDF: I wanted to ask you about school.

MLT: School.

MDF: Yeah. You went to Antelope.

MLT: Yes, I did.

ART: A freshman, ninth grade. But now you moved from there when, in '42? Was that when you changed school.

MLT: Yes. I think I was a freshman in high school when I went to Gatesville that year. I don't know what grade that was back then. But the last year, I went to Gatesville. They had school busses at that time, and we rode twenty miles to Gatesville and twenty miles home, and in June of '42, the minute I got out of school, boy, we got out of there. See, we had to leave. And nearly everybody was gone anyhow by then, but of course, because I was in school, I guess, they let us stay there. And then, I went to Nolanville, I guess it would be my sophomore year. And then to Belton my junior and senior years where I played ball down there, you know. Basketball and football.

MDF: Did you play any sports when you were at Antelope?

MLT: Uh, yes. We played a little bit of tennis, basketball, softball, and volleyball. But they had baseball there, but I never did play that. The older boys played baseball.

MDF: Now, where did you play the tennis?

MLT: There at Antelope. That was probably the last year or two that I was at Antelope that we messed around with tennis, and that was very very little. But that's where I played tennis.

MDF: Did you take your own lunches to school?

MLT: Uh, yes. Carried it in a paper sack. That's all we had, I think.

MDF: What did you have for lunch?

MLT: Well, a lot of ham. What we raised, you know. And I don't remember what all now other than ham. I know there was something else. Maybe we carried some chicken, you know. Fried chicken. And sometimes, everybody would have a little bit different things. Sometimes we traded around.

MDF: What did you like to trade for?

MLT: Homemade bread. Some of the German ladies that made homemade bread, I guess it was sour dough, you know. And boy, I really liked that. So I'd trade sometimes for the homemade bread, and that was really good.

MDF: And what would they like to get from you?

MLT: Well, I don't know. Whatever I had. It might be bought bread, you know, or maybe biscuits with jam sometimes. Now I never did carry any cornbread 'cause that wasn't one of my favorites for some reason. I like cornbread now. Back then, these kids, they would carry a little bit of everything. Sometimes fried pies or cookies. We had chicken sometimes. We didn't carry much pork. I know we did. But because it would spoil I guess. But we just carried our lunch in a paper sack and keep our lunches there. And at noon we'd go outside and get under a tree and eat our lunch.

MDF: Where was, where did you get the water there at the school?

MLT: They had a well with a pump on it. You'd go out there and pump that water.

MDF: And then, were there outhouses at the school?

MLT: Yes, um-hm. And then we had a stove that would burn coal in the winter. When I was little I liked to go get the coal for the stove just to get away, get outside to do something.

MDF: I wonder where they got the coal.

MLT: I don't know. We carried it in buckets, you know. And get it all over you. It was dirty and dusty.

MDF: Tell me about the livestock that you all raised on the ranch part of your—

MLT: Well, we didn't have any sheep. We had hogs and cattle. We didn't raise any goats. Now, the McDonald boys had about eight hundred sheep. And that's the way they made their living. They farmed, too, but mostly from those sheep.

MDF: Now, did they live somewhere near you?

MLT: They lived west of Antelope. But there was a little grocery store there that had a gas pump. I don't know what kind of groceries. They didn't have much. But they had one of those gas pumps that you take a handle and pump the gas up, you know. And then you had the school and the church north of the store, and that's all Antelope was. But anyway, they lived west of the school on their ranch.

You know, that's odd, you asked me what we took to lunch, I mean, what we carried in our lunch. We'd take what meat was available to make sandwiches. Sometimes we had peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

MDF: What kind of cattle did you all raise?

MLT: Mostly it was Herefords.

MDF: Did you belong to any beef clubs?

MLT: No. Now I'll tell you, Bill Lyons was a fellow that had a truck, and he lived in Copperas Cove, and I can remember him coming by our place and wanting to buy cattle every now and then. And sometimes he did. I always liked to ride in his truck. We had a cattle pen down in Roy's pasture where they'd pen the cattle. We'd go in his truck, cross that branch, and go up to that pen which had a loading chute, and he'd back up there and load the cattle he bought. He would come right to the house and buy cattle. And if you didn't want to sell any, just tell him. He'd visit awhile, you know, and chew tobacco and all of that kind of stuff. But, then he'd go on.

MDF: Do you know if your father or your uncle ever did any breed improvements? Would they bring a bull in from somewhere and try to improve the herd?

MLT: No. We just had our own bulls. I don't know whether we bought 'em, already had 'em, or raised 'em.

MDF: And when did you do your cattle dips?

MLT: Dipping? Well, in the spring I think. I remember one time when I was little bitty, that they did. They just run those cattle down into the vat and they'd go under, and then they'd swim so far and then walk up the steps on the other end of the vat and come out. I also remember in 1934 the government killed cattle. And I remember I was on my little horse, and I was over there when the cattle was penned so they could be shot, and Daddy made me go off. He didn't want me to watch 'em shoot those cattle. But I remember it well. They killed quite a few cows.

MDF: Do you have any idea how much of the herd they shot?

MLT: No, I don't remember. I think the government paid the owners something like six dollars for a calf and twelve dollars for cows.

MDF: Do you remember what they did with the carcasses?

MLT: Well, I'm not for sure about them all. John Gail would know. I know some were burned—put in a ditch, covered with brush, and set afire.

MDF: Did you hear your father talk about it at all?

MLT: Uh, yeah.

MDF: What did he think of that?

MLT: Well, they didn't like it much. It wasn't too good.

MDF: I haven't heard anybody be very positive about it.

MLT: No. I'm pretty sure they weren't. But, there wasn't anything they could do about it. That was a government deal. Never was anybody did anything. Back then, you did about what you were told to do, you know.

MDF: Do you have any memories of the Depression at all? Did it seem different to you, or did it seem just like it had been always?

MLT: Well, you see, I was not quite old enough to notice the difference. I wasn't but three years old in '31, and '34 was when they killed those cattle. I started riding a horse by myself when I was about five years old. I can't remember not riding in front of Daddy and Uncle Roy, holding on to the saddle horn.

MDF: Did you raise any cane at all?

MLT: Yes.

MDF: Where did you raise it?

MLT: Was there on the farm. Literally we called it the cane patch, you know.

MDF: Where did you take your cane after you cut it?

MLT: I don't know. I think we just used it to feed to the cattle.

MDF: You didn't make syrup?

MLT: No. Now, there was a syrup mill in the area, but we didn't make syrup.

MDF: So was honey what you used for your sweetening?

MLT: Yeah. We'd buy our honey from one of our neighbors who had a lot of beehives. And we'd buy several gallons. We'd eat that in the wintertime with butter, you know, and biscuits. My daddy liked honey. I can see him now, mixing it up with butter in a plate and then putting it on his bread.

MDF: What kinds of things could people get at the Antelope Store?

MLT: Not very much. You could get gas, and you could get a—I always liked to go on my horse up there. For a nickel, I could get me a Pepsi-Cola or something. I'd sit there, and I'd take an ice pick and punch a hole in the top. I wouldn't take the top off of it, you know, one of those caps. Punch a hole in it and then it'd last a long time. I could drink a little and then, that's what I really liked to do. Get on my horse and go to Antelope Store. That was about two and a half miles up there, and get me a Pepsi-Cola. And I didn't do that too often, but when I could get ahold of a nickel, well I did do that. And then maybe what they called all-day sucker, was a penny apiece.

MDF: Now, how would you go about getting a nickel? Did you earn money, or did your dad give you money?

MLT: Well, they generally would just give me some. But I never did have a quarter, or hardly ever. Most times, it was just a nickel, or sometimes two nickels. But if you ever got a quarter, you was in the money then. Boy, you could get a sack full of candy and all kinds of stuff. I remember, J. W. Thomas, they lived down the road from us there. Sometimes, he'd have a quarter. I don't know what—I guess they gave it to him. And I thought, Boy, he's rich. He had plenty of money. Had a whole quarter. Shoot, I was used to a nickel or a dime, maybe.

MDF: Now, you told me something about this bicycle that you got that had the flashlight on it.

MLT: Yeah, Joe Insall thought I was one of the richest boys in the country because I had a bicycle with a light on it. Well, I had this flashlight put on it.

ART: Had a jacket with a zipper on it, too, didn't you?

MLT: Yeah, and a zipper. I never will forget that sweater I had. It had a zipper, and I was so proud of that thing. I was about six years old then. My first year at school, I guess. And I had a zipper on that sweater, and boy, that's something.

MDF: Did your mother make most of your clothes?

MLT: No. She didn't. We'd just buy overalls, I guess. That's what I wore all the time, best I remember.

MDF: I talked to Dr. Yancy in San Antonio.

MLT: Who?

MDF: Dr. Yancy. And they lived down near Clear Creek. And he said that at one time, there was a doctor in town who had advised that everybody wear overalls because they thought that wearing a belt was unhealthy. And so everybody walked around in overalls for a couple of years. And he had a picture of himself with this nice shirt on and his overalls.

MLT: Yeah, most people wore overalls. Yancy, is that Sherwood's brother?

MDF: Uh-huh.

MLT: Well, I didn't know he was a doctor. Is that right?

ART: I bet you could buy overalls at the Antelope Store.

MLT: No you couldn't.

ART: You couldn't?

MLT: Had to go to Gatesville or Killeen, maybe, or Copperas Cove might have had some.

ART: But you had a car then.

MLT: Well, we had a '29 Chevy, and after that we had a Model A coupe.

MDF: Did you have a telephone?

MLT: Yes. Two longs and a short was our ring. We had Central, you know. I still have, I think, the one that was my grandmother's telephone. Somebody stole the one we had. It's one of those old wooden wall phones. Still have that thing.

MDF: Now, did you all get together much for community gatherings or parties?

MLT: Sure. The school would have plays and programs and different kinds of things that everybody went to. At the end of school we had a big country-wide picnic, barbecue. They'd have goat roping and the gander pull. They tied the goose on a wire, grease its head and neck, and then the men would run down through there horseback, and whoever pulled its head off got a prize.

MDF: Now, where was the goose?

MLT: It was hanging on the end of a post, or pole up there, see. And when they was on horseback, they'd get up here, and they'd have to run just as fast as they could and try to grab that goose's head and pull it off. That was one thing I liked to watch. And I don't know what they called it. Maybe gander pulling. Another contest was, they had a pole for the, kind of a metal point on it, I think, like you'd cut the end off of a hoe, and they'd have rings attached to these posts, and they'd go down through there and catch those rings, running on a horse. And I don't know what they called that, but that kind of stuff. And then the goat roping. They just, just had a big time, boy. Have homemade ice cream. Or maybe some bought, I don't know.

MDF: What kind of prizes did they give?

MLT: I don't remember. I wasn't old enough to do that kind of stuff. I'd just watch. All I did was try to get a nickel for ice-cream cone or something most of the time.

MDF: Were there any dances?

MLT: I think they had dances, but I never did go to any of them. They didn't have dances at the school.

ART: But your dad danced somewhere, because they told me about it. That he was a real dancer.

MLT: Uh, yeah. All those Thompson boys danced. Yeah they loved it! Some of them played the fiddle, too. I think when they were growing up they ran around everywhere. They might go to Gatesville, twenty miles horseback, and come in just in time to go to work the next day. Those boys did everything—had a good time. See, before there were lots of fences, and even after, there were friends and school kids that lived way down past our place, and they'd come through our pasture or field to cut distance. Sometimes they'd be walking and sometimes riding their horse. Back in those days no one worried about trespassing. Nobody cared. And it you found a gate closed, you closed it back. You didn't leave a gate open.

MDF: Did you go to church?

MLT: Uh, yeah, every Sunday.

MDF: Where did you go?

MLT: To Antelope. Yeah. Church was right there by the school.

MDF: And was it Baptist?

MLT: Baptist church. That's all they had.

MDF: Do you remember anything about the services?

MLT: Well, you know, I don't know how many people were there, but it wasn't a very big church really. They had a choir, you know, had a piano, and they'd sing, and the preacher'd preach. And the preacher'd always go to somebody's house for Sunday dinner, see, and they'd have fried chicken nearly every time he'd go. And then that night, they'd come back and have a little service and you'd go home. But that was something to do, see, going to church, on Sunday, that's what you did. You went to Sunday school and church in the morning, and church that night, and then get up the next morning and get on your horse and go to school.

MDF: Did you go to any baptizings?

MLT: Uh, yes. Go to the creek, they'd take 'em to the creek.

MDF: Did you get baptized in the creek?

MLT: Yes, down in House Creek. Down there where I learned to swim. I have a picture of that place, out there in my pool room.

MDF: Now how old were you when you were baptized?

MLT: Oh, I'm going to say, I might have been eight or ten.

MDF: Did you make up your mind you wanted to be, or did your parents encourage you?

MLT: Well, yeah, my friend Wayne McDonald, my friend, we just decided we'd join the church, be baptized, and so we did.

MDF: Did you wear special clothes to go in?

MLT: I don't remember now what we wore.

MDF: Was there a celebration about it, too?

MLT: Oh, there'd be several families go down to the creek with us, stand on the gravel bar, and watch the baptizings. The preacher would make a little speech, then baptize.

MDF: Was the preacher a traveling preacher, or was he just there with that church?

MLT: No. That's all he did. We had two preachers—Orban Turner and Fred Grubbs, and they were our preachers all the time that I remember.

MDF: Where did they live?

MLT: Fred Grubbs lived up close to Purmela, which is west of Gatesville. Pretty good little jaunt from Antelope. But Orban Turner, he lived at Antelope on part of his father's farm.

MDF: I wanted to ask you about home remedies, too. What kinds of things did your folks do if you got hurt or you got sick?

MLT: Well, we used kerosene oil a whole lot, and Mama gave me castor oil sometimes. When I had the croup, she'd mix kerosene oil and sugar and give it to me in a spoon. And then, of course, when you stepped on a nail, or something, barefooted, we soaked our foot in kerosene.

And then, if you had a splinter, they'd take a piece of hog fat and place it over where the splinter was and somehow tie it there and leave it overnight. The next morning, there was the splinter out of the flesh laying on the fat. You know, the fat had drawn the splinter out.

MDF: Did you ever hear of anybody getting hydrophobia, or being treated for that?

MLT: No, I didn't. I heard about mad dogs. I think that meant they had hydrophobia. But not, I never did know a person who had it. Well, there were not many doctors in our area. There was Dr. Woods in Killeen, and he is the only doctor I ever went to.

MDF: What did you go to him for?

MLT: Oh, for whatever sickness we couldn't cure with home remedies. But I know one night I was just about to die with the croup, you know. Couldn't breathe. I was just little bitty, trying to breathe, and I got scared. Dad and Mama got upset and they called Dr. Woods at his home. Of course, the weather was bad—cold and rainy. We couldn't go into Killeen, nor could Dr. Woods come to us because the roads were so muddy a car would get stuck. So he told Mama, on the phone, to give me a spoonful of sugar with kerosene oil on it. And so they did, and I made it, somehow or another. And they'd heat up Vicks salve, have me lean over it with a cloth over my head so I would breathe in the fumes from the Vicks salve. I think that was supposed to open up my head and maybe my lungs. We just had heat in two rooms of the house—the cook stove in the kitchen and the fireplace in the living room. In the winter all other rooms were so very cold, and those old cotton mattresses seemed to hold the cold, and it was chilling to get into those cold beds in the winter, so Mama would put the old irons that she used to iron with. You know, she'd put them in the fireplace and get 'em hot, and she'd wrap 'em in an old rag or, most of the time in a newspaper or something and put 'em in our bed when it was real cold. Keep your feet warm when we went to bed.

MDF: Did you have quilts?

MLT: Uh, yes, a lot of quilts.

MDF: Did she make quilts?

MLT: She did. The women in the in the community would get together and they'd have quilting parties, that kind of deal. I've been to those when I was little. I can remember crawling around on the floor, you know. I'd get so tired, but I'd about have to wait until Mama got ready to leave, you know. But they'd sit there and quilt all day. A bunch of them get around that frame with that quilt. They made quilts all the time, you bet.

MDF: Did she have a quilting board in her house?

MLT: I'm not sure.

MDF: Or frame.

MLT: Seemed like we had a frame.

MDF: Something that would come down from the ceiling.

MLT: Yeah. It seemed like, I'm pretty sure that we did. And we had quilting parties at our house, see. Yeah, I know we did. And nearly everybody did, though. Or the majority of the families I think had those quilting boards, or frames, you know, where they'd sit around. And take all the scraps, whatever there was, and make the quilts. They made good quilts, though. Sew it by hand, everything. And there might be five or six women there, you know, sewing, working on it. But they'd make quilts.

MDF: Do you know if your, if anybody in your family ever worked for the WPA or the CCCs?

MLT: We didn't have any of our family. We, we always worked on our own farms, you know. But, yes, I've known a few boys that went to work for CCCs, and WPA, too. Yeah.

MDF: What kind of work did they do?

MLT: Oh, they'd make culverts and dams and just do all kinds of cement work. WPA worked a lot on the road, if I remember right. And the CCC boys, well, they did rock and concrete work and things like that. That was just something that Roosevelt started all that. But I remember it, yes. Just vaguely, you know, don't know too much about it.

MDF: Now tell me when you first heard about the army coming in and maybe setting up a camp there.

MLT: Oh, I know where I was. My Granddad Mize was in King's Daughters Hospital in Temple with a broken hip, I believe. And he later died. But on December the seventh, the news come that there was a war or that Pearl Harbor had been bombed by the Japanese. Well, I never had heard of Pearl Harbor, didn't mean anything to me really. Of course, I remember my mother and my daddy and all of them, everybody around talking about it. We're going to be in a war. I didn't know for sure what that was going to amount to. And, well, they didn't either, I don't guess. And then of course we went back home, and I don't remember just exactly, it was shortly thereafter, I guess the word got out that they were looking to build a army camp. I cannot believe, it seemed like it was much longer than what it was. From December of '41, that was thirty days, you might say, in December there, and then on June of '42, well everybody was out of there! Now that's pretty quick. So they did move pretty fast, see. And when they notified everybody that they was going to have to move, of course that was, I mean they, there was all kinds of talking about that, of course. All old people, they'd lived there fifty and sixty years and maybe longer than that, some of 'em. But they, Daddy and them, I mean they had to get out and try to look and find a place that they might could buy to move to, see, and then plus gettin' everything you had to try to load up all that stuff and get it ready to go. I cannot believe it seemed like it was longer than that. But that's a short time for everybody to go and look and buy 'em another farm or ranch somewhere and think about when they're leaving their old home place, see. And move. Like I say, some of 'em shot theirselves. Couldn't take it. It was a very strange time.

MDF: Where did your parents move?

MLT: Well, we moved near Nolanville. The reason being, that wasn't where Daddy wanted to move, but the reason we did that was because by that time they were going to ration tires and gas and everything else, see. The war was on. And so when my grandmother was up in years, I don't know, in her eighties, and she needed somebody to take care of her, and my grandpa had died, and they thought,

well, we better move to Nolanville so Mother can take care of my grandmother. See that's old-timers. They used to take care of the old people.

MDF: Now, was that your mother's mother?

MLT: My mother's mother.

MDF: And what was her name?

MLT: Ida Kitchen Mize. And that's the one, her husband, my Grandpa Mize, was postmaster in Nolanville. But anyhow, he was dead. That's the reason they moved so Mother could take care of her. With gas rationing and then tires, and I mean everything, couldn't get that stuff. Well, Daddy wanted to go somewhere around Hamilton or San Saba, to the west part, and buy a place. We ended up going to Nolanville because of that. And that's how come [I got] to go one year to Nolanville School. And then I rode the school bus to Belton and graduated from Belton.

MDF: How old were your parents when this happened?

MLT: Well, they'd be—

ART: Your mom was born in eighteen-what?

MLT: Mama was born in June of 1893. Daddy was born December of 1885. They married in May of 1924. So Mama was around fifty years old and Daddy around fifty-seven.

MDF: And did he continue to farm after that?

MLT: Yes.

MDF: And what about your uncle who was there? Where did he go?

MLT: Well, he had died by that time. And it was just my daddy and my mother and myself. Dad's mother had passed on, and Uncle Roy had passed on, so there was just the three of us at that time that lived there. And then my Uncle Edwin moved, Anice's daddy, that lived right about half a mile from us. They moved to Copperas Cove. Leslie Thompson moved to a place just outside of Copperas Cove. And his grandchildren still live on it.

MDF: How did people find places to buy?

MLT: They just contacted real estate people and then word of mouth, but the real estate mostly as far as I know, there was a real estate man that Daddy had known, Tally Cloud, had a real estate business in Killeen. And Daddy went to him, and that's how he found that place. But I mean they looked at several places, too. I guess some of 'em just got in the car and drove around the country, maybe, see anybody stop at their house and ask 'em, "Do you know of any place that's for sale, or that we could buy?" And they, of course, when they knew these other people in the surrounding areas, they knew that these people in Fort Hood area had to have a place, they'd go up on their price. What was so unfair about the pricing of that Fort Hood land, they didn't have any real appraisers that knew anything about the land. I don't know how they decided. But you have a good river bottom farm, I mean, as good a land as you ever see, might be appraised for less than the sorry caliche hill with cedar all over it. That's what was so unfair about that whole thing. They just barely did get enough money to buy another place. People didn't borrow money back in those days. They might borrow a little, but you'd be sure you could pay it back.

MDF: [What did you like about growing up on the Fort Hood lands?]

MLT: Now that I think back, I liked the freedom we had, although I didn't consider it freedom at that

time—go by myself, you know, just get on a horse and go. Tell my mama I was going over to Joe's or Howard's—that's his brother—goin' over to see Howard Insall. Or goin' over to my Uncle Leslie's house, you know. He lived south of Antelope, and I'd ride my horse up there.

MDF: So you liked to visit.

MLT: Yeah, just go around when I could. I'd go to the store and get my Pepsi-Cola, if I had a nickel. The store changed hands, and there were two girls, Aubry Jean and Pootsey McClain, whose mother and daddy had it. And I'd go up to the store and drink that, and then Aubry and Pootsey, we'd play and talk while I was up there. I'd just tie my horse. There was very little traffic. I mean, you might see a car every once in a while, but not very often. And that ol' gas pump. You'd pump your gas up in that bowl, then run it into the car through a hose. I enjoyed that. Of course, looked forward to the Antelope picnic at the end of school. That was really something.

MDF: What did you do for Christmas?

MLT: Well, we always went to the pasture and got us a Christmas tree, cut a cedar tree, you know, and bring it in, and Mama'd decorate it. A lot of times, Aunt Ruby from Corsicana and her husband would come down for Christmas, and we'd all get together. Most times it was at the old home place where we had a Christmas gathering, you know. Uncle Edwin, Anice, and Lucile, Leslie, and Martha, and Lee Roy, you know, sometime, they'd come. They'd all come where Grandma Thompson was, when she was alive. And they'd all come to our house for Christmas. Maybe Christmas dinner, you know, somethin' like that. They'd all come and visit, all the brothers and sisters, get with their families.

MDF: What would your mother decorate the tree with?

MLT: I just remember icicles. And some kind of something, some silver-looking stuff that you put around.

ART: Tinsel.

MLT: Yes. And I don't know what else.

MDF: And what kind of presents would you give each other?

MLT: Well, I got a saddle one year. And a red wagon. I really liked that. I had a new saddle and then another red wagon once, and then I got a bicycle. That's when Joe said I was one of the richest persons in the country. That's when I put that flashlight on there. A bicycle with a light on it. Dadgum! I did get that bicycle for Christmas and sold it to Howard Scott in later years.

MDF: Did you get candy for Christmas?

MLT: Uh, yes. Candy and fruit, a lot of that. Apples and oranges and candy. That's right. And maybe sometimes a pair of shoes. But usually a pair of boots. I wore shoes a little bit, but I wore boots all the time, darn near, I think. I just think I must have been born in boots and wore 'em all my life. I mean, just to school every day, and in the mud, and had to clean those things. They wouldn't last long and have to get another pair. Boy, hidey! A tricycle! Rode tricycle when I was little, do you know. Had a lot of fun on the tricycle. But, I don't know, mostly just something like that for Christmas, you know, fruit and candy and maybe a, like I said, a pair of shoes or a pair of boots. Then, like I said, I got that wagon and I got that saddle, and one time, I got a little toy train. But a few toys, you know, things like that.

MDF: Did you make your own toys much, or did you have store-bought?

MLT: Sometimes we would try to make a toy. I liked trucks and cars, you know, and I made little toys like that. I've still got one I made. But they'd buy some in town.

MDF: So tell me what Pollyanna was.

MLT: A game similar to Monopoly played with dice and small disks. I don't know if you can still buy a Pollyanna game, but I wish I had one. And dominoes they played some.

ART: Checkers?

MLT: Maybe. Yes, we used to play checkers sometime. I forgot about checkers. But that's about all I remember to—'course in the wintertime you'd always sit in front of the fireplace, and I guess they'd just talk, read some, you know.

MDF: Did you have books and magazines?

MLT: Not too many magazines that I know of. I guess we had books. And we had a Victrola, play music if you wanted to. I remember Lee Roy and Clements, they'd turn the Victrola on and then they'd dance, you know. I'd watch 'em.

MDF: Was that at your house or over at their house?

MLT: Both Uncle Leslie's and ours. Well, we had a Victrola, and they did, too. Nearly everybody had a Victrola, I guess.

Louis J. Tomastik

Date of birth: 16 December 1928
Community affiliated with: Antelope
Interviewed by Martha Doty Freeman

MDF: This is Martha Doty Freeman. Today is January 24, 2001. I am interviewing for the first time Mr. Louis Tomastik. This interview is taking place at 1702 Eighth Avenue, Fort Worth, Texas, 76110. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood, and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

Start off by telling me a little bit about your family. Who were your parents and what brothers and sisters did you have?

LJT: John Tomastik was my dad, and my mother was Agnes, used to be Bartek, Tomastik. And my dad's family moved in from Fayetteville, Texas, back in 1889, and my grandfather died a short time after they immigrated. My mother came to Seaton, Texas, in the 1890s. And then when Dad got to be about twenty-five years old, he moved up here to Seaton, and met my mother. He worked for my grandfather, who had a country store there, and some farms, and he married his youngest daughter. That was my mother.

I'm the youngest of six. All of 'em were born around Temple, east Temple, you know, I mean, in the country. They were farming. And what happened, I was the only one born in Fort Hood. I said, "I wasn't born, I was hatched amongst the rattlesnakes and rocks." Right in the center of Fort Hood. I tell you, there's some rattlesnakes around there. I've seen many of 'em. And people look at me. What you mean, you wasn't born? I was hatched, in a way. I've gotten a lot of laughs out of that.

But, they were farming. Had nearly a two-hundred-acre stock farm there. A hundred acres cultivation, at first, when we moved there, 'cause of mules. It was about 1926. I was born in 1928, December sixteenth, and that was three or four years before. Two or three years. No, a couple of years they moved. 'Cause they couldn't work but about sixty acres of the place with the mules. He rented out the rest of the hundred acres. Then, in 1933 or four, he bought the first John Deere tractor in that area with the steel wheels. The next year, there were three or four of them around the farms around there. Let me take a break. Can you cut it off?

LJT: They was born here. My grandmother and grandfather were born overseas. But they come to Texas, my grandfather and grandmother, in the 1880s, 1890s, so my parents were born here, you know, just barely. And so they lived all their lives in Texas.

MDF: Do you know, you said they moved to Coryell County in about 1926?

LJT: Twenty-six. I was born in '28. [They moved] a year or two before then. My sister was born over there, and she's two and a half, nearly three years older than me. So somewhere a year or two before I was born, they moved to Fort Hood.

MDF: Now tell me the names of your brothers and sisters.

LJT: My oldest brother was Johnnie, next was Jerry. And there's about two years apart for all of us. Then Lillie, she's Beckett now. Well, you don't need to know that, I guess, but then Agnes, then Annie, and then me. I'm the baby of the family.

MDF: Did they ever tell you why they moved over to Coryell County?

LJT: Well, I don't want to put that on record.

MDF: Okay.

LJT: I can tell you, but I don't want it on record.

MDF: Okay. And was the whole family there together, all you six kids and your parents?

LJT: Yes.

MDF: How was the farming land there?

LJT: I tell you, we hauled many many trailer loads of rock out. And it was about half of it or so just rock there. But pretty good land, and there was some flat lands. Four, five, six, seven acres in places. But it was pretty good cultivation there. Wasn't nothing like around the blacklands around Temple, you know. It was the shallower land there, but it made half-decent crops. It wasn't real bad. They'd plant usually cotton, corn, and oats some, I think. Usually cotton and corn, mostly, was what they planted during that time. Some oats, too, I believe.

MDF: Where did you all live? Where was your home?

LJT: It was in Coryell County, about a mile from the Antelope community on the little farm road that goes to Gatesville and Copperas Cove. My dad's farm had about half a mile frontage on the road there. And that was eighteen miles from Gatesville, seven miles from Copperas Cove.

MDF: When you talk about the community, do you mean where the little store was?

LJT: Yes, the store and the school and the little Baptist church. Antelope.

MDF: Was there a farmstead there already when they bought that place?

LJT: Yes, it was a farm there.

MDF: Do you have any idea who had it before?

LJT: I had no idea, because I wasn't hatched yet. That's a good enough answer, isn't it?

MDF: That is. Now what, describe your farmstead for me. About the house and the outbuildings, and that sort of thing. What do you remember about it?

LJT: Well, I remember there was the old house and the regular house. And the old house, we'd use it for storing things. It was one big room, then a little small room. We didn't live in it. It was just a porch adjacent to it about six feet from the regular house. The regular house had two or three bedrooms. I can't remember for sure. Then the kind of living area and, of course, the kitchen. And, of course, it was pretty old. It was in the old-times. And I remember one thing about the house. In summer it was real neat a lot of times. It had a breezeway from the south to the north. It was about eight or ten foot in shade. And a lot of time it was the coolest place in the house, 'cause of the way the wind hit. And that breeze would just come in, too. And I remember south of it, there was a great big old live oak tree, about four foot in diameter. It wasn't real tall, but real wide. Old. The front slanted. And then

there was some other live oak trees just a foot and a half, two foot in diameter, but that big ol‘ tree, man, it must have been there a long time. ’Cause that thing was about four foot in diameter.

MDF: Did you play in it?

LJT: Yes. We used to go up in its slant and then lean. Never fell off of it though. I was fortunate there. And we were living on a kind of a little little hill and bluff. Not real high. I’d say maybe from the lower area, about eighty foot at a longer slant, and then a rock ledge there. And the ledge was about two foot or so, and we used to watch the northers when the rains were coming in from northwest during the spring. Blue norther. We’d set on those rocks and watch them after sundown. So that was neat. Dad taught us a lot about weather. Learned us to be weather-wise.

MDF: Was that something he was specially interested in?

LJT: Of course, farming, you know, you’ve got to know a good lot about weather, or you try to outguess it. And he knew a good lot about weather. He did, as far as trying to anticipate. Sometimes this and that may come. He’d hear on the radio. You have a different kind of feed to harvest. Well, if you get it in too green, it’s liable to spoil. But, still, sometimes you take a risk, ’cause, you know, that big rains and squalls coming. It’s coming by radio, then they would tell you. And if it gets wet, it messes up a lot of it. So he a lot of time watched that. He’d watch the weather like that.

MDF: Were you aware of the drought in the ’30s?

LJT: No, I wasn’t aware of that. I wasn’t aware of the drought, but I was aware of the Depression.

MDF: How, what, how so?

LJT: Because of the time they killed all the cattle. I couldn’t understand it. What it was about, I don’t know. That was in ’36, something like that. I was about seven, eight years old. Then Daddy explained it to me. And we could give away all the meat, but you could not sell it. And we had to kill over half our cattle. We had about thirty head, or forty, or whatever it was. Had to kill about, I think, two-thirds of ’em or so. And just let them rot. You know, that’s during Roosevelt, when he was gettin‘ the prices and all that worked out. But I couldn’t understand why did they have to do that.

MDF: Were you there when they killed the cattle?

LJT: No, no, I didn’t see that. They wouldn’t let us be around that. But then you’d run around the pasture, and “Don’t go around them,” Dad said. But, you’d see ’em from farther off. By the vultures. A lot of vultures was eating them up.

MDF: And your family didn’t use any of the meat?

LJT: Oh, yes. Whatever we could, you bet. But we didn’t have no icebox then, no ice service there during that time, so the only way you could store it, you’d put it right above the water in the well. That was the coolest place. And that would keep it good a lot longer. We belonged to a beef club there, too. A lot of times, since there was eight of us, we’d kill a beef twice. Took two portions. Because it was usually around fifteen pounds and eighteen pounds, and so we needed more. And some years we took a double portion of it, you know, and had to kill a beef twice. And we killed about six hogs each fall, winter, usually. And Mother would can the meat, you know, and we’d use it. A lot of good ol‘ sausage. Oh, boy.

MDF: How did you make the sausage?

LJT: I don’t remember all that, ’cause I was pretty young. But I know I remember this. The regular sausage pork, we’d always smoke it. Get it good and smoked. And it’d keep a long time thataway. Made it all

by hand. Had that sausage stuffer and all that stuff. Two or three different kinds or sausage. Had to make head sausage, too. We had it for breakfast. They called it head sausage. I don't know what they call it now. Or in Czech we called it *jelito*. *Jelito*.

MDF: How to you spell that?

LJT: I don't know. Like it sounds, probably. But that means that head sausage. You fry it and bake it. It's for breakfast. You use it kind of like Eckrich sausage now and stuff like that, fried for breakfast. That's what you use it for, except it was better. That was delicious. Gosh, my stomach's just—I feel the juices coming just thinking about it.

MDF: Did you all speak Czech in the home?

LJT: Yes, that's standard procedure during that time. We was the only Czech family around there. And the German families. You wouldn't be taught any English until you were about four and half years old. And you'd learn your native language, German or whatever it was, Czech, fluently, you know. That's all. And then you'd know maybe five, six hundred words in English when you started school. Enough to get you by. And then pretty soon you catch up fast. And that's why I have a little accent. Linguists, specialists, told me, Well, that's why you got a little [accent]. You don't sound like a natural-born Texan, quite. When I was changing jobs about the second time or third time in my life, I said, "What you mean always?" They said, Where were you born? "I was born and reared in Central Texas." Well, that guy, he was smart. This was a man. He asked me two questions. And the third one said, "What language did you learn to speak first?" "Czech." "Well, that's why you got a little, it's, you don't sound like a natural-born Texan, quite." Do you notice that?

MDF: Just a little bit.

LJT: A little bit. See, I don't notice it. But, your vocal chords are, they're grown a little bit different, whatever language you learn to speak first.

MDF: Did your mother ever fix foods that were Czech origin?

LJT: Oh, all the time.

MDF: What kinds of things?

LJT: All kinds. Just your kolaches, and different types of the cakes and pastries and, of course, a lot of time when you cook, now, it's like normal a lot of times. Then when, you got a lot of beef, different things, the way you stew 'em and do 'em. A little bit different, you know. And the Czech way, they taste different. It's not like Irish stew. It tastes a little different. Then one of the best things I ever remember eating there, I looked forward to, was the beef club. Usually you got a certain amount of bones, you know, that were cut, meat and bones, and the neck. And she could put some, oh, I don't know the spice, chili powder, et cetera.

MDF: Paprika?

LJT: A bunch of stuff. Maybe that. But chili powder some and some other spices, and a little onion and a little garlic taint, and she would stew it slowly. And after it got cooked, that meat was just like barbecue. You taste it all the way through. And I loved the meat around the bones. It tasted the best. Gosh, my stomach, I feel the juices flowing just thinking about it. You know, when you're growed up, I mean, when you're getting in this age group, last ten years, a lot of times you reflect on your younger years. And boy, you didn't know how enjoyable it was when it's happening. How you remember it. You was having a real good time enjoying it, but you didn't realize it. What else would you like to know?

MDF: Well, somebody told me that your sisters used to gather mushrooms.

LJT: Yes, all of us did.

MDF: Now, how did you, where did you go to do that, and how did you know what a good mushroom was?

LJT: Well, see, I always did. That's when it rained in the fall or spring, and they'd be all in the pastures. There was live oak. Our pasture had a lot of places pretty thick with live oak, and there was a lot of leaves on the ground. And when it rained a good lot, that was when the mushrooms were around trees or where the leaves were. Well, how you would know what the different is, because the good mushrooms, they was thicker, and they had that that little comb under. They was a lot thicker. And the mushroom itself had a kind of a little different color, too. But it was a lot thicker. And the poison ones were thinner, and they had that little comb. Under the comb that fine stuff was thinner. There was a lot of difference in looks. You could tell them by looking at them. If you learned, they taught. Daddy and Mother, 'course they learned it from the old country. You know, their grandmother and grandfather taught them, you know. And, oh, man, those mushrooms, when they're fresh like that, they're delicious.

MDF: Well, how would you fix 'em?

LJT: Sometimes kind of like fried okra, a little bit in a way. Some a little softer. Most times you'd kind of stew them. And then you'd use 'em with other foods a lot of time. I still eat that. Sometime I go to Harrigan's when I want a real good hamburger. And I get mushrooms on them and stuff like that.

MDF: Is there anything else you can remember about the food that your mother used to prepare, that you liked specially?

LJT: On Sunday afternoons, different times, you had some of the different ethnic type of food. And always, nearly, had some kolaches and all that. You know, Czech kolaches. But then a lot of times we'd have this. I always used to like the certain way they fried up chicken and all kind of stuff like that, you know. And always she made homemade chicken noodle soup. It was delicious. And I remember that.

MDF: Now, did you have, where did you get the poppy seed for your kolaches, and things?

LJT: Grew 'em.

MDF: Really?

LJT: Even though we didn't know it was illegal then. We didn't know they made opium out of poppy seeds. We grew 'em there in little flat. We had some little lands there where it is flat land, kinda, where the top dirt is real rich, and boy you'd grow anything on there. Just like river bottoms, you know.

MDF: I wonder if they brought the seed with them, or did they order it from somewhere?

LJT: You order, you got catalogs you could order it. You had Czech catalogs, too. They had different ones. Like this, I can't think of the name. There's *Hospodar*. That's a Czech paper put out. You know, magazine come out once a month, all kind of stories and stuff in it. "Now here, in the old country," you know, kind of combining historical from the old country and what's happening in America.

MDF: Did you get those publications in your home?

LJT: Yes. Mail. They'd mail them to you. You subscribed to it. And there's another one, *Nasinec*, that is called, *Nasinec*, and it was a Czech paper, too. But the main one I remember, *Hospodar*, it was, it's

usually a fourth of an inch thick or so, you know, just like a fair-sized magazine. Come out once a month, both of 'em.

MDF: Now, where were they published?

LJT: Granger, I think. I don't know if one of them was in Granger. The other one was maybe somewhere other. 'Cause Granger used to be 100 percent Czech community, you know. Well, the last thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years or so.

MDF: Were there any other Czech families in your area?

LJT: We were the only ones.

MDF: You were it. Uh-huh. Did you ever get teased about it in school?

LJT: Oh, definitely. But not too bad, not too bad. It wasn't too bad.

MDF: Was anybody in your family musical?

LJT: Johnny and Jerry, they played guitar some, but not a whole lot. But they did play some. They'd play sometimes at the house parties. They may have played the violin a little bit, too. But mostly the guitar. I never did. I tried to learn how to sing, play an instrument. Everything went flat on me. So I started using my mind more I think.

MDF: Now, tell me about where you went to school.

LJT: Went up to the Antelope until I was about twelve and a half, I believe, when we had to move. And see, Dad bought this place close to Little River, a blackland farm, but he couldn't get possession of it until the crop was off. It was too late to get the possession, 'cause they had already started working it for next year. So he rented a place about a mile and a half south of Gatesville, Graves place, about a hundred acres. He worked it, rented it that year. And then we moved to Little River. That was about '42, I guess. I can't remember the dates when we moved out. You know, it was like everybody was moving. We were one of the later ones. But what was the question you asked me?

MDF: Ah.

LJT: I forgot. I'm absent-minded.

MDF: If there were any other Czech families in the general area, and then you said something about your father's moving to Little River.

LJT: No, we were the only one. I remember Mrs. Sharp, the schoolteacher, the first one I had, first grade. I think Mrs. Sharp was my teacher, third or fourth grade. And of course, everything went pretty good. I was a little bit mischievous guy.

MDF: What did you do?

LJT: Not real bad, but I was always kind of a little bit on the mischievous side. And one time she told us to sit in the seat. "Don't get out of your seats. Stay in your seats until I get back." She had to go to the principal's office or something. Well, I had made a little windmill out of paper, where you blow on it or run with it, and it'll turn. And I just wanted to watch the wind blow it. I was blowing on it. I wanted to see, if you get up and run with it, how good it would do. So I took off running around the room. About the second run there, there she walks in. Boy, she shakes me a little bit by the shoulders and puts me under the desk for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes.

MDF: Did you all ever get whippings if you misbehaved in school?

LJT: No, I never got any whippings, sure didn't. That's about the worst thing I ever had there. She grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me. Of course, she was pretty—she wasn't heavy, but she was a pretty good-sized lady. And I liked her okay. Just the mischievousness in me, I guess. I said, "Well, I'll do that before she gets back." Well, I didn't get through before she gets back.

MDF: Now, what did you study in school?

LJT: Just the regular things, you know. You had five, six, seven things you did. Just like they did then. Arithmetic, English, and history, and all of your—I don't remember all, but you had usually about six different subjects then, something like that.

MDF: Was there one grade per classroom, or did you have multiple grades in a classroom?

LJT: We had one grade normally there, I believe. But the teacher would teach different grades, I think. Different times. But I think it was just one grade. There was about thirty of us or something like that. Thirty-five. At least twenty-five I would say. I'd say more than that of us.

MDF: And how many grades did the school go through when you were there?

LJT: That school went through the eleventh grade, I believe. I know my brother went to Copperas Cove to finish up his senior year. Because before we moved, then before my sisters went into Gatesville and Academy High School. But during the school year, it was a pretty good school, I think. Everything went pretty well.

MDF: What kinds of things did you take to eat? What did you eat at lunch?

LJT: Well, we always packed sandwiches, an apple, bread, sandwiches and stuff like that. And put on stuff that didn't spoil. No mayonnaise. They knew enough about that, you know. But we just always brown bagged it. All of us did, I think.

MDF: Did you ever exchange food with other kids?

LJT: Uh, I don't think so, 'cause I liked what I had. And they liked what they had. That's normally what we did. And I know one thing, I started picking cotton when I was six years old. All of us nearly did. But not in the heat. But we started working, we had our little money we could make, this and that, and put aside. And of course when we got through with our crops, there was enough of us that we'd help the neighbors, two, three, four neighbors. And of course, we'd get paid for that. And every little one, we had a savings. They would keep the savings, and we bought a lot of our own clothes with that year-round, what we'd saved. Especially when we got to be ten or twelve, we'd make a fair amount of money, and that would help us. We'd save it for buying our clothes or anything we needed. And I remember this, going to school there, and I got to be three, four years, third grade or so, I didn't like to wear overalls or blue jeans. I didn't like that. That was work clothes to me. I bought some little semi-dress pants like that, you know, and I just didn't like it. And until now, to me blue jeans are made to work out in the fields and overalls also are. That's the way it's in my mind. And I always want some kind of a little nicer clothes to wear to school. What else would you like to know?

MDF: I wondered about church and religion. I assumed that you were Catholic.

LJT: No, well see, all my family was, but they all broke away. Back there something happened. Some priests were talking real dirty, I mean, stuff that wasn't right from the old country. My parents broke away and didn't go. Good people, but they just quit going to church. And it was up to us there. And I went once in a while to the little Baptist church, and that's the way my sisters did. And they ended up being Baptist. Well, I was about to go some, but to me, I just never felt fulfilled.

That brings back to me the experience that many people don't have that I had when I was about five

and a half years old. I'll tell you about it a little bit later. But I went on seeking, seeking. And I'd go to church some. But a lot of times it was up to me. I was the youngest of the six. I'd rather stay home with Daddy and Mother. I just didn't get too much out of it. But after I got to be seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, I went to different churches. It was at Temple here and there. And I was searching. And what happened to me is, when I was six years old, about five and a half years old, there was one of our dogs I liked, Jack, got poisoned, 'cause he was a coon hound. And probably weighed about sixty pounds. Not real big, but a spotted kind of, I forget what they called 'em, but he was kind of whitish. Blue tick or something. Had brown spots on him. And he'd go out at night, and he got poisoned. You know, they had a lot of the sheep there. They put meat out at night, and the dog smelled it. They don't know. They jump over there and he got poisoned. And when he was dying, he bit a Coke bottle in two, the head of it. They was giving something to him, trying to make him throw up. And I saw some of that. And then two, three days later or pretty soon after that, I started crying, and they couldn't stop me. And I cried. My mother and father were working, except my younger sister was with me there, and I cried for about forty-five minutes before I sobbed out, "What's going to happen to me after I die?" And ever since then I had a void within me. I felt a void, and when I was grown I kept looking, and it didn't disappear until after I went—I tried different places, and this church would say, Well, we're the only one, this and that.

Well, when I went into the armed service, I had a friend there. He was Sherill Sullivan. I had a restaurant before I went for one year, and I started it three months before I was twenty-one. I bought it on my brother's name, a drive-in restaurant. There was about six people working there. And soon as I got there they immediately put me in the kitchen. And I was head of one shift. First cook. And I had a dishwasher there, and he kind of give me a hard time, but not in a bad way. Sherill Sullivan. Later on, he said, "Why don't you go with me?" I went to the Sunday services every day, every Sunday. He said, "Why don't you go to church with me sometime?" And I did. Next thing I start taking instruction, and I was baptized on the thirty-eighth parallel. I bet you can't find many people that were baptized on the thirty-eighth parallel. Went through Japan, ten, eleven months of occupation, and I was sent into the Fortieth Division, LA zone. It's a national guard division. They weren't ready for combat. So they put us occupation troops for a year. And then, and then

(customers enter; interruption in taping)

LJT: Absent-minded, you know.

MDF: How long were you in the army of occupation?

LJT: I was two years, well, we was in Korea for, let's see, nearly a year, in Japan. Ten months or so. Then in Korea we was supposed to stay a year, but it was winding down, and they let us out about one six weeks early. And I was discharged. Nearly two years I was in there. Not quite, but nearly two years. They discharged you because it's winding down or that last part of it. And they rotate everybody out usually a year at a time there.

MDF: Well, going back to your farm, tell me what kind of livestock your parents kept?

LJT: Usually we kept two, three cows for our own use. Holstein, milking, you know, milk cows. Well we'd have milk all the time. We didn't want them to dry up. We'd have enough self-sufficient in that. And then the other cows were crossbred. Some of 'em, some were Hereford, pretty good blood. Hereford or white-faced, they called them then. Several of them, maybe, we had some of the Holstein-type or Black Angus-type. Some of 'em were mixed. There were times that Daddy would buy some calves, sometimes, feed out then like then, fifteen, plus just kept cows that would, you know, you had about maybe ten, fifteen, fifteen brood cows just had a calf once a year. You know, that's what we kept 'em for. And usually kept around thirty head I think. Somewhere like that what we kept running there.

MDF: What about sheep?

LJT: No sheep.

MDF: How about goats?

LJT: No goats.

MDF: Strictly cattle.

LJT: Strictly cows. My dad was a farmer basically, not a cow man. He didn't like sheep or goats. 'Cause you have to fence it. You know, you have to have extra fences and all that stuff. The people up there like the McDonalds, too, I think, but I can't think of the, Robinson I think was next or south of us towards Antelope. And he was renting from somebody then. They had the sheep fences there. And in different places. But my dad just didn't like to mess with that.

MDF: What about small animals? I mean, chickens, turkeys?

LJT: Oh, yes. We raised them, kept probably a 100, 150 chickens. Sometimes 200 maybe and sold eggs. Each Saturday, or once a week, take them to town. And then we'd a lot of times, we have quite a few turkeys.

We sold them off around six weeks, or so, before Thanksgiving. So they would have time to slaughter 'em, pack 'em, all that stuff, for Thanksgiving. And Christmas.

MDF: Where did you take them to sell them?

LJT: It's either one of the smaller towns around most of the time. Some of the time we take them to Temple. A lot of the time Gatesville had a market, I think. Killeen had. Maybe Copperas Cove. I don't know. But usually, one of the smaller towns, I think, we sold them. And maybe we didn't sell them all at one time, you know, two or three weeks, so many other times.

MDF: How did you get 'em there?

LJT: Trailers. Put them in trailers. Put some fence on top of it, chicken wire, two-inch mesh or something like that. Then, when we started, way back yonder, I remember, he had a Model T. I remember it vaguely. I mean, I remember it pretty good. And he used to pull to cotton gins and the grain corn bins, and sometimes, boy, he could just barely make it up them hills out of the creeks with the Model T. Well, boy, about when, he's looking for a car and bought one about a year and a half before, a 1934 Ford V-8, and boy, that thing, that V-8 would pull anything compared to that Model T. That Model T didn't have enough power to pull those trailers. We couldn't load them down like we wanted to either quite as much. A bale of cotton, boy, that's about all they had. And everything we did, we carried it ourselves, you know. Always you can improvise. We had some fair-sized trailers, you know. You could put in maybe thirty-five, forty turkeys, maybe more than that. I mean, good lot on a trailer. Maybe have to make two, three trips. But you didn't have to make them all the same day.

MDF: Did the turkeys run out free and loose?

LJT: Free. All over the pastures there. They'd feed on grasshoppers, all kind of stuff, you know. And of course we had, like I say, nearly two hundred that was ours. Most of the time they'd stay on our place, but sometimes they'd go over to the neighbors. We didn't hear about it unless they started pestering the house, and then they'd tell us, something like that. And we would see about it, try to watch them not to go over there. I know one thing, at times, at one time we had a Hereford bull, and he was a good-sized one, and sometimes, boy, I tell you, I think it was Gannaways was north of us, Gannaways, I think it was. They had one. Sometimes their bull come see our bull, and there was the

awfullest fights. They'd jump across the fence. I mean the awfullest noise. It scared me. They weighed maybe twelve hundred, fifteen hundred.

MDF: Did you ever bell your turkeys? Put bells on them?

LJT: I don't remember. I don't think we ever had trouble much with that. Once in a while, we'd lose some to a fox or coyote or something. I don't remember ever having bells on them.

MDF: How did you get 'em to come back in?

LJT: Well we fed 'em every night. They'd go feed, but then we always fed them some grain or something like that because we had that two barns there that was fair-sized, and another shed, and then that old house. We put all kinds of grain in the room. A lot of times that thing would be a room that was about, I'd say maybe thirty-five by forty foot or so, one room, and you'd go up six feet, maybe eight, nine feet up there. It'd be piled full of corn. And then cottonseed, we'd save our cottonseed, too. We had a cottonseed house where you would save almost most all the cottonseed. We'd feed it out. You didn't get much money for it during those times, and we used it for different purposes like that. And we had another place where we stored corn. We sold a lot of corn, too, but we kept a-plenty for our cattle. I mean cattle, cattle and your turkeys and chickens and stuff.

MDF: What did you use the cottonseed for?

LJT: I don't remember what it was. Or, maybe, it come to me maybe, because we had a good-sized. I mean it's made for that. I don't know, it would hold probably cottonseed from fifteen, twenty bales, in that cottonseed house. It's fair-sized. And it's made for that, you know. It's designed for that. And I think what it is, it's come out of the recesses of my mind, it come to me. I think what it is, when you're ginning that away, you don't get much for cottonseed. You wait, two, three, four months, you get a lot better money for it. And I think that's what it was. Later on, we'd sell it and get twice, three time, or a lot more better money for it. 'Course, cottonseed always they use, oil, cottonseed oil, all that. But when you're ginning, it's always the prices are the lowest. That's the way we did a lot of the corn at times. We'd store a good lot of the corn and then sell it later. Not all of it, 'cause you couldn't. But you had facilities to store maybe a fourth of the crop or half, or third, or something like that.

MDF: Was there a local gin?

LJT: There was the gin in Copperas Cove, one in Killeen, one in Gatesville.

MDF: So there wasn't a gin around Antelope when you were growing up?

LJT: No.

MDF: Were there still a lot of people growing cotton then?

LJT: Not a whole lot there. See, different farms, some, but our farm was more suited for cotton and corn, and we had maize, milo, different grains like that. Some oats sometimes. But the way the land was, some of the other lands there, they didn't. Of course ours produced pretty good cotton and corn. Just the way the land was. And we, usually we had quite a lot of cotton. And that was the best cash crop about. And of course, as I said, Dad wouldn't sell the cotton right away. He'd hold it. They would sell it in wintertime. And it went up always. Dad did that. And like Dad was pretty progressive even though he didn't have very much schooling. He was quick. He had a good mind. And I didn't understand it until I got older. But he was a lot smarter than I thought he was when I was sixteen, fifteen. When I was about eighteen, nineteen, I began to realize that. He was a lot smarter than I gave him credit for in many a ways. You know, that's the way you are a lot of the time.

MDF: Did he use mules?

LJT: At first. Until 1933, the early John Deeres come out. The first row crop where the tractor come out was a John Deere Model B, that I know of. Before, they had the Fergusons, but that was the row crop with steel wheels on it. Steel wheels on the front, kind of, that away. But boy, that thing, you could work with it what you could work with four teams or five teams of mules, or three teams. But you couldn't go as fast as you wanted there 'cause there was some rocks in the fields. You might tear it up. You could go pretty good speed, but still, he'd work the whole place, no problem at all.

MDF: Do you remember when he brought that home?

LJT: I don't remember that part of it. I know when I was about seven years old, that first year when he got it. Said, he asked me, "Louis, do you think you could do this?" And a lot of times, there was, pulled corn in the afternoon and then later, when we come in, I mean they didn't have nobody to drive it, they'd throw it in piles. And you didn't have no corn pickers then, you know. And what it would be, we'd come in from school, eat something, and then thataway then we'd go, there was a bunch of us, and we'd go with the tractor, on each side, be picking it up and put it in the trailer. And we had sideboards. You could haul probably forty bushels or so, fifty bushels to a trailer. And I remember one time, he asked me, "Louis, do you think you could do that?" That John Deere had a hand-shift lever. And I said, "Daddy, I think I can." I was seven, eight years old, somewhere like that. And he said, "See, you go." And I went on, and I, well I ran over the row a little bit to the side. And he said, Daddy said, "No, you keep, look just down there. You got to look ahead and see to it." And then, man, I was a driver from then on. Yeah. And I always enjoyed using the machinery of any kind. Motor machine. And I used to, when I was about eleven, he let me do some real careful not to go too fast, but he let me cut corn stalks and stuff like that. Let me start carrying the guns at twelve before he would let us hunt with a .22 or shotgun. But 'course I was pretty careful. I believe the family let me go, made me start at eleven and a half. A little bit early. But usually, they wouldn't, most of the people there, they wouldn't let you go by yourself except you were twelve years. You were a little bit more responsible when you're twelve.

MDF: Did you do quite a bit of hunting?

LJT: Oh, yeah. I enjoyed hunting. And I used to hunt sometimes, had a trap line. And I'd run them before I went to school. Pick possums, skunks, skin 'em and make some money out of 'em. Yes, when I was twelve or eleven. At the place, there's a little creek there, Cottonwood Creek. And we caught a good lot of possums, skunks some, too. I don't know if we ever caught any coons. But then sometimes you got some good money for some of the pelts, you know, during that time. Especially the skunk one. You hated to mess with them, but man, you'd get sometimes $2.50, and that was a lot of money during that time. Heck, that'd be like, what, about forty dollars now, or fifty.

MDF: Yeah, it'd be a lot.

LJT: But I know, that helped to buy a lot of different things we needed.

MDF: Did you go around with Joe Insall and his brother much?

LJT: Oh, we went a lot of places. We'd just go. Sunday afternoons usually we spent it together. And we'd go, especially summer when it got warmer, we'd go swimming in Cottonwood Creek. We got nice big deep holes there. We learned to swim. I learned to swim in a hole there on that Deorsam's place there when I was about five and a half years old. We all learned to swim when we were real young. And there was some holes there that were way over our heads, and man we swam like everything. Dive off a little bluff and all that. And, of course, we did a whole lot of things. We'd go in, and I know before we moved, about a year or so, and Howard was very mechanically inclined. And he got a-holt of a little Model T pickup that didn't run. Bought it for five dollars. Had a little bed on it. And I donated something towards the tires, to put a couple of new tires on it, or some tires that would work. And we

worked on it Sunday afternoon, and finally it fired once. We got it running after a while! And we got it going and everything. Then sometime we'd go to school. After school we'd go up there to the school. And one time, we had four, five, ten, fifteen kids, too many kids on it. And we shouldn't have done it on the schoolyard. Boy, the schoolteacher, principal come out. "Don't you all ever come out here! You'll get hurt." Because we was driving like that. You know, the school had a big yard, several acres there where the baseball fields were, and so forth, and we used to takin' people rides on them like that. And, you know, one thing, there's a hill comin' down about half a mile from the school going north on that Gatesville Road, and one time we was going to see what it'll do. And just down that hill. I guess we got up thirty-five, forty miles an hour, and one of the tires come off. Boy, I tell you, we slid sideways this and that way, and we hit a bank a little but we didn't hurt nothing real bad. Boy that was dumb. Dumb. I didn't know why the tire come off. Well, whether it blew out or what. Then it come off the rim, I think. I know it went flat, I know that. And boy, that thing went sideways this way, and finally it squeezed around and hit the side of the bank there. And we wasn't going no more than four or five miles an hour. It was nearly stopped by then. Ol' Howard Insall, he's trying his best to control it. Then we got another tire. We still ran it. But we learned not to go to the school and this and that. You know, that was a learning experience. Of course, we didn't know better before. You know, kids are like that. You don't know how easy you can get hurt, somebody fall off, or run over. And we just didn't realize it. We were careful, but still with all that many kids lettin' them get on, we should let maybe three, four on. But it was a pickup, you know, like the bed was probably about six foot by about four foot wide. And it had little, kind of little railings on the side. What else would you like to know?

MDF: Tell me about the mischief you and Joe Insall got into with the armadillo.

LJT: Well, see, each picnic we'd get together and buy a pack a cigarettes usually. We were eight, ten years old, or something. Go to the store and we'd smoke cigarettes on the picnic, and that was a big thing, you know. We'd do different things special kind. And nearly every time, well we'd get somebody to get it if they wouldn't sell it to us. And we'd smoke a little on that picnic deal. And ever since we were, the last three years or so, you know, when we got to be about ten or more. And then we'd do, on Halloween, we always tried to do something. You know, something a little bit, not too bad, but not outrageous, but some mischief. Not too bad. And we'd think it up. And I think I thought this up. I said before we'd been running around, I mean, like Sunday afternoon, we'd do a lot of things. We learned that an armadillo, if you catch it by the tail before it gets in the hole, and hold it, no matter how big it is, strong, that you change around, or one of us couldn't do it hardly, but a grown man can. Hold it in about six, seven, ten minutes, and you can pull it out. It'll push its feet against one side of the hole. You cannot pull it up, because that shell hooks into it back the way it is.

And we changed, we was planning what we was going to do this time. That was about, maybe, a year before we moved. We were probably, I was about eleven or twelve. And as I said, I believe, I thought, Hey, let's see if we can catch a armadillo, put it in a box day or two before Halloween. Some way work it in there where they don't see us to turn it into that auditorium when the lights are out. And I know there's a little hallway this way. And there's a kind of double entrance I think, was, in that hallway. 'Cause they opened up a partition, and the whole school there was two, two of the big rooms, auditorium plus another classroom was altogether, and the stage was on, it was probably about, I'd say probably it was about seventy or a hundred or ninety feet long or so, that auditorium, by about thirty foot wide or so. And that's where we'd have all these Halloween plays. And what we did, we figured out let's wait until after the intermission. They always have a intermission. And so we, about ten minutes or so after the intermission, we got it in there. And it didn't move around too much. We got it in, located the door, and we threw the case away or something, I don't know. Then we went in, I think, another door. We went into our seats. Nobody, we got to go to the bathroom or something. The people, 'scuse us. And then we went and set back down. And nothing happened for a

little bit, 'cause the armadillo was probably on the side corner. But then it start, and after a while it start moving, or somebody, but then when it gets to where there these people were, and they couldn't see, it's dark, and they would hit it or something, it would try to run. And then, man, it would make the awfullest noise, then feet against that hardwood floor! And pretty soon, people, kids, especially girls started screaming, I tell you! And pretty soon, after a little bit, they stopped the play and turned the lights on. And finally somebody caught it and took it out. And nobody, I bet nobody ever found out who it was. That's a secret we still have until now.

MDF: Did you play many other pranks?

LJT: That's about the only one I really remember that's worth remembering. And some stuff we might have did a little bit where, well, we may still be liable. I may have to tell you this off record. Reckon they could do something about us?

MDF: I think you're safe.

LJT: You think I'm safe?

MDF: Yes.

LJT: Do you remember G. G. Northcutt? Or have you heard of him?

MDF: Yes, I've heard of him.

LJT: He's the principal there. And he was kid of mean to us kids. At least we thought he was mean. And sometimes we'd do this and that, something, and he was a little bit, a little bit hard. Something happened this and that, and he'd make all of us stay thirty minutes late at lunch or after school. Now, I'm not going to get sued for this if I tell you? I was a little bit involved maybe. There was three or four boys. He started having flats. And you wonder how come. Well, he had a garage out there. Tacks. We got back at him a little bit. I wonder if he's living.

MDF: I can't imagine he would be.

LJT: I doubt it. I know when I used to go to Lampasas, you know, to the Antelope and Lodge community, I saw him there way back yonder, but I haven't went the last two years. I just wonder. A few years ago, he's probably gone. He was a good lot older. But we got back at him. And I think maybe Murrel or somebody. I think one time he was going there. He was real wet. (makes sound of racing engine) His car was running this and that. And it was missing out. I think somebody, I don't know this now who did this hardly, but it happened, is somebody put some dirt in his gas tank. That's what I think. 'Cause he was mean to us, so we was mean to him a little bit. I do think, I mean, he wasn't real, but he did, he was a little bit overactive I think he was, far as. Of course, sometime now, if you get the person whoever did it, this and that, he didn't have to [say,] "Okay, everybody stays behind thirty minutes or hour after school," because of that. And that wasn't just for everybody if he found out who it was and punish the ones that were responsible. But not the whole class. That happened more than once.

MDF: How did you, how did your family celebrate Christmas?

LJT: Traditional way. Christmas tree, you know. Stockings.

MDF: Were there any special things that you all did that you can remember?

LJT: Not that I know of. Sure don't, not anything. Except we had the socks up there sometime, but there wasn't much in 'em. 'Cause, boy during the Depression, it was rough. Dad nearly lost his farm.

MDF: Really.

LJT: Come close, 'cause he borrowed on, you know, he had a little money. He had a little farm there, but that was a fair-sized place, and he went in, I don't know if he paid a third of it down or fourth, or what, but he had a twenty-year note or something and couldn't hardly make the payment at the time when everything got so low. You couldn't sell cotton for nothing hardly and corn and stuff like that. Hegari, maize, oats, everything was so cheap. And cattle, you couldn't sell the meat. Everything was just so low priced.

MDF: So what did you have for Christmas, say, in the '30s? What kinds of gifts would you get?

LJT: Usually something from town. Little trinkets. Some of 'em we'd make, but most time it's, some small things they would get us that we liked. And always, they'd always had a lot of oranges and apples and all that around the tree. Always had a Christmas tree, decorated it up.

MDF: Were there any home remedies that your mother used?

LJT: Oh, quite a few of them. But I don't remember them all. Except maybe one or two.

MDF: What do you remember?

LJT: One of 'em I know, there's a place from the Czech. I think it come from the old country. That's where they made it. Called *no-not*. *No-not*. I don't know how you spell it, but it, and, what it is, and sometimes you have a splinter in your hand or this and that, you put it on there, and it would draw it out. It was amazing how it worked.

MDF: Was it salve?

LJT: It was a kind of a gooey stuff coming in a kind of, wrapped in some kind of a hard paper or something, four, five, six inches long, about half an inch wide, or so, and it was kind of gooey-like. Like halfway hard tire. It was gooey a little, I mean kinda. Now you'd put it on when needed, put a bandage on it or something, and I don't know how it worked, but it would bring, most time it would bring the splinter and stuff out. And I remember that. We used that a fair amount and lot of times. 'Cause instead of digging in there with, you know, that messes things up, but it's down there. You know, it's down there. You put that on in the morning, out there, you pull it off, it's on the top. And of course, they had several different kinds of remedies, I know. I don't remember them all. Sometime I know kerosene was used for something as a remedy. I don't know exactly what for.

MDF: Do you ever remember being sick and having a doctor's visit?

LJT: We didn't use doctors then. The only one I remember my sister, she didn't mind Daddy, and boy, she got punished. As we go fishing, usually, on Fourth of July on one of the creeks there. And early in the morning on the Fourth of July, feed everything, catch a fish, this and that. We cooked it with dinner. Have everything else, but, and then that's when we have a noon meal. And we'd have a really early breakfast at home, and you feed the animals. Each one had a different job to do, and my sister had, 'course we cut the heads of the maize when they're ripe, and we had a little bin or something about fifteen foot by ten foot wide. It's the maize bin, and it'd always be full of maize. And that's what you fed certain chickens. And she, Dad told her, never put your hand in there unless you look first and can see. And that morning she was in a hurry. She couldn't see. She's getting it out there, and a copperhead got her, right on the wrist. And, so 'cause she disobeyed Daddy. Like I say, my dad was smarter than you would think, a lot of things like that. She should have had a flashlight and went in there. But she was in a hurry. She said, "Oh, this is fine." And she risked getting bit. Went to the doctor, wrapped it and went on and took her to the doctor. In Copperas Cove there was a doctor, and he did this and that, the arm swelled up, and of course, what you do there, we always did, soon as you get bit you reach and suck it out, all you can, hard as you can, and of course did she all that. But

copperhead is a pretty poisonous snake, and her arm swole up for about two days, and then it went down. And of course, I don't think she was too near death, but she was in misery a lot, 'cause it hurt. And the doctor did this and that. Said, "You'll just have to keep her cool. Don't let her sweat, get fever." Take aspirins and this and that and whatever. Just keep her quiet, still. And that's the only time I remember going to the doctor.

Now, out of all the kids, they were born at home by the, what do they call that?

MDF: Midwife?

LJT: Midwife, Yeah. So forth. Now, about going doctor, I said I don't remember this, but I was born, I was the only one that had a doctor when I was born.

MDF: Really!

LJT: Yeah, doctor. But I don't remember that.

MDF: Now, where did your mother go to have you?

LJT: I think he come out to the house I think.

MDF: Really.

LJT: Or even in Copperas Cove. Yeah, I think they took her to Copperas Cove. I don't remember that. Whether it was at home or—you know, doctors did do home visits a good lot then. More so. Where they come to the house. Probably that's what happened. 'Cause you couldn't hardly travel when you were pregnant that much. Would you? I mean, in a Model T, 1928? December sixteenth, I was hatched.

MDF: What do you remember about the taking in the early '40s?

LJT: About the what?

MDF: The government's taking your parents' farm in the early '40s. Do you remember anything about that?

LJT: Yes, I remember a fair amount because I kinda understood it. Because I was with Dad a lot, and he took the *Temple Daily Telegram*. He'd get it a day late by mail, and I learned to read it, comics, when I was six, seven years old some. Then, about eight, nine years old already, I started kinda reading the paper some. You know, a little more. And then they got me interested in different things, and then I kinda, Daddy said, "Hey son, read this," or this sometimes. "You ought to read this article." You know, somethin' that may have interested me. And I kinda knew what's going on some because reading that paper helped me to understand the war and all that. And of course, when that December seventh happened, all that we knew we was going to go to war, this and that. And pretty soon, the camp was coming in there. I don't remember the years. I think they really started it in about, about the World War started, or not. That's when they started Fort Hood, or whether they started it before the war did, in '40. I don't remember what.

MDF: They started it, actually, in '42. That's when they started acquiring it.

LJT: I was thinking it was when the war started or right after. Yeah, that's what I was thinking. I couldn't quite remember it. So then they started it. And then we had three months, or two months to move out. So Dad got a pretty good price for his place. So he bought that farm there at Little River and we went to Gatesville. And I remember, you know, moving this and that, but I don't remember no real big details about it. And we got to keep part of the houses, except the main house. We'd tear them down and take the lumber, you know, the different barns. We got to keep a good lot of the lumber there. But the main house you could not touch. Yeah, I remember it pretty well.

MDF: So what did you do with the lumber that you took?

LJT: Stored it. Then later on, when, 'course then we stored it, a good lot of it in Gatesville. Some of it went to the farm close to Little River. And then later on we built chicken houses, the barn we built out of it, and stuff like that, you know. Because it was real good lumber. It wasn't this soft stuff. It was a hard, good solid pine.

MDF: So, your family moved from Fort Hood over to Little River?

LJT: No, to Gatesville for one year, see, because we couldn't get possession of the farm.

MDF: And then you went to Little River.

LJT: And then from there we moved to Little River.

MDF: And did your parents stay there?

LJT: Where is that?

MDF: At Little River.

LJT: Yes, that's where they lived and that's where they died at. Place there. Dad died in 1976, and my mother died, I was trying to wake her up December twenty-fifth, Christmas Day, about eight o'clock, and I couldn't wake her. Boy, that was a shock.

MDF: In what year?

LJT: Nineteen eighty. No, '79, 1979. Seventy-nine.

MDF: How do you think they took the move?

LJT: I don't think it bothered them too much. It had to be. I never heard too much complaints about it. Now, some of the other people there didn't get too good a price for their land. But Dad got a pretty just price, I think thirty-five dollars an acre. As far as that price, it was a pretty good price. But some of them, they didn't get a good price. Now, if Dad got fifteen dollars an acre like some of them, well he wouldn't have liked it, I imagine. But he got a just price. But, you know, far as the war was, he understood that time, you know. It had to be, it had to be.

MDF: What did you like about growing up out there?

LJT: I've always like the outdoors and all that riding. You got bicycles. Rode around a lot. Different picnics. Howard, Joe, and me, we'd ride a lot of times different places like that. Just go visit. Also, we went around alone. For seven to ten months, we used the Model T. And I kind of liked it growing up. I didn't know any others. And I've always like the outdoors now. I've always had. You can't take the country out of the boy. That's a fact. I know, do you ever see Murrel McDonald, I mean Murrel—

MDF: Thompson?

LJT: Thompson?

MDF: I saw him once.

LJT: I tell you, one time, that was before we were moving. And we'd go visit at neighbors. And we were there, my oldest brother Jerry and stuff, and they lived about a mile, mile and a half towards Killeen from us, that was southeast. And we went to visit there at night, and Murrel and I went out there and made a little fire to roast some weenies, I believe, out in the woods about, oh, I'd say it's about 150 yards, say 100 yards I'd say from the house, and we had the .22 with us. And we leaned

it against the tree there. And we were talking this and that. And hated the moving. We didn't like moving and leaving all our friends and everything. And we were talking, and they say, What would we do if a bear would come up, or something that away. I said, "Well, I'd grab that gun and shoot him." Murrel said, "No, I'd probably go up the tree." And a little while after we were talking, there was some rustling in the woods, and louder it come up, louder, and it come up, and round the bush you could see like this, it looked like a gorilla! You know what we did?

We didn't know, we didn't have no idea what it was, but it looked like a gorilla, a big wide gorilla. And boy, come crashing through the woods, and we, I don't know, how we got around those trees, but when we got in the opening space, about fifty yards or so, it was kind of rolling up and down. You walk or run, normally you wouldn't feel it. But man, we was running so fast, you could feel it up and down. One time I fell, and then I caught up with Murrel, even though he could always run faster than me. I caught up with him. Man, we, I bet you we were going thirty miles an hour or so. We were running very fast. That scared the whey out of me. We jumped over the fence there. Said, "There something was after us out there!" What he had done, he had got the big bear skin put over him, and he looked like a gorilla coming like that. And boy, I never got so scared in my life. That was something. And we were just talking a little before that. What we would do if something, some bear or something would come after us. And, oh, "I'd get that .22 and shoot him," one of us said. And see what we did. That schemin' brother, Jerry, bless his soul. I don't know what else. Cut her off, if you want to.

I remember one time after probably the first summer after I bought the bicycle, I was about twelve, I would say then. And from Copperas Cove to Gatesville, it's twenty-five miles on the road. We were living at Gatesville then, just before, after we moved out from the Fort Hood. And that's sometime I'm going on my bicycle to see Howard and Joe [Insall]. Dad said, "You think you can make it?" "Yes." I was strong. And I forgot how many hours it took me there. It was okay going to there. And I stayed a week with them, in Copperas Cove. And then coming back that day, because I didn't hear nothing about a hurricane coming in or anything, because, I don't know, we didn't pay attention, we were having fun, so I started coming back, and when I got about halfway there, the wind started blowing towards me, kind of, kind of at a right angle, and that's the hardest about ten miles I ever lived in my life, because it picked up, and I walked up the mountains there. Of course, I could have, and the wind was blowing me thirty miles, forty miles an hour, and I was going against it. It was, you know, like I was going this way, and it's coming at an angle a little bit there. And that was the twist of that hurricane that come in. Probably blowing forty miles an hour at times. And man! Was I tired when I got there. I was, I got some water. There was a pump there. Somewhat dehydrate 'cause I was working so hard and my body, and I forgot, it took me twice as long or more to get back. And I was three times as tired after I got back, 'cause about the last ten miles of it, it was, man I was going against that solid wind.

MDF: Did you have this bicycle when you were living at your farm?

LJT: Yes. I bought it about a year and a half before we moved from the farm. And how I got it, I went around selling Cloverine Salve to all them neighbors around there. And I sold everybody as far as I could. And that bike was twenty-eight dollars and something. It was the deluxe model with the brake. You step on the brake, the back light would come on, and it had a little horn. A headlight, all that. The best one they put out at Sears Roebuck. And I lacked about ten dollars having enough. And I said, "Man, I's gettin' worried." So Jerry and Johnnie, my bothers, said, Okay, we'll give you five dollars apiece if you'll let us ride it sometime. I said, "You bet you can ride it sometime. But as long as you don't hurt it." And so they gave me five dollars apiece, and I ordered it from the Sears Roebuck catalog. Had to go to Copperas Cove to get it because the mailman didn't deliver things that big. I remember that, boy, was I proud. It was a pretty thing. Whitewall tires on it. It was

kind of blue, aqua blue-type tinge. A little white trim on it. Had a tank on, one of those tanks between the bars. It was pretty.

MDF: And where would you ride it?

LJT: School, all the way around. Just Sunday afternoons. Howard had the one. He had a bike a little before I did. And for a while, Joe didn't have one. Then Joe got one. Of course, he's the last one that had one I think. And a lot of the time, we'd just go, like school picnics, you know. They'd be four or five miles off, some at Maple or somewhere other. We'd get together and go. Of course, we visited. They'd come to our picnic. That way we can get on 'em and ride to the picnic. Well, those country roads are just right for bicycles. But you take off fast, you see dust behind you, or go down the hill. And of course they all have that brakes, you know, where you step back. You have the brakes. I think, I don't know if we had a front-hand brake on them. I don't remember that. I don't think we had hand brakes on the front yet. I don't think those were developed. But we rode them a lot of places. Sunday afternoons, after school.

MDF: How far would you go when you were ranging around, you boys were out and around?

LJT: Well, on a bike, we could go three, four miles like this, you know, but when we were walking around, we could go to the farm. All them people didn't mind you going, you know, the creek, Cottonwood Creek. And probably within a mile, mile and a half of the farm. Not real far, you know. We'd go hunting through the little bottom, that Cottonwood Creek especially. We'd go, and there was a couple of other little creeks where there's a lot of woods and stuff. And some prairies where there was different types of animals. And I know this, I remember this, too. Dad always wanted us to be very careful, and the dogs, see we always had dogs, one or two dogs. And they would a lot of times chase a rabbit into a rock pile. They had all them rock fences where they'd just stacked the rocks to get 'em out of the fields. And the rabbit would run in amongst them rocks. He said, always warned us, to be real careful because there are rattlesnakes in there. And we'd dig 'em out. We were careful, you know. We'd dig out them cottontails out of the rock fences. We had a lot of fun.

MDF: I think you said something, and I can't remember if we got it on the tape, but it was about how you boys went out hunting one day just to see how many rabbits you could get.

LJT: Yes, that was on a Saturday. And we started about eight o'clock in the morning. It's kind of foggy, maybe a little drizzle once in a while. That's best time to hunt early. The dogs could really run the rabbit. They'd run 'em in the rock fences, and we'd shoot 'em running at times. And we had, I think one of us had a shotgun, and the others had a .22. And we shot some birds, too. I forgot what kind. Doves, I think it was. And, but the rabbits, I know, and squirrels, we got thirteen of 'em. (comments aside about a prospective customer) But we would, that day, we probably didn't come in until four o'clock or five. We was gone about seven, eight hours. We'd just see how many we could catch. See how much, and that broke the record by a long ways. We'd come in sometimes with four or five like that, four hours or so. But that was thirteen of 'em. My, that's an unlucky number, but we didn't believe in an unlucky number, and I still don't.

MDF: Now, how did you fix them? How did you cook 'em?

LJT: Some of them fried, 'specially the younger ones. Sometimes you catch them, they were real good like fried chicken. And different basting you used, different ways. And some of them, the bigger ones that were older, you would fry 'em all and then you'd simmer them, simmer them with some spices, all kinds, you know. And they would taste good, man, I tell you. Squirrel 'specially. Rabbits, too, them younger rabbits were delicious. Oh, gosh, I'm getting hungry again.

Frankie Juanita Wright Trantham

Date of birth: 18 December 1923
Community affiliated with: Antelope
Interviewed by William S. Pugsley III

WSP: This is Bill Pugsley. I'm at the home of Mrs. Juanita Trantham in Gatesville, Texas. I am interviewing her on May 27, the year 2001. It is Memorial Day weekend, this is Sunday. I'm in her dining room. This is Bill Pugsley. [This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.]

We are going to be discussing Mrs. Trantham's life on Fort Hood lands before 1942 and her parents' farm and some of the things she did during that time period.

Now, if you would, please, just give me some idea of your parents' names, and your brothers' and sisters' names, in order of who is the oldest.

JWT: Well, my dad's name, my daddy's name was George Washington Wright.

WSP: Wright? All right.

JWT: Uh-huh, that's okay.

WSP: Your mother?

JWT: My mother's name was Lizzie Elizabeth Graham.

WSP: Okay.

JWT: My oldest brother was Dewey Wright, Dewey George, I believe. He lived only fifty-four years. He was born in 1900, and he died in 1954.

WSP: All right.

JWT: And the second—well, now, after him there was a girl born, but she only lived three days. I don't even know what her name was.

WSP: All right.

JWT: Then there was—the next was a girl, Ocie Annie Wright.

WSP: How do you spell Ocie?

JWT: O-c-i-e.

WSP: All right.

JWT: And, let's see, after her was a boy named Archie Spivy.

WSP: Spivy?

JWT: Uh-huh, Archie Spivy Wright. (laughs) That's what my mother always called him. No one else called him that. And, oh, let's see, the next was a girl, Gertie Lee Wright—Gertie Lee Wright. And then the next was a boy, C. B. Wright.

WSP: Do you know what C. B. stood for?

JWT: No, I don't. (laughs) That's all we ever knew him by—all we ever knew was just C. B.

WSP: All right.

JWT: And my—the next was a girl, Alice Malissie—or Malissa, Alice Malissa Wright. And then there was me, Frankie Juanita.

WSP: Are you the youngest?

JWT: Uh-huh, baby of the family.

WSP: How old were you when your family left the farm in 1942?

JWT: Seventeen.

WSP: Approximately, where on Fort Hood lands was your parents' place?

JWT: (pause) Well, it was—it was back east of the Old Georgetown Road and was about three miles from Antelope School and church. (pause) I guess you'd call it northeast. (laughs) I don't really know, but that's about all, about the best I can do about it.

WSP: About how far away was it from Copperas Cove?

JWT: It was eight miles to Copperas Cove, from our house. (pause) And fourteen miles, as the crow flies almost, to Killeen.

WSP: When you went shopping, which town did you do the most shopping in?

JWT: Well, we used to shop—when I was just a little girl, we'd go to Killeen. It—grocery, uh—had grocery stores and they had—well, we never did, I don't think ever shopped at the grocery stores over there—went to the dry goods stores, and the doctors. But later we started going to Gatesville, coming to Gatesville.

WSP: Why was that?

JWT: Well—I guess we just didn't—Killeen just wasn't—and Copperas Cove just wasn't big enough to suit us or something, for what things we wanted and needed—is all I know. I don't really know.

WSP: Which trip was longer?

JWT: Ah, to Gatesville. It was twenty miles to Gatesville.

WSP: Did you go with your parents?

JWT: Yes. My mother only went to town twice a year—one time in the fall, and one time in the spring. The rest of the time just the rest of us went, and she stayed home.

WSP: Why did she pick those particular occasions to go?

JWT: Well, it was because—when school was out and just before school started—she'd have to get clothes

for us to wear to school, or—a lot—most of the time she bought material and made dresses for me. I don't know about the others. But I was too far behind to remember much about them. (laughs)

And I know—I remember when the Antelope School—uh—year would close each year, we always had a great big picnic, Antelope picnic they called it, on a Friday after the school would be out on Thursday. (pause) And she'd go—we'd go to town, we'd come to Gatesville before that time, and she'd get material, and she'd make me some new dresses. I never had a, a store-bought dress then.

And, um—(pause) well, I don't know—we just had a big day at that picnic! Everybody loved it, and it was the best picnic there was anywhere in the whole country! (laughs) Everybody thought that, 'cause everybody came from everywhere, miles around.

And my daddy cooked the barbecue. He'd have to get up—my brother who was still at home—he'd get up at four o'clock in the morning and take him up to the schoolhouse, and—so he could get the meat started to cooking. And he cooked the barbecue. And it was good barbecue!

WSP: How would he cook it?

JWT: Well, he had a, a vat that he cooked some of it in, and I think some, maybe, he might have cooked in big wash pots or something. I'm not sure. I wasn't very interested in that at that time. (laughs) But I just know it was good.

And of course, they had all kinds of games all through the day, and on Friday night they'd have, oh, what they called a senior play, the seniors of, of the school or out—some of the outsiders, maybe, would go and be in the play. And, uh—but they had all kinds of games during the day. And they had soda water stands, had ice-cream stands, and I guess that was about all of that, like that. But we just did what we wanted to. We just roamed around all over the school grounds and just did what we wanted to. Sometimes they'd have, oh, local boys or somebody'd come in and play, get up on the stage that afternoon and play guitar, or whatever, and sing. And, uh—I don't know—(laughs) I don't know what else to say about it.

WSP: Well, that's good. Let's go to your house you were raised in. Can you walk us through it, describing the floor plan and what was in each of the rooms?

JWT: (laughs) Well—(pause) now, before I was born, my dad had built a brand new house down on the—on Cowhouse Creek, where all the rest of them was born. And, uh, they had a nice home down there, I think, and don't ask me why they moved, I don't know, I honestly don't know. I don't believe I ever asked them or know what they said about it. But, uh, then before I was born, after we moved up on the—away from the creek kindly, and closer a little bit to Antelope—uh—the house—it was an old house.

It was real, real old, but—and it only had one, two, three—three or four rooms, I don't know. We messed—we cut it up and made different rooms out of some of it, and—and my dad later on, he built two new rooms that was connected to it for bedrooms. And, uh, we had what we called—we didn't call it living room then because we always had beds in every room. We had the—we called it the fireplace room—that's what we had for heat in the wintertime to heat by, was the fireplace. And, uh, my mama and dad slept in that room, and then they usually had a small bed somewhere over on the other side of the room where I slept there, when I was still young, little.

And, uh, see, we had that room—I'm getting mixed up now because I'm thinking about the last of it. The first of it, we had a bedroom that joined the fireplace room. I guess it was two beds in there. And then we had a long room—what you want me to do?

WSP: Draw it for me, please.

JWT: Oh, I can't draw. (laughs)

WSP: Well, just sketch a little box.

JWT: Ah, let's see—oh, I don't know. I wouldn't—(laughs) I don't even know how to start! I know, like—

WSP: Draw the fireplace room, first, then draw the other rooms as you remember going from one room to the other.

JWT: Like here was the fireplace room, and here was a bedroom—that didn't come out right—but anyway, later we turned that into a kitchen. But then on the back side here we had a, a long room, and that's where the kitchen was. Up in this end of it we had the table, down here was the stove, and what else I don't remember. But then later on, after I grew up some, they cut this kitchen about in half, or not quite half, and made a little bedroom out of this up here and made a kitchen out of this down here.

WSP: They made a bedroom out of the area where the table was.

JWT: A little one at the end of it, just a small one, and then the rest of it was—no, and then we came into this, this bedroom here—they did—that was onto the fireplace room—and we made a kitchen out of that. Then this out here was opened up and made a little, just a little porch.

WSP: What had once been the kitchen was turned into a porch area?

JWT: Um-hm, yes. Yes, uh-huh.

WSP: What about the other two bedrooms you mentioned?

JWT: Well, now, he built them onto this end of it. I don't know, it was just two big bedrooms, pretty good-sized bedrooms. And we had a walkway that went from here, going from one part of the house to the other one.

WSP: Was this area open?

JWT: Uh-huh, open, um-hm, yes, it was open between the houses. And there was a long—on these beds—well, I've got it too close, I guess—but we had a long porch that he built on.

WSP: To the additional bedrooms?

JWT: To the bedrooms, uh-huh, on the south side. I've got it fixed like the north side but it was on the south side.

WSP: Your house was relatively small starting out—

JWT: Well, yes, uh-huh.

WSP: Because I don't see any more bedrooms. I see the fireplace room that had your parents' bed—

JWT: Coming on down here with this a little bit—that's not two bedrooms, now, that's just one.

WSP: Oh, okay.

JWT: Yeah, and this is the fireplace room—I can't print to save my soul. The fireplace room, and actually that was what you'd call, now, the living room, but we didn't have a living room then. We just had a big bedroom and, uh, with a fireplace in there, and that's where we lived.

WSP: Where did your brothers and sisters sleep?

JWT: Well, in the beginning, my brother that was left at home, he slept in this back bedroom over here, on

the new side part. And me and, uh—well, when I wasn't sleeping in here, I'd sleep over here with the other girls—two of them at home, Alice and Gertie Lee. And, uh, we'd sleep in the same bed, all of us together. (laughs) Yeah, we did. It was a pretty good-sized room, had a piano in there, and, uh, one bed, one big bed and a dresser, and I can't remember what else. (pause)

WSP: That's pretty good. We can expand on it a little later.

JWT: Yes, well, it was—it was great as far as I was concerned. (laughs)

WSP: What made it great?

JWT: Well, I just loved the old place, I guess, because I was born there and raised up there and—and that's all I knew.

And my mother, she did not, at that time, she did not want any grass in her yard. And we had to keep it hoed out. (laughs) She just wanted flowers, and she didn't want any grass in the yard. 'Course, it wasn't like it is nowadays. And we also had a lot of weeds in the back part of the yard, too.

WSP: With this diagram, show me where the road and the driveway was in relation to the front of the house.

JWT: Oh, well, let's see. This was the front door right here, in the front room, in the fireplace room. And we didn't have any special driveway or anything like that. But we had a yard fence around the house. Some of it was, some of it was rock, and some of it was, in the front part, it was just wire fence of some sort.

And, uh, we just came in—we'd go out thisaway—the road would come on and go on out across our place and on up. Well, we could get out two different places. We could go across—people, Tomastik was their name—they was, oh, what was they, uh—Czechs.

WSP: Oh really?

JWT: Um-hm, yes. But they lived there and they had—Mrs. and Mrs. Tomastik—and they had three boys and three girls.

WSP: How do you spell their last name?

JWT: T-o-m-a-s-t-i-c-k [sic].

WSP: Were they there as early as you can recall?

JWT: Yes. As far as I know, they was there as long as I was. (laughs) I don't really know. But I went to school with the girls, well, I went to school with all of them, but the two, the two older girls, and I were pretty close to the same age. And the oldest boy, Johnny, he was older than me a little bit, and then there was Jerry and Louis—and Louis. And then the girls was Lilly (??) and Agnes, and Annie—and Annie was the youngest one in the family.

WSP: Is Annie still around?

JWT: No, she lives in Arkansas now, as far as I know, she does. But all the rest of them, except Jerry and Louis, is dead.

WSP: From the front of your house, you could cut across their property?

JWT: Yeah, we could—we'd go across and go up here—a gate leaving our place—and, uh, go on, go through into where their field was, and then there was a road all the way around their field here. And it would turn down thisaway, along the fence line, and go on down here to about where their house

was. And then we could go another way, we could go across thisaway—(pause) well, that was the west way out—I don't know—we could go down thisaway and go—and there was another family then, after we left our place here.

Right along about here somewhere my daddy had a big watermelon patch, and he always had boys coming in every summer and stealing watermelons. (laughs) He'd shoot out over their heads, he didn't shoot to hit them, but he'd just shoot to scare them. And they'd jump that fence and drop their watermelons and—(laughs) burst them open and everything. (laughs)

And anyway, we would, um, go out that way sometimes. And like I said—this other family—we'd go on into their place, and there was a gate along here somewhere, right along in here. And we'd go out and go up, up a hill and out across to the Georgetown Road and out, out to the road there.

That was two ways that we could go out.

WSP: All right. Hold on one second.

(labels drawing; interruption in taping)

WSP: From your description, your family farm lay a bit east of the Old Georgetown Road, and apparently you would cut through the Czech family's property or another property, to get to Georgetown Road?

JWT: Yeah, well, we had to go across their property, part of it, some of it.

WSP: Once you got to the Old Georgetown Road, you could go north to Gatesville or south to Copperas Cove.

JWT: Um-hm.

WSP: This shortcut would, after a ways, it kind of split to the north, making it easier to head north, or split to the south making it easier going south on the Old Georgetown Road. Have I got the picture, right?

JWT: I know that this is supposed to be south, coming thisaway—

WSP: Right.

JWT: (pause) Like I told you, I don't know anything about maps, and I can't, I just can't read stuff when it's wrote out, hardly, that way.

WSP: That's all right. But apparently, your home place lay far enough beyond the road, to the west, that you would often cross somebody else's field or walk around their field to get to—

JWT: Yes. Yes, well, we had to—when we'd go down thisaway, we'd go across the Fry place, where they lived—it wasn't far from our house, but it was about a mile, I guess. And, uh, then we'd leave that place, and we'd go across another pasture—there was no house on that pasture—to get to the Georgetown Road.

WSP: Oh, okay, there's two places. On one route you would cut across through two—

JWT: Two places, uh-huh, two properties.

WSP: And the other way, you would cross—

JWT: Well, no—yes, we'd cross them, and we could go from there—well, now there was two ways when you get to their house. We could either go, uh, by, by their house and go on around—and, it was still their—it was still their land—and go on around, which would make just one land we'd be crossing. But then we could, we could turn just before we got to their house, and go thisaway, and go into another place. And I don't know what it was called—people from Copperas Cove lived there most of

the time. But most of the time we went the other way.

WSP: Went around their property the simple way. And basically when you went north, you're going through the Czech's property?

JWT: Well, after we'd leave their place—their place would, would, went right to the, all the way to the Georgetown Road.

WSP: I see.

JWT: We'd just go down there. And, uh, there was a branch of something between their gate, where you went out, and got on the Georgetown Road—and, uh—

WSP: I'm just transferring your drawing to this larger map. Okay, your house is here, and the gate is here, and you went around their property, like this.

JWT: Well, that's about the best I can tell you. I don't know. I just don't know a thing about drawing, or maps or anything.

WSP: Well, I think you've done a good job. About how long would it take you on foot to make that trip?

JWT: You mean to Gatesville? (laughs)

WSP: No, no! From your house to the Old Georgetown Road?

JWT: Oh, well—oh, shoot, it didn't take to long, just a walking—I used to ride a horse most all the time. I was a real horseman in those days. (laughs) Oh—(pause) I don't know—I know my sister, when we'd go thisaway, and get to the Old Georgetown Road, then there was a house right there where you'd go out, across the road, and then you could take a—uh, there was another road that went into their place—and then go up on top of a hill up there, and that's where my oldest sister lived. And I'd go to her house a lot of times, late on Saturday afternoon. When I'd call her just, oh, gosh, it wouldn't be thirty minutes until dark, not even that long, and I'd tell her I was coming. And I'd just strike out and go afoot and go over there, spend the night, or the weekend or whatever, you know? (laughs) I was more like their child than I was my mother's and daddy's anyway. (laughs)

WSP: Were your parents fairly old at that point?

JWT: Yes, uh-huh, they was older than me. (points to the wall) That's a picture of them right there.

WSP: When was that taken?

JWT: Oh, dear, I don't know. I couldn't tell you.

WSP: There's a nice framed picture on her bookcase in her dining room area, showing her father on the left and her mother wearing a dark hat on the right, and smiling. She looks very pleasant. They both do.

JWT: They was good people. But he was thirteen years older than my mother. He had had two wives before her, and both of them had died.

WSP: Do you know how?

JWT: No, I don't, I really don't. And then he married her, and they—and she died then first, before he did. She was—I don't know—she died in 1954, when my oldest brother died. He died in January, and then she died in November in that same year. And then—I was in Germany at that time, and I didn't get to come back. And, uh, I don't know how long it was—and my dad died in 1962—that's when it was, 1954 and 1962, that's how much longer he lived than she did.

WSP: About eight more years.

JWT: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

WSP: Were you in Germany in 1962, or were you in Germany in 1954?

JWT: In 1954.

WSP: Was your husband posted in Germany at the time?

JWT: Yes, uh-huh, yes.

WSP: Getting back to your parents. Did you father buy the house that you lived in?

JWT: Yes, he bought the whole place, uh-huh. Yes.

WSP: As you said, this was his move upland, and away from Cowhouse Creek.

JWT: Uh-huh, um-hm.

WSP: How many acres are we talking about?

JWT: I think it was five hundred and, oh, five hundred and something, I can't remember how much more. That—that was in that Antelope book that we had. We had—well, I've still got the book, but I don't have it here because I let my son—he visited me two weeks ago—that lives in Houston, and he lost his wife the last of February. And he wanted the book, and they had ordered it, and she remembered writing the check for it and everything, but they never did get it. So, I let him take my book for a while.

WSP: Your Antelope book? I think it's got a green cover on it.

JWT: No, it's—well, I don't know about the cover, we didn't get one with a cover, it's just a dark blue or black, dark blue I believe. About so long and about so wide, I guess. Good book. I wouldn't take for it, but still, I didn't ever look at or read it too much after I went through it the first time. But, but my son wanted to take it, so I let him take it.

WSP: It has information about your father's property?

JWT: Uh-huh. Well, yeah, it shows kind of like this would, I guess, kind of like, you know, where places were and how big they were, and—

WSP: From your recollection, would you consider your father's place to be average, large or small—

JWT: Well, it was—

WSP: Relative to the other farms in the area?

JWT: Well, now we lived next—farmed next to some, to some, uh, Mr. Ben Thompson and his wife, and I don't—I think our—I think we had about as much land as anybody did around there. I don't remember for sure whether it was bigger or what, but it was about average, I guess, anyway. It wasn't the smallest.

WSP: What did your father raise?

JWT: Well—(pause) crops! (laughs) I'll tell you what! We had corn and cotton and maize, and at the last we had broomcorn. And my mother always had a big garden. And we just had fruit trees around. They wasn't in no orchard, actually, was just up in one end of the garden some. And, uh, then he raised cows, and sheep, and goats, and he had quite a few horses—I don't remember just how many. He had one mule, and then he always put a good horse with the mule to work—that's what he plowed with.

WSP: Can you give me your best educated guess on—say, given five hundred acres, for example, what percentage was devoted to ranching and how much was devoted to farming?

JWT: (laughs) Oh, uh—

I know we had, we had two different fields, if at first, and way long after while they decided, my dad decided to put in another field, up on kind of on a hill like, and, uh—but I don't think they ever done too good with that. But the other two fields was real nice fields and sure did grow crops real well. But I don't know how much there was of them, I don't know—there was a lot more pastureland than there was, uh, cropland, uh-huh.

We had a deep, big old deep canyon, I remember in one pasture. We called that the goat pasture, I believe, and it had a real deep canyon in it. And they told, it used to be—oh, I don't know after, some, something or somebody, they always claimed—I never did see anything about it, and I don't think it was—but they always claimed that there was some outlaws or somebody that lived down in that canyon. (laughs) But I don't think they did.

WSP: In the olden days?

JWT: Um-hm, yes.

WSP: Story was there was a hideout on your property.

JWT: Yeah, but I don't think it really was. But I never did go around it myself.

WSP: The goats would feed well along the sides of the hills? But did that require any fencing to keep the goats out of the other fields?

JWT: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, we always had good fences. And we had that—that pasture was fenced off from the pasture that the house set in. You know, of course, it wasn't any, it wasn't any, uh, pasture right up around the house or anything. Of course we had a lot of barns and, and things like that, and tanks, water tanks. We had one *big* old water tank—it seemed awfully big to me because I was young—but I know it wasn't as big as it seemed to me. And we had a windmill and a pump house.

WSP: If you don't mind, I'd like for you to add them to your drawing, if that's possible. I'm going to make another map here. (pause) Let's assume that this is the main house and the walkway. Is that about right?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: If you would, please, mark the relative position of some of these other buildings you've been describing? The barns, the water tank, your mother's garden out front, that you mentioned earlier—

JWT: No, the garden was—from this house the garden was—we kind of went through the woods for just a little space, and then out to the garden. And then it was in a—it was thisaway, and it wasn't very far, but it was not in sight of the house. Then right up—

WSP: It looks like you went north out of the house?

JWT: Uh—ah—actually, yes, that's right. (laughs) Uh-huh. Yes, the garden was, and then out from the house—well, this was kind of northwest from the house, where the barns—and we had a windmill here and had a big old round tank along here, a water tank. And a lot of trees around out in here, and, uh—then you went on a little farther and there was lots—now I can't draw those lots, I know, I remember them in my mind, but I can't draw them.

WSP: Lots being what?

JWT: Well, cow lot, horse lot, and a lot where we put sheep or goats, and when they'd shear them. Well—

WSP: That would be north of your water, uh—

JWT: Yeah, we had a water well where there was a pump, and then he had the windmill. But, uh, when the windmill was right there, and, uh, the pump house, right at that big tank, pretty close to it. And 'course there was a little pump house there, too. Ah! I don't know, but the cow lot, where we had our cows and milked them and everything, was first—and then there was a big old barn over here, a big barn, and it had a big hallway through it. And, uh, we always put hay up here in the loft part.

And then right out here, close to the barn, was the goat and the sheep lot. And they'd come to shear the goats and shear the sheep, the shearers would. And we'd always fix dinner for them. And 'course we had no screen doors, we had no fans, we had no nothing like that. And, uh—(laughs) it was always in hot weather when they'd shear those sheep. And I'd sneak away from the house and go up where they were shearing any time I could because I loved to watch them shear. (laughs) And—

WSP: How many guys would be shearing?

JWT: Shoot—about—usually about four men. They would have a drop apiece—they called it drops, where they had those shears, you know?

WSP: Is that a little stall where they would work?

JWT: No, they didn't—well, we had a little shed out there where they worked—in that shed—and they would, uh—it was out thisaway from the barn. And, uh, they'd, they'd just get the sheep in there, and then they'd run them back around here in a—where they couldn't get out in the other end. And, uh, they'd go catch one—when they'd get through shearing one, they'd go back here and catch another one, throw them down up here on their pallets, whatever they called them, to shear them. And then we—and my dad always had a stand out here where he'd put the—it was big old tall sacks that he put the wool in. And somebody'd every once in a while get there and tromp it down. Sometimes I would. (laughs)

WSP: Where they did the shearing, was it covered?

JWT: Yes, it was, it was covered, uh-huh.

WSP: They would pick up the unsheared sheep from a fenced area, and they would take them into the shed where they'd be sheared, and then, when they were done, they would put them into another pen? Is that right?

JWT: Well, no, it was all—it was all just one long shed, I believe, best I can remember. And it wasn't but—oh, it wasn't too awful wide. I don't guess it was any wider than this room is. But it was long, it would go back.

WSP: About fifteen or twenty feet?

JWT: Um-hm. And, uh, those sheep—and they would shearing out here at the front of the place, you know? I mean, not out from under it, but, I mean, under—just under the front of it, you know, where, where the shed came to—they'd be shearing out there, out in here, and the other sheep would be back here.

And it didn't take them long—and yet it did take them a long time, too, I guess. And we always fed them—always had one bunch, mostly from out of Copperas Cove, that would come and shear them. Their name was—I can't even remember—oh, Gocher, their names were Gocher. (laughs) And I don't know how you spell it.

WSP: That's interesting, don't you think, they are shearing sheep, and their name was Goatshear?

JWT: Go-*churr*. Gocher, G-o-c-h-e-r, I guess, something like that.

WSP: I see.

JWT: Yeah, and they'd shear goats, too, when we had enough of goats. Sometimes we didn't have very many goats. And maybe, once in a while. My dad and my brother would—we had one little old shearing thing that had one drop to it. And sometimes somebody would have to turn a crank on it to get it to go.

And sometimes they'd shear a few goats, if there wasn't very many, like with that, you know? I don't know who sheared them. (laughs) Somebody! But my brother didn't, and my dad didn't.

And that—by the way, I never—he was *never* Daddy or Father to any of us! He was Papa. Just Papa and Mama. (laughs) That's all he was.

WSP: What did the hired hands call him?

JWT: Mr. Wright. (laughs)

WSP: Now this drop that you have been describing, is this some area where the mechanical part of the shears would come down, and the men would be able to work in this one particular area? Was this what was considered a drop?

JWT: Yeah, well, yeah. Well, yeah, like the, uh—they'd set it up, and it would be a—I don't know, I don't know how big it was, I just really don't know. (draws on the map) But like there'd be a drop coming off of this side, and a drop here, and a drop here, and a drop here—and, and where the—where they could throw down a sheep or a goat on this—they'd have some kind of a—oh, it wasn't padding but it was—(sighs). Oh, I don't know what you called it. Just a, just a great big old thing they'd throw on the ground there, where they could throw them down and they wouldn't get dirty, you know, when the wool was sheared off—and, uh, they'd just have one—something there that they threw them down on.

WSP: What is this square in the middle?

JWT: Well, this is the engine where the—this is—you know, those drops had to come from some sort of engine. And it was, uh—I don't know, but that's about as much room as it took up, I mean—'course, not like that is on there, but to me it is! And, uh—

WSP: Was this the engine that operated the shears?

JWT: Uh-huh, yes, uh-huh. They'd, they'd run that engine, and, and, of course they had a turn on and off on the—on those hand shears, too. They was about, oh, about this long, I guess, the shears themselves.

WSP: You're indicating seven or eight inches long? In that range?

JWT: Uh-huh, I imagine something—

WSP: What was the engine powered by?

JWT: Gasoline, I think. Gas, I think, 'cause we didn't have any electricity. (laughs) So I'm sure it was gas.

WSP: You also described a single drop unit that you could operate by hand.

JWT: Well, we had one, I know, and the reason I know and that I remember it is because one evening we had, oh, we had a few goats, not very many, and they was going—somebody was going to shear one out there in that, in that big pen. And we had a billy goat—and 'course, a billy goat—if, if you've

never known anything about goats, I'm sure—but if they could see, uh—like my mother, she always wore dresses, *all* the time. And I remember her one evening turning that wheel out there on that little old one-drop machine. And the old billy goat spied her, and here he come! You know? And they just, oh, they just delighted in butting you! (laughs) They'd just butt you down on the ground! (laughs) So one of them got after my mother that evening.

That's all I remember about that. I don't—it wasn't very many sheared by it anyway—but it's just, if you just had a few, you know, and you didn't want to hire those four guys to come out to do it.

WSP: About how many head of sheep are you talking about, approximately?

JWT: I have no idea! (laughs) I honestly don't know. Pretty good-sized, though.

WSP: Are we talking about several hundred head?

JWT: No—uh—oh, dear, I wished I knew, but I just don't know. No, it wasn't several hundred. It might have been a hundred in all. I don't know for sure, but it wasn't several hundred. We didn't have that many.

WSP: How many goats did you have?

JWT: Oh, well, you know, just sometimes we'd have more than other times. And I thought those little old kids were the cutest little old things. They'd be born, you know, and then there was a big water tank for them out in, in the goat pasture there, pretty close to the house, where you could—(refers to map) that's supposed to be part of the house, and that's the barn, I think. (laughs)

WSP: Where would be the goats kept, relative to the goat pasture and the water for the goats?

JWT: Well, it would be out thisaway, I think. It would be north, it would be north from the house. So I don't know, really. I just don't know how to draw it.

WSP: Okay, let's see. (refers to drawing) This is west, south, north—even further north, you would say?

JWT: Well, of course, these was all compact. They was closer together maybe than I've got it let, uh—drawn out there. And 'course, my daddy just had a rock tank out there, where the water run out in there and—

Those little old goats, they'd get up on those tanks—they were so cute, just as white as snow, and just as curly a hair. I'd always say, "Yes, my hair looks just like the goats' hair," when I get a new perm. (laughs)

JWT: And, uh—but they was so cute! They'd get up on that tank and run around and play, and jump on and jump off and everything. They were so cute! I remember that. But I don't—I don't know how to draw anything. (laughs)

WSP: That's fine. We were trying to estimate of the size of your father's place. You estimated, at the most, around a hundred sheep. What would you estimate for the number of goats?

JWT: Oh, I don't know. Maybe—sometimes maybe we was down to ten or something, sometimes maybe twenty-five. I don't know. Not as many goats as sheep. And we always milked. Of course, then, you didn't have—we didn't have real milk cows. We just had any kind of a cow it was that had a young calf—and 'course, my dad and mother, I guess they determined which ones they wanted to milk, to get—thought they could get the most milk from. (laughs) And so we milked about five or six cows twice a day, by hand.

WSP: You didn't keep milch cows, just grazing cows that had calves.

JWT: Uh-huh, yes. And I remember in the—in the spring, I remember I'd have to get up—before school

was out, even—I'd have to get up early of a morning. Now my mama *never* stayed in the bed until after daylight. Before daylight she was up! Getting breakfast ready and this and that, and she'd always call me, she'd say, "You better get up! You got to go milk." And I'd go before breakfast and milk those six or seven cows. (laughs) And, uh, I don't know—I didn't always milk them—she always milked at night. But I had to do it every morning. (pause)

WSP: How much milk would you get?

JWT: (laughs) Sometimes maybe a gallon or two gallons, something like that. And of course, we just had this—you said from this other person—we just had the cooler, we didn't have a refrigerator or anything. We just had this cooler that you put a cloth around it, you know, and put cold water up in the top of it and that would drip down on that, that cloth, that was going down into the bottom of the cooler. It would all get wet and go down, and it would keep that milk just as cool! And, of course, then, what I loved that I've never had since and never will, and that was that old clabber milk. I loved it! (laughs)

WSP: What is that?

JWT: Well, it's sweet milk that you keep in the cooler long enough for it to sour and then—well, it would turn thick. And I know I had a brother-in-law—he'd say, "I don't want none of that old—that old, uh—." Let's see, what did he call it? Well, it was clabber, was what we called it, but—but he didn't want any of that old soured, ruined milk. (laughs) But it was so good! And of course you can't do that to the milk you get today. That was from fresh milk.

WSP: Would be a day old, or two days old?

JWT: Um-hm, yes, about two, I'd imagine, before it would sour and start turning to clabber.

WSP: It would turn to clabber just before it would go so far off you couldn't drink it? So clabber was this mid-stage between fresh and completely undrinkable?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: With its own distinctive taste.

JWT: Uh-huh, yes.

WSP: What taste would that be?

JWT: Oh! I don't know—

WSP: How would you describe that, to someone who wouldn't know?

JWT: It was just really good! It was—of course, you could break it all up, like if you put a spoon in it or something, you'd break it up. Well, that didn't make it good. You could take a dip, uh—a dipper with a handle on it or something—and dip down in and pour you a glass full of milk. And it was just—it would just stay together, you know? And it was so good, it was so cool, and I just loved that clabbered milk. (laughs) I've never heard anybody else say anything about it, but everybody nearly had it—I know they did.

WSP: Was it as thick as, say, melted ice cream?

JWT: Well, no, it really wasn't. It was firmer than that. It was just—I don't know—kind of like Jell-O, maybe, only it wasn't—I don't know, but it was more like Jell-O than it would have been anything else, I think.

WSP: Was it bitter sour?

JWT: Oh, it was kind of—it had just a little bit of a sour taste to it.

WSP: But still sweet because the cream was still in it?

JWT: Well, no. (sighs) My mother skimmed the cream off of all of it, I'm sad to say. (laughs) My mother would not let us, us drink the—she'd skim the cream off of the milk when it was sweet, and she'd save it. And she'd send it by my dad when he'd go to town. Then she'd send that off and sell it. She'd sell cream, and sometimes she sold some butter.

And she sold eggs. And we had a lot of chickens, all over the place. They just went wherever they wanted to. Of course, there was no neighbors for them to bother. So they just went everywhere. And they roosted in the trees at night. We didn't have no chicken house. They just roosted in the trees at night, all year long. (laughs)

And, uh, if we was going to have some company, if we knew company was coming, my mother would tell my brother to get up and go shoot so-and-so rooster or hen or something, you know? She'd say, "We're going to have—have chicken for dinner!" (laughs) And she'd make smothered chicken, and oh, that gravy was good! And, and chicken and dumplings.

And I'm just learning that—I, I have made chicken and dumplings all of my life, and I love them—but the way—I make them the way my mother did. But we've got a man up at church right now—they've just come into the church, him and his wife—and he makes, he cooks a lot. He makes chicken and dumplings, and he brought some one day when we was having dinner up there. And he puts vegetables in his chicken and dumplings! I know he had broccoli in it, and I think carrots, and I don't know what else. I ate a little bit of it, it was good, but it wasn't the same as what Mama made.

WSP: How would Mama make it?

JWT: Well, just boil the chicken until it gets tender and then pull—well, she didn't pull the meat off the chicken bones, she just—she just left it in there, and made the dumplings with the chicken pieces in there, after she'd cut it up, you know, and, uh—she'd cook it until it got tender, and then she'd put her dumplings in it. She'd roll her dumplings out—I still do, too—and—oh, a lot of people now, they use everything for dumplings but I don't think it's real dumplings. And that's what we had, though, when company come—we'd always have chicken—either chicken—either smothered chicken or chicken and dumplings. (laughs)

And I had a couple of cousins that lived the other side of Killeen—it was my mother's sister's kids—they was about the same age as me or a little older than me and my brother at home, and, uh—oh, they loved that chicken and gravy, with the smothered chicken, and the chicken and dumplings, too. George was the boy's name, and he'd always come and he'd say, "Oh, boy! Aunt Lizzie's got some chicken and dressing!" Not dressing, "Chicken and dumplings, or smothered chicken!" (laughs) And he just loved it!

And she could make the best dressing, but 'course she only made it at Christmastime. But she could make the best dressing I ever eat.

WSP: What was the stove she was cooking all these fine dishes on?

JWT: Wood stove.

WSP: Oh, my!

JWT: Wood stove. (laughs)

WSP: Lots of people don't know how a wood stove operates. How does someone become good on a stove that doesn't have a dial to set the right temperature?

JWT: (laughs) Well, you didn't. You just put your wood in there, and you started the fire. There was a wood—wood box in the, in the front part of the stove, and then the, then the burners on the solid top of it, behind that. And some stoves had a deal that would come up—you know—I don't know what you called it, uh—but Mama didn't—Mama's stove didn't have that. And you just put your wood in there and build a fire and just get the stove hot. It didn't have any temperature—we didn't have any way of telling what the temperature was.

WSP: How did you keep from burning things?

JWT: (laughs) Well, I don't know. (laughs) But it was sure good. Everybody still says that there is nothing like a good old wood cook stove. (laughs)

WSP: Did your mother spend time teaching you the art of cooking?

JWT: No. No, she didn't. She never did teach me what to do or how to do, but I'd watch her and I learned a lot from just watching her. I might ask her a question once in a while, and I learned to make—and my mother made—of course she always made a lot of, oh, jelly and jams and stuff. Everybody nearly would eat that for breakfast, but, uh—(pause)

She made a lot. She canned every kind of a fruit that was on the place, peaches, plums—we'd have big old plum trees out in the pasture. Actually, I've got one right here in the corner of the yard—it's the same kind of plum. It's the—she called them tree plums. And oh, they made good plum cobblers! She made a, she made a cobbler *every* day of the world in the summertime, and we'd eat it, too! (laughs) Because she always cooked dinner in the summertime—and that's another thing. We never had breakfast and lunch, and dinner at night. We had breakfast, dinner and supper. And I still do!

WSP: What is the difference in that?

JWT: (laughs) Well, it's just back in the old-times we just called it dinner and supper. Now then all the young people calls it dinner at nighttime, and that's when they want their big meal—and they call it dinnertime. Well, to me it's suppertime. But she made—

WSP: Dinner at noon was the big meal.

JWT: Uh-huh, yes, uh-huh.

WSP: What would you expect to be served at noon dinner?

JWT: Well, usually, we was working in the field in the hot weather, and we'd come home—of course, she'd cook everything out of the garden.

And she didn't buy stuff like we do now. She bought, they bought sugar and flour, and corn—some cornmeal—well, I think sometimes, maybe, my dad might have ground our own cornmeal—I don't remember for sure.

JWT: But he'd buy a hundred pounds of sugar, he'd buy fifty pounds of flour, and, uh, just stuff like that, that you had to have. Nowadays, people have got to buy everything in the world in the can, or sack or whatever it's in, it don't matter—they've got to go to the store and buy it.

And, uh—but she, she'd make, every day at dinnertime, what we called dinner in the middle of the day—she'd make biscuits and she'd make cornbread. And we ate whatever we wanted. And she'd all—like I said, she'd always make a cobbler every day of the world! And she'd make a different

kind. I don't know how many kinds she would make, but she made plum and peach and grape juice and sweet potato cobbler. And she'd—my dad loved them—she'd make vinegar cobblers. (laughs) And he loved them! (laughs)

WSP: I give. What is a vinegar cobbler? And how do you make it?

JWT: Well, just like you do any other one. (laughs) Of course, then—well, she just used so much vinegar—I don't know how much she used because I never made one, 'cause I didn't like them—and she'd just use so much vinegar and put so much water with it, you know, and sugar in it, and dough and all, just like you put in the other cobblers. And he loved stuff like that, my dad did. He, I guess, was the only one of us just about that liked that.

WSP: I'd think that the end result would be more like a biscuit than a—

JWT: Um-hm. Well, biscuit dough, she made hers—

WSP: Biscuit dough, but with vinegar poured into, instead of the—

JWT: Well, you'd put—she'd make her pie in a—usually a big round pan, I guess—or I don't remember what kind of pan it was. But she'd put—if it was a, a lot of juice, like the grape juice, now—that was just like water, you know, just thin. But oh, we loved that grape juice cobbler!

WSP: She would just pour vinegar onto the dough?

JWT: No, she'd pour that in the pan and she'd put butter and sugar in there with it, and enough water to weaken it down, whatever she was using. And then she'd take her dough and she'd roll it out, roll it out real thin, you know, like so, and then she'd just cut it in strips and put it in this, this dish, and put it in the stove and cook it.

WSP: The bottom layer was the liquid, the vinegar, and the top layer—

JWT: Well, it all mixed together during the cooking time. It was all mixed time it got done, it was all—it was—the thin stuff was through it, and, uh, and the dough and all through it, too. Now other people do have, I know—I had a sister-in-law that made cobblers different to what my mother did. She'd make up her—she put her fruit and juice, or whatever she was using in the pan with butter and sugar, and then she'd just mix up her dough and she'd just pour it in there. But I never did like them as much as I did like my mother, roll out the dough and made it.

WSP: And put it on top?

JWT: Um-hm.

WSP: Excuse my ignorance, here, but unlike a pie where the dough goes on the bottom and the fruit goes on top, a cobbler has the fruit or the filling as a first layer, on the bottom, and the bread on top when it's baked?

JWT: Uh-huh, yes, and usually—I make—I always make them and my mother did, too, a couple of layers in it in the pan. you know? You'd put juice or fruit, or whatever in the bottom and then you'd put—put your butter, see, and your, uh, sugar for seasoning, you know, however much it took what you wanted. And then you'd put another layer of, uh, juice or fruit, and, and then you'd put another layer of dough on the top of that. I still do it thataway.

WSP: When you're done, you flip it bottom side up.

JWT: No, unh-uh.

WSP: So it's still bread on the top?

JWT: Uh-huh, yes, the bread cooks and comes to the top.

WSP: I'm not a cook. It's obvious. (laughs)

JWT: (laughs) Well—

WSP: I've eaten cobbler, but I've never known how to make it. I'm sorry I'm asking you all these dumb questions about cobbler-making—

JWT: (laughs) Well, that's all right, that's all right.

WSP: But I'll tell you, I'll—

Besides milking the cows, were you expected to do other chores around the farm?

JWT: Yes. Yes. Now in the wintertime—and I don't remember in the summertime much, but in the wintertime it was my job—of course my brother had to go out in the pastures where the timber was and cut firewood for the fireplace. And also, he'd cut wood, and they'd cut it up in however long they wanted it, and then he'd—they'd—every year they'd—after the trees or lumber or—oh, no, it was trees—they would be trimmed up, of course, and they'd bring it to the house. And they had a saw that, they'd saw that up in how—in whatever length you wanted.

WSP: You're showing me a piece about ten to twelve inches in length.

JWT: Um-hm, I guess so, for a cook stove.

WSP: For the cook stove.

JWT: Uh-huh. And the firewood in the fireplace—just whatever way you could get it, however—however it was shaped, just so it would go in there. (laughs) It didn't make any difference.

And it was my job every afternoon in the wintertime to haul—to carry in enough wood to do in the fireplace that night and the next morning, and to, and to bring in the stovewood. We called it stovewood because it went in the stove. And then that was my job, and carrying water.

We had a spring that went just a little bit downhill, not too bad, a water spring. And it was built up with rock around it, about waist high, I think, or something like that, or hip high out on the outside of it. And, uh, we'd carry that water—I'd have to put my bucket down in, in the water and let it turn over and get full. And then I'd bring it up, off, out of the spring and take it to the house for use. That's where we—that's what we used. It was *good* water, too. And cold!

WSP: The spring was a natural artesian spring out of the ground? Was it a dug well?

JWT: No.

WSP: Or was it—

JWT: I don't really know about that, but it was always there, and it never did go dry. I don't really know—(laughs) about that, now. But I know when it would get low, a lot of times my dad or my brother or both of them, they would go down there, and they'd draw a lot of water out of it, and then they'd get down in there and clean it out, clean it up.

WSP: Now when they crawled into it, how deep were they below ground level?

JWT: Oh—you can imagine my imagination then, being a young girl, and now? (laughs) I don't know, I

really don't know.

WSP: Was twenty or thirty feet, or more like eight to ten feet deep?

JWT: Hmmm, I would way, probably say ten to fifteen feet, maybe, but I don't know for sure.

WSP: Well, this is a fifteen-foot ceiling in this room—

JWT: Oh, no! Oh, no, it wasn't that! No, it wasn't near that much. I don't know, maybe—of course with that rock wall around it that made it deeper, you know? But I don't know how actually deep the spring itself was. No, it wasn't anything like as tall as these walls! About half, I'd imagine.

WSP: Okay, we're looking on the order of eight to ten feet deep.

JWT: Probably, um-hm. It was good cool water all the time.

WSP: And what was the diameter, do you think?

JWT: Oh, I'd say it was as big around as this table, not all of the table, but about up to there and around thisaway—about that big.

WSP: Maybe three or four foot in diameter?

JWT: Yeah, I imagine so, maybe four or five foot, five or six—I don't know.

WSP: Your dad and your brother could fit in this thing at the same time?

JWT: Um-hm—well, no, they'd—just one of them would go down at the time.

WSP: One at a time.

JWT: Um-hm. But they didn't have to clean it out very often, but if it got to, you know, tasting a little bit funny or something, they'd go down there and clean it out. And we had a branch running right along by the side of that spring, too. And when it would rain, oh, that branch would get up and get out of bank—if it come very much of a rain.

And my brother and I—of course we didn't have any kind of cooling, we didn't have—like I say, we had no electricity, no running water, or anything like that. So, we had to carry water to take baths, and we had to—well, just do the best we could about sleeping. But we'd put—(laughs) we'd put our beds out in the back yard *every* summer.

WSP: Not even on the porch?

JWT: No! In the yard! In the yard, uh-huh. And boy, they'd sun all day and at night when we'd go to bed they'd be so hot we couldn't hardly stand them! (laughs) But we'd lay there for a while, and they'd cool off. And that's where we slept in the summertime because it was too hot in the house.

WSP: Wouldn't the bugs get you?

JWT: Well, the mosquitoes sometimes, I guess, but I don't remember about bugs.

WSP: Well, I consider mosquitoes bugs.

JWT: Well, yes. (laughs)

WSP: And what were your brother's chores like?

JWT: Oh, my brother did everything in the world, but my brother had to quit school when he was just not

very old. I don't know how long he went, but he had to quit school and take over the farm because my daddy wasn't able to do it, not by himself, anyway. So my brother had to quit, quit school and take over and help him, and do the fieldwork. Of course, in the wintertime, when it was where they could, they'd plow, and maybe plant grain.

I don't know. All I know about the fields is when we had corn and cotton and stuff. (laughs) And I knew we had work then. Of course we chopped cotton, and chopped corn, too, before that, before it would make, of course.

WSP: How much acreage would you estimate was in cotton? That was an important crop out there.

JWT: It was then. Now, they don't have cotton around here much, but then it was. I just don't know. We had one great old big field, and usually we had a small—kind of a small patch of corn in between that. And—but, we usually planted corn over in the other field—but he'd plant corn in that.

One great old big field, in the middle—I think, and then he'd have cotton on each side of it. But I don't know how much it was. I have no idea. It seemed awful big to me. Of course, you know, things when you're small, little, growing up seems a lot bigger than when you get grown.

Because I know we went back one time—my son and his wife from Garland and their two boys, they'd come down, and we'd go out and try to find our place down on the Fort Hood area. We finally run up on it one day. (laughs) And the big old water tank was still out there, but it wasn't as big as I remembered it. And I went down to where the house was—of course they was all gone. And we had—outside the yard fence there was a, was a great big rock—I don't know, it was about this big, square, I guess, and there was a couple of them stacked together.

WSP: A foot and a half, square? Something in that range? That's what you're showing me with your hands?

JWT: Uh—yes, I guess that's how much it was, two foot at least, probably two foot wide, you know, square.

WSP: Okay, uh-huh.

JWT: And that was right outside the yard. And that seemed like such a big old place, and the house, and from where the barn was—the house was kindly downhill from the barn a little bit. And, uh, it seemed like a long—a longer distance than when we went down there and found it and looked. And, oh, I was so—I don't know—I just—it just didn't seem right because it was so close together, you know? (laughs)

And I walked down to the spring, and it wasn't the same. All that stuff seemed like it was all jumbled together. I don't know. But it wasn't, really. But when I was a kid living there, oh, it was just wonderful. (laughs) I just wouldn't have took for it. But we was just poor people, making a living.

WSP: Would you estimate three or four acres in cotton?

JWT: Oh, no, no! No! It was a lot more than that!

WSP: A lot more than that?

JWT: Uh-huh, but I don't know how much to say because I never did hear them say anything about how much, how many acres was in the fields, that I remember of. But they was pretty good-sized fields.

WSP: How many people helped pick cotton?

JWT: Well, uh—me and my brother was still at home—and my, my sister that's still living now, in Midland, she didn't do too much work in the fields because she was kind of sickly, and she wasn't able to do much. But my other sister just older than her, now, boy, she got with it! And she got with us, too, and

we picked that cotton!

And my brother, my second brother, when he married—I never did know him very well, I never did even feel like I was kin to him, hardly because, uh, he was away from home. He would go to West Texas with other guys and pull cotton out there, and do stuff. And when he'd come home, I didn't know him!

WSP: That would be Dewy George?

JWT: No, that was the oldest brother.

WSP: You're talking about Archie Spivy?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: Archie was the one you knew the least well of?

JWT: Well, I just—no, I knew—I knew the oldest boy, Dewy, better than I did Archie, because—I don't know, Dewy was married from the time I was any size, I guess, because his oldest boy and me was just four months apart. (laughs)

WSP: Oh!

JWT: And he had six boys and this Archie Spivy, my brother, had five girls. They had five girls and my oldest brother had six boys. (laughs)

And—(pause) I forgot what I was going to tell you on that—

WSP: You were telling me how many people it took to pick cotton.

JWT: Oh, well, yeah. At first, when we had so much—it got to where he didn't plant as much as he did, quite, but at first, uh—me and my brother that was at home, and my older, middle sister that was at home, still.

And then my brother Archie and his wife. They started having kids right away, and they lived on a farm. They lived up where we'd go to the Georgetown Road—well, they lived just across the road, where we almost, where we'd go out at, into it, up on a knoll like there, in a house—they was renting, he was renting the land, then, from Mr. Albert Kindler.

And, uh, they would do—he would do his work and his wife stayed right in there, and she worked, too. She worked in the fields all the time. And—when they'd finish theirs, if they finished first they'd come and help us. And if we was getting to where we didn't have any to do, we'd go and help them. And if we had any extra time—(laughs) then we'd hire out to somebody else to pick cotton—(laughs) oh, maybe for seventy-five cents an hour, or something like that. You know, just very, very cheap labor.

WSP: Basically, when it came to harvesting the cotton, it was all family members? Would you ever hire outsiders?

JWT: No, we wouldn't hire anybody else.

WSP: It was something that you would just pitch into do yourselves?

JWT: Yeah. Yes, we did it all ourselves.

WSP: It sounds like that your dad would enlist the girls, your sister and you, to do as much fieldwork as he could get you to do.

JWT: Yeah, we'd just go to the field with the rest of them and work just like they did. And my brother, Archie, now he could pick the cotton! But I just never did know him because he was always gone. When I was just a little bitty chap, he was gone all the time to West Texas. And I—I remember him coming home one time. He'd bought him a car, and he came home one time—him and his friends came with him, I think—and he didn't stay but a night or two, or something, and he was gone. See, I just didn't know him.

And 'course, I got to know him real well after he married and settled down! (laughs) But I didn't know him then. And evidently—in October, if he lives, he'll be ninety-two years old.

WSP: He left the home place fairly early and moved out west?

JWT: Yeah, yeah, he just went out there and stayed and worked. I don't remember him ever being at home.

WSP: As much work as you were doing in the field, how would you work that around your school time?

JWT: Well, then, it wasn't as important, or wasn't—it didn't seem as important—or it just wasn't the rules and regulations like it is today. We'd have, we'd have cotton to pick still in September, you know? And, uh, so a lot of the kids, we'd just stay out and go ahead and pick cotton, and just start to school when we got through. And this—everybody understood, you know? Because they knew we were having to help get the crops in.

WSP: Some of your classmates were already in school for a time—

JWT: Yeah.

WSP: And then you would join them several weeks into the first semester?

JWT: Um-hm.

WSP: Would that put you behind? Were you concerned about being behind?

JWT: No, not really, not too much, unh-uh. We might go a few days in between, you know, just owing to how the weather was, I guess, and what—I don't know. I don't remember that much about it, but I know we didn't go, start to school right at the beginning. I didn't.

WSP: Now some of the school systems in Fort Hood lands actually started the school, got everybody registered, and then allowed time off from school, in September and October when the cotton picking was really prime—

JWT: Yes—

WSP: When the first batch was coming ready—

JWT: Uh-huh—

WSP: And they would let them out for that?

JWT: Yes, I guess they did, the best I remember. I don't know, I hated school, anyway! I always hated school. (laughs)

WSP: Really!

JWT: I sure did! (laughs)

WSP: Tell me about school. Tell me about your nightmares at school?

JWT: Oh, I don't know, I didn't have nightmares, but I just didn't like school! I'd rather stay at home and

work! (laughs)

WSP: What was Antelope School like?

JWT: Oh, it was good school, and, uh, had good teachers, And I remember there was three men in our community that was brothers—Ben and Edwin and Leslie Thompson. Now they was the richer people in our community—(laughs) if you want to—they wasn't rich, but they was well-off. And, uh, I know Mr. Ben's wife taught school for a good while—not when I was going, she taught before. And then Leslie had two girls—three girls, and his oldest daughter, she was a schoolteacher. And she was my schoolteacher the first and second years I went to school. And I was her pet. (laughs) And I liked her *real* well! (laughs)

WSP: What grades did she teach?

JWT: First and second.

WSP: When you got to third, you changed teachers?

JWT: Um-hm, yes.

WSP: Who was this teacher?

JWT: I believe it was—her name was Miss Sharp. And then we traded, changed teachers just about every year from then on, I guess—best I can remember we did. But I played basketball. Oh, I loved basketball better than anything! I could just play all the time. (laughs)

WSP: This is in the schoolyard?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: How was that arranged?

JWT: Well, we had a boys' court and a girls' court. We usually ended up playing on the boys court just as much as they did. And I was on the team. Of course, we had three guards and three forwards, back then when I was playing, and I remember we didn't have very many people—different ones from our school, to—you know, I mean, from the different school to play. But we usually went to Pidcoke and played them, and we'd always beat them! (laughs) We always enjoyed that.

And then we got—after we got a little bit older, then we was having—they was having, um—well, they had what they called a county meet at Gatesville every year in the spring. But they didn't play—we didn't play basketball at the county meet, we had a regular tournament, basketball tournaments up there in the gym for that. And I remember the last year that I played—uh—we was having to play all the other schools that was out around, you know, like Pidcoke, or Levita, Ewing, and all those different places. And Ewing had great old *big* tall girls, and they could beat anybody, I think. We just couldn't beat them. But we did beat Levita! And we won second place in the basketball tournament. (laughs)

WSP: Well congratulations!

JWT: Oh, I sure—I loved basketball, I just loved it.

WSP: How large was Antelope School? I mean, how many rooms, how many students?

JWT: Let's see, we had one, two, three rooms, and later on they built another room onto it, made four. And then there was a little place—on one of the oldest rooms, just a small place, where they—they called it—well, it was used for girls' home economic class, where we did a little cooking, and we sewed

some later on.

And we had a principal named Mr. Barton, Charlie Barton. And he was a good guy! And he was a good basketball coach, too. His sister taught there, Joy—she wasn't married, Joy Cousins, I believe, was her name. And she was just as cute as a pie, and she got out there in them high heels and would play basketball with us—practice, you know? (laughs)

WSP: High heels?

JWT: Yes! She did! (laughs)

WSP: Well, now are you indoors? You had a four-room school, but was there a separate gymnasium?

JWT: No. No, unh-uh, there was no gymnasium.

WSP: How was this arranged?

JWT: Yes, well—

WSP: Can you describe the court? What surface you would play on?

JWT: It was dirt. Just clean dirt. Just clean dirt, just cleaned-off, white-looking dirt. Uh-huh.

WSP: Outdoors?

JWT: Yeah.

WSP: How did you know what your boundaries were?

JWT: Well, they'd draw lines, some—you know? And they'd draw the court and, as big as it was supposed to be, and then they'd draw a line across the middle of it for the center. And then we'd have a goal at each end.

WSP: And it was flat enough on the dirt to be playing—

JWT: Oh yeah! Yes.

WSP: Basketball and bouncing the ball around?

JWT: Uh-huh, yes.

WSP: And did it give you any trouble transferring to an indoor court?

JWT: No. We never did, we never did play inside until we went to Gatesville to the tournament to play. (laughs) We always played out on the dirt.

WSP: I say, you get to your big play-off, you go to Gatesville and now you're playing in a completely different arrangement!

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: Did that not—

JWT: No, it was just a basketball court, and it was—'course it was hardwood floor—I guess that's what you'd call it?

WSP: Would it make the play faster, or the ball respond differently? Was this something your coach would discuss?

JWT: Well, no. No, not really—same size, same size court, I think as what we'd have at our own school. But it was real interesting—I sure loved it. Of course, I played softball some, too, but not like I did basketball. And we'd run at the county meet we'd have hundred-yard dash runs, you know, and things like that, and I'd be in that. And we won third place one time, I think, for the fifty-yard dash or something like that. I can't remember, but I think that's what it was. (laughs) And just things like that, you know? And we won first or second place in baseball one time.

WSP: Girls' baseball?

JWT: Um-hm, uh-huh. Softball.

WSP: Softball. It sounds like girls had as many sports activities as the boys did?

JWT: Um-hm, yeah.

WSP: It wasn't necessarily a preference?

JWT: No, not really because they played some—we played the same things. See, they didn't have football then. They didn't play any football then. But the guys would play baseball, which was a *hard* ball, you know, and we played, uh, softball, a big old ball. The fact of it is, I've got some balls in yonder right now that I'd like to give away. (laughs)

WSP: Would you play on the same diamond, or the same field, as the boys.

JWT: Um-hm.

WSP: When they weren't there, you would play softball?

JWT: Um-hm.

WSP: Did you have any uniforms that you wear?

JWT: Well, we had, uh—we got to wearing basketball suits, you know—

WSP: What was that?

JWT: Well, it was new to us, I guess—but my mother was so strict with everything and, uh—we had little white blouses, and then we had green shorts, shorts that come, oh, just a little above your knee, you know? And, oh, we were so proud of them! And I took—we had to take care of them ourselves, wash them and keep them clean, you know? So, we had played basketball at—with Pidcoke or somebody one day. And Mama knew I was playing, and she didn't mind me playing—and I always told her. And, uh—so, I come in one evening, after we'd gone and played, and I had that suit to wash. And, a-ha! She found out what it was! And she said, "Well, you're not playing basketball anymore, if that's what you're going to wear, you're not going to play anymore!"

WSP: She thought they were shorts?

JWT: Yeah! And she wasn't having me play with that on anymore. So I just kind of—just made out like, "Well, okay, I'll just play with my dress on." You know? (laughs) I don't know how I done it after that, but I always played. Because I wouldn't have given it up for anything. (laughs) I loved it too much!

WSP: What would you wear on your feet?

JWT: Oh, just any kind of a good shoe. I don't know, just—

WSP: Would you wear leather shoes, as opposed to tennis shoes?

JWT: Yes. Well, they didn't require us to wear a certain kind of shoe, I don't think. I don't remember if they did—I know they didn't.

WSP: Whatever comfortable shoe you felt like running around in?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: There wasn't like a special basketball shoe?

JWT: No. No, unh-uh. No, there wasn't.

WSP: Did you slip or slide around any?

JWT: Sometimes we did, a little bit, you know. I played forward all the time. That's what I wanted to play, and that's what I played. (laughs)

WSP: And what did that require you to do?

JWT: Well, we had to play—it was different then to what it is now. The girls play more now like the boys, but—you know, just bounce the ball and go all the way from one end to the other. But then we had our certain—we'd just meet in the middle. And one girl from the—well, now, let's see—I think it was—I don't know if it was just the forward—no, it was the guards, the guard and a forward, maybe, I don't know—but they would get out on the center line, and they'd get the two girls there at the center line together, and they'd pitch the ball up between you. And the one that got the ball or hit the ball to some of their other—that's the ones that got it and got to go and shoot at the goal, you know. But we couldn't—*then*, we could not bounce the ball or anything and take a step in there. If we took a step they'd call it you're walking, and so that would be against us then.

WSP: You would dribble the ball quite a lot while you're moving around—

JWT: Well, some.

WSP: To keep from taking a step without dribbling?

JWT: Yes, uh-huh. Yes.

WSP: As I recall from my sisters' day in high school, it was called half-court basketball? Is that what you would call it?

JWT: Well, I never heard it called that. Just girls' basketball was all I ever knew. But we did have—we couldn't get over the line on the other end, we couldn't do that. We had to stay on our end of the court, the guards and the forwards.

WSP: So they grab the ball away and pitch it to their teammates on the other side of the court, and they would try to make the basket.

JWT: And if—uh-huh, and if the others, if the guards could get it from them then they'd come back down to the center and, and—I don't know what they finally done, but 'course the guards didn't shoot goals, you know, like the forwards did. But, oh, I just loved it. (laughs) I loved it! I just think about it so much, playing basketball.

WSP: People have done studies to figure out what the value of women playing sports, now, because it's been revived, since the 1970s.

JWT: Yes, I know, um-hm, I know.

WSP: What do you think you took away from the experience?

JWT: I don't really know, but I know one thing—Mr. Barton, he was the principal of the school for two or three years. And, uh, his sister-in-law, Joyce Cousins, was our schoolteacher our—in my room. And she'd been teach—she'd been coaching us, you know, and so—and we couldn't—it seemed like we couldn't win very many games. And so Mr. Barton himself took us over and started coaching us his self. And he told us one day, he said, "I'll tell you what I want you to do." He said, "I want you to—every one of you, I want you to eat, or take it out of the shell, or however you want it, a raw egg every morning. Every morning—a raw, completely raw egg." (laughs) And I would have done it or died! (laughs) Because I loved that game so much. And he said that would help us to have longer wind, and we wouldn't run out of wind so easy.

WSP: Did he put you through any special exercises or running?

JWT: No.

WSP: How about training in shooting the basket?

JWT: No, it was just—we—we just, when we trained, I mean when we just practiced, you know, we just practiced like we was in a game, only we'd just choose up between the Gates—the Antelope girls. And three of them, or, six of them would be guards, and six of us would be goal-shooters, you know?

WSP: All the training was directed toward game playing?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: Was there any particular strategy that he brought to the game?

JWT: No. No. Unh-uh, not that I remember of, sure don't.

WSP: Would he yell from the sidelines like basketball coaches these days, yelling at the players?

JWT: Well, he'd blow a whistle, I think. (laughs) If we done something wrong, and then he'd tell us what we'd done, you know? (pause) He was a good coach. And he was a good teacher, too. In fact, he was a good man.

WSP: What courses did he teach?

JWT: Well, he taught high school, he taught in the upper classes all the time. But I don't know, just history, I guess, literature, and—I don't know, some kind of mathematics—however it was when they got up that high, whatever it was.

WSP: You say he was a good man. Why do you say that?

JWT: Well, I just—

WSP: Was there something in particular that comes to mind?

JWT: No, I just think he was. (laughs) I just—I had him as a teacher one time. After they closed our school down and moved us all to Gatesville, I had him in algebra. He was my algebra teacher, and I could not get that stuff to save my soul. (laughs) I just dropped it! (laughs) And then the year I was—I don't know what grade I was in, ninth, maybe—I had to have plane geometry. Oh, that was just—

WSP: What happened in your plane geometry class?

JWT: Well, I just dropped out. I just couldn't, I could not get the stuff. I did not know what to do, or how to do. I just could not do it. I was good in math down in the lower grades, you know, when we started

out with math. I was good at that. But when it got up to where it was geometry and plane geometry and all that stuff, I just couldn't do it.

WSP: We started this whole section because you didn't like school, yet you've given me several stories showing how much you *liked* school.

JWT: (laughs) Well, really and truly, I don't know why, I just didn't like school. Well, it was when I was little, really, I guess. I wanted to stay at home with Mama. (laughs) And I had a—at that time, when I was little, I had a problem with my sides hurting me.

WSP: Your sides?

JWT: Uh-huh, they would—I get on the horse and ride, and my side would just kill me. And I'd run and my sides would just kill me. And so finally they took me to Dr. Shaw in Killeen. And he said, "Yes," he said, "you've got," he said, "it's not appendicitis, but," he said, "it is your appendix." And he said he wanted me to take mineral oil for one full year. I don't know if it was one or two tablespoon fulls a day that I had to take of mineral oil. (laughs) And you know, I reckon it cured me because it just quit hurting me that way.

WSP: I'll be darned. How did he know? Did he run tests on you?

JWT: I don't remember it. I don't know.

WSP: Did he do any x-rays?

JWT: I don't know, I don't think so. He didn't do any x-rays that I know of. I don't know how he knew, but I guess—he examined me, of course—but I don't know, I don't remember.

WSP: About how old were you at that time?

JWT: Hmmm, oh, I guess nine, ten, eleven, somewhere in there.

WSP: Was he the family doctor? Or was he more like the kids' doctor?

JWT: Hmmm, well, he was really just a regular M.D., you know, in Killeen. Dr. Shaw, that was his name.

WSP: Did your parents go to him, when they were sick?

JWT: Well, no. But she could call him if we got sick at home, any of us. She could call him, and he'd say, "I'll be out there just as soon as I can." And he'd come out there. Of course, they made house calls, then, you know. (laughs) And he'd come, too.

WSP: You have described your family life on the farm, and some about your school. What about your church?

JWT: Well, I'll tell you. Back in those days—uh—my mother was—I always thought she was a hard-shelled Baptist. That's what I thought it was. Anyway, her church was at Eliga. And they had only two churches down there, hers and one other one was—we called them then Campbellites. It's now the Church of Christ.

WSP: Campbellites?

JWT: Uh-huh, then they called them Campbellites. And my dad was a Campbellite when he married my mother. But my mother was this Baptist. And I always thought it was a hard-shelled Baptist. Now I don't know for sure. But it was different to any others. And they'd have church twice a month—two Sundays a month they'd have church. And my brother would have to always go and drive to take my—oh, didn't any of us want to go, didn't any of us want to go, even my dad didn't want to go. But—

WSP: And you're going to your *mother's* church?

JWT: Yes, uh-huh. But my dad did finally, uh, go over to her church, but he done it just to please her. (laughs) So I don't—I don't remember that—that church was about all—that's all I remember, we had it twice—unless they were having a revival, and then we'd have it a week at a time, you know. And, of course, we'd go every night, maybe every morning. I don't remember.

WSP: These revivals were in Eliga?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: And how far away is that from Antelope community?

JWT: Oh, about eight or ten miles, I guess, east of us.

WSP: What was your means of conveyance back then?

JWT: (pause) You mean, how did we go? Well, I'll tell you. (laughs) For a long, long time my daddy had a Model T car, and he drove it. And he's the only one that did drive it. I never would. I didn't even know how to drive the thing myself. And of course they didn't have any power to them, and we had—we had a big mountain and a big hill going and coming to Gatesville that we had to climb. And that thing wouldn't do it. We'd have to get out, the rest of us, and push it up every time! (laughs)

WSP: I know that mountain! It's out on Highway 116!

JWT: Yeah, that's part of it. But that wasn't where we had to come up—we come up it on the Georgetown Road. And, oh, it was a steep one, too! And we had a *steep* hill, just as bad. It was called the Gannaway Hill, and it—

WSP: Gannaway Hill?

JWT: Uh-huh, the Gannaways lived at the foot of it. (laughs) But—

WSP: When you'd hit Gannaway Hill, everyone hops out of the car?

JWT: Uh-huh. Oh, we had to. We had to get out, whoever was in there, and push to get it up. (laughs) We always had to push up the hills, and the mountains like that. (laughs) And then, later on, well, he'd start—of course, my dad was getting older all the time—and so he decided he'd just give it up. And he got rid of his Model T and my brother got a Model A. And so—'course that was better. (laughs) And so he'd have to be there on Sunday morning—of course he always was anyway, usually—but he had to be at home on Sunday morning, on church morning, so he could drive and go and take us down to Eliga to church. And he didn't want to go! (laughs) But he had to! (laughs) And, uh, so that's the way we went.

WSP: You'd go in your brother's Model A?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: Or did your dad buy the Model A?

JWT: Oh, I don't know. I don't know who bought it, but my brother—it was my brother's car, that's all I know.

WSP: Everyone would pile into your brother's car and head off to church?

JWT: Um-hm. Me and him, and my mama and my papa, that was all that was left at home. Um-hm.

WSP: Why was church held only twice a month?

JWT: Well, I know, back then—I don't know—they just, they just had church twice a month. And that was just the rules and the regulations or something. I don't know.

WSP: Was there a church in the Antelope community?

JWT: Yes, there was an Antelope—there was a Baptist church on the Antelope School grounds, right close to the schoolhouse.

WSP: This was not your mother's church?

JWT: No, no, unh-uh. But that's where my sister that was married, Ocie, that's where she went. After she married, she started going to the Antelope School, I mean, church.

WSP: Did you meet other people, other kids by attending a church in another community?

JWT: No. No.

WSP: Were there Eliga students in the area?

JWT: No, the Eliga, the Eliga, uh, students all come to Antelope to go to school. There was a bus that picked them up, until we all had to start going to Gatesville. Then we had a bus from there to Gatesville.

WSP: What other communities besides Eliga fed into the Antelope School?

JWT: Not any that I know of. I think there was a few, maybe, that came from around close to Copperas Cove.

WSP: Schools north of Copperas Cove?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: Any from Pidcoke? They had their own school?

JWT: Oh, yes. (laughs) They had their own school. Uh-huh.

WSP: I was talking to someone, and I commented on the large number of trees out there. I asked her if there was just as many trees when she was growing up, and she said no. How do you recall the terrain?

JWT: Well, we had a lot of trees in our pastures, a lot of trees. But of course, some of it was just prairie-looking, too. But mostly there was a lot of trees all over in the pastures.

WSP: Were there trees around the Antelope School?

JWT: Oh, not right close around. We had a German community close to Antelope School. You know, it was just Germans that lived there. But they was good people.

WSP: Oh! Hold on just one second while I look at the map.

(interruption in taping)

WSP: We tried to locate the Antelope community on the 1939 county map, but couldn't find that particular area. You mentioned, while the tape was off, that there was German community that lived nearby.

JWT: Um-hm. There were several German families that lived in that community.

WSP: Do you remember the name of it?

JWT: It was just—it was just a German settlement.

WSP: I see. And the Czechs? You had a Czech neighbor? Was there more than one Czech family in that area, as well?

JWT: No, that was the only Czechs there were, as far as I know.

WSP: Do you know how long the German families had been in that community?

JWT: No, I don't. No, I really don't. But some of them was older than I knew anything about. They was—I mean, they had children that was as old as my older brothers and sisters, and—I didn't, I don't remember.

WSP: What was the longest trip you took as a child?

JWT: (laughs)

WSP: You went down to Killeen, and you went up to Gatesville. Would that be considered the longest trip, or did you go elsewhere?

JWT: One time I remember—uh—I think it came from the school, I'm not sure. They fixed it to where we could—so many of us could go to the Dallas fair. And we had to go to Killeen and catch the bus, I guess—guess it was a bus we went on. And, uh—and I was in that, and we went to the Dallas fair, and I remember riding the Ferris wheel up there. (laughs) And I guess that was as far as I—well, no—now when I was—oh, let's see—my younger sister, just older than me that's still living—I've only got one sister living and one brother.

WSP: Who is still living in your family?

JWT: Alice Malissa, the youngest girl, that I'm next to, and then Archie Spivy—he's next to the oldest boy, and uh—and my sister and her husband, they left, they didn't—he was, he was a cowboy, that's all he wanted to be. He didn't want anything else. And he wouldn't do anything else, hardly. So, they left here after they married for a while and—well, they had their little daughter when they still lived around Pidcoke, around where his folks lived. And—so finally he decided they was going to move and go to a ranch. So he went. He left and went out west like, and he found a job at—let's see, was it Kingsland? I believe it was Kingsland, Texas?

WSP: Around King's Ranch?

JWT: No, no, it wasn't called King's. It was Kingsland. But I don't—but it was a pretty good ways out there, but it was kindly in the south from here, kindly southwest, I guess. And, anyway, he got a job out there, and they went out, moved out there. I don't know how long they stayed there, but we went out there a time or two to see them.

And then he got a job in Llano, out the other side of Llano, and, uh—he had a pretty good job out there, and they stayed there, uh—I don't know how long. But anyway, then he kept going on, a little farther and a little farther. And he went to Coleman, and he got a job there on a ranch. And then after they—and, and they went to San Angelo. He got a job at San Angelo on a ranch and they went there, and, uh—then they ended up—from there they ended up, he went out to Midland. And, uh—oh, 'course, they had oil wells and everything out there. And he landed a job as foreman of the big, one of the biggest ranches, I guess, there is anywhere out there. And it, and it was an old, it was a great—a whole lot bigger than this house—a great old big house, I mean a *big* house on that ranch. And that's where they lived. And there wasn't any other hands on the ranch. He was the foreman. And the boss man, that owned it and all, him and his wife lived in town, in Midland. It was halfway between Midland and Big Spring, forty miles from either place.

And—so he liked it there so well, and that old man was so good to him, he tore that old big house

down, and he built them a brand new ranch-style house. I mean, it was nice. And then he, he furnished it with whatever, whatever my sister wanted. He told her, he said, "You just go and pick it out." He told her to pick out drapes for the living room, and, and everything! For the kitchen and everything! "Just pick it out," he said, "what you want, and you'll get it." And so she did. And he—and he just—he was so good to them! He furnished them everything, just about it.

WSP: You traveled out there, I take it?

JWT: Oh, yes, um-hm, when I was—

WSP: Would you consider this one of your longer trips?

JWT: Yeah. But, yes, well, I—but, no—I don't think I went to Llano, though—I was forgetting where I was coming from—I don't think I ever to—out to Midland before I married. I don't believe I did. I don't know, but I don't think so because I remember being at Coleman after I was married.

WSP: Before you left your parents' place, about the longest trip you took was a bus ride to Dallas for the state fair where you rode the Ferris wheel?

JWT: Yes. I remember that Ferris wheel ride. I thought that was so much fun. (laughs) I could see everything. (laughs)

WSP: That would be in the late 1930s, after they had done the Centennial and had it all fixed up real nice?

JWT: I can't remember what year it was. I just can't remember.

WSP: How old were you?

JWT: I don't even know that. I really don't. But I must have been twelve or thirteen, or somewhere along there, I'm not sure.

WSP: That would have been about the time of the Centennial, or a little before. The Centennial was 1936. If you were thirteen, it would have been before. But if you were fifteen, it would have been during the Centennial.

JWT: I don't know for sure, but it was right around in there somewhere. But I enjoyed that trip—although I had to ride to Killeen in the cold, in the rumble seat—(laughs) and cover up with a quilt! (laughs) Oh, it was so cold! (laughs) I won't forget that either! But when we came back—I don't remember anything about the trip.

WSP: You said earlier that you liked horses, and that you rode horses all the time.

JWT: Um-hm. I did! Oh, well, I just always rode a horse. And of course, like I say, we lived about two and a half miles from—the Old Georgetown Road was where the mail route was, you know. And I'd get on my horse—now in the wintertime, I don't remember—but in the summertime, oh, I just felt free, and, and I'd ride my horse everyday, I guess. And I'd get on the horse and go to the mailbox.

And, 'course, we'd have different horses. My daddy would get us a horse. And if he got ready to get rid of it, he'd trade it off or buy another one or something, you know? And we got a little horse one time, a little old bitty thing, and, uh—I mean, it wasn't a Shetland, but it was next to it, it was just a small horse. But he was smart, and he was quick as lightning! (laughs)

My sister—my younger sister that's just eight years older than me, that's still living—she and I rode that horse, and we rode him to school a lot. But he'd just be going along, just as nice as you please, and all of a sudden he'd just *jump*! And he'd jump out from under you! (laughs) And I'm telling you! We got to where we just hated him for that. (laughs)

WSP: He'd jump sideways? And toss you off?

JWT: Uh-huh, and just run on, then, ahead of you. And he never did hurt us, though—but he was just a small horse. But he was so pretty, and he was so quick. I never will forget him.

WSP: Would you ride mostly on your property, or would you go beyond your property for one reason or another?

JWT: No, mostly—mostly I just—it would be on our property. I have gone, I did go off sometimes. Sometime I got it in my head I was going to sell garden seed, or some kind of salve or something. I remember one time going way down, even close to Eliga, horseback, and—(pause) and—I'd go and sell whatever I was trying to sell. I'd sell what I could.

Yeah, and I bet—I think I told you on the phone—that, uh, when we had to move out of camp, when I was seventeen years old. I don't think we had the little Buck horse then—his name was Buck. But like I said now, my oldest brother had boys, six boys, and the oldest one was nearly the same age as me, about three and a half or four months younger than me. And then he had a brother just two years younger than him. So we was together a lot. And my dad—and when we had to move the cattle out and everything, and the animals, well, my dad told us one, one night, he said, "I want y'all to, to drive the sheep from here up to the new place," where they was going to move—(laughs) move to out southeast, southeast of Gatesville.

And, uh, so we started out, and drove them—was on the Georgetown Road with them. And at that time, some of the soldiers had already moved in up on Georgetown Road—I mean it was level ground. It was before you got to the Gannaway Hill. (laughs) And, uh, they was part, uh—just—that was the first bunch that ever moved in. I don't know how many there was, but there was quite a few, there was quite a few pup tents out there. And we got up there—and we hadn't had much trouble—and we got up that far, and the sheep wanted to start straying out into where they were set, to where the soldiers were, you know?

Oh, that just thrilled them soldiers to death! Oh, they had never witnessed anything like that, I guess! Maybe a girl riding a horse and herding sheep, or something. (laughs) And, oh, they just come out, and they wanted, "Oh, let me ride your horse!" "Get down and let me ride your horse for a minute!" "Let us take a picture on him!" (laughs) And, oh, things like that. And I told them, well, we didn't have time, we had to go on and get those sheep up there. And I said, "You know what we're doing it for because y'all are running us off our place!" (laughs)

JWT: And so they—but anyway, they just kept on. And finally I got off and let one or two of them get up on the horse, and they took some pictures. And, we kind of got over that then and got on our horses and got the sheep together and got them back together and drove on, you know? (laughs)

WSP: Did they help you round up the sheep?

JWT: No! No. (laughs) They didn't help us. (laughs) They wouldn't have known how, I don't imagine. And, uh, I—we got them to the place that day, by night, I guess, that same day. And I think my nephews—I think their mom and dad lived somewhere pretty close around up here then. And I guess that's where we stayed that night, I don't know, but we came back home the next day, on Sunday, horseback. And I enjoyed that, 'cause I loved the horse riding anyway. (laughs)

Then, later on, well, then the cattle had to be moved! So that fell to my brother. He knew a way to go that I didn't know, somewhere on the back. I didn't know it very well down that way. It was brushy and—(coughs) pardon me. And so—me and my oldest nephew, and my brother, I believe there was three of us. (coughs)

WSP: Do you want to take a break?

JWT: No, I just got—I don't know, I just started coughing.

Anyway, we started out with the cattle. I don't know how many we had, but of course, my brother, he was better than any of us with the horse and the cattle, you know? We'd have to—they'd run off out in the brush, and we'd have to go out there and get them back, bring them back into the herd, you know? (laughs) It took us all day long, I think, to get those cows up there. They give us a lot of trouble. But we took them up there.

WSP: This time you used some route away from the soldiers?

JWT: Uh-huh, yeah. Yeah, we went an eastern route—(laughs) somehow, I don't know just how—where it was.

WSP: Did you enter any contests, or was horse riding just something you enjoyed yourself?

JWT: I just enjoyed it, and I rode my horse all the time. And I'd get on—out in the pasture, and I'd get him up in a lope, and we'd go on a lope, just—(coughs) I'm sorry.

WSP: It's all right. We can take a break, let you get a glass of water?

JWT: No, that's all right. I don't know why I'm coughing.

But, uh, I really enjoyed riding my horse. And I'd get out there, and I'd go just as high a lope as I could go, just singing to the top of my voice. (laughs) I was always a singing.

WSP: What were you singing?

JWT: Oh, just—then, it was just country tunes, you know, that I liked.

WSP: Did you have swing dances, or what was it called, ring dances?

JWT: Oohhh. Square dancing. No, we didn't have square dancing, but we had this round dancing. We had, uh, what we called country dances. It was two different—two different people, neighbors, that would give country dances, and we'd go to those. Of course, my mother wouldn't allow us to dance, but she didn't know we was going dancing. My brother and I told her we was going to a party. (laughs)

WSP: Oh, I see!

JWT: And she'd let me go with him just about anywhere because she trusted him to take care of me. (laughs) Because he was eight, ten years older than me. And, uh, yeah, we went to the dances, and sometimes we'd dance until two and three o'clock in the morning.

WSP: Is that C. B., the one she trusted?

JWT: Yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh. Yes. He was the sweetest old brother anybody ever had. I sure did think a lot of him.

WSP: Was this the brother who knew the secret route for the cattle?

JWT: Yeah, uh-huh. Oh, it wasn't secret, but I just didn't know it. I just didn't know anything about it, I guess, and he'd been there, and I hadn't. (laughs)

WSP: There's a good eight-year gap between your sister and you, and then your brother was two years before that.

JWT: Yeah, he's two years older than her—he was when he died. He died in 1994.

WSP: Let's go back to 1942, when the army came. How did your family know or learn about the decision? Can you recall?

JWT: That we was going to have to move? Well, no, I don't know much about it. But I'm sure there was gossip all around the community. And then they got papers, I guess, from the government, you know, about it, told them they was going to take the land and that we'd have to get out—because that's what they told everybody. And there was some people that was stubborn enough they wouldn't get out, one or two of the old men I remember over this, just wouldn't go.

WSP: In your area?

JWT: Well, not right close to us, but in—in the general area around, you know? And, but—oh, my dad, he sure did hate to leave. And we all did.

WSP: Did he say anything or discuss it in any way?

JWT: No, I don't remember. Oh, he'd talk about it, I know, but I don't know what he'd say. But they—that's the, that's the heck of it now, see, uh—over 500 acres of land, somewhere close to about, almost 600, I think, maybe 570 something, I'm not sure—but I know it was over 500, and it was good land. It had good pastureland and good field land. And nowadays, mercy, mercy, a place like that—of course, it didn't have any good improvements on it, but a place like that now would cost you no telling how much, with that much land, you know?

WSP: That's right.

JWT: And he got ten thousand dollars. That's what he got for it. That's all they'd give him. So, that's the way it went.

WSP: Did he have to wait long for his payment? Some waited quite a long time for property deeds to clear or resolve disputes or questions about the land. Or did he get his money fairly soon?

JWT: Well. I think fairly soon. I don't remember much about it because that part of it I had nothing to do with. And I don't remember too much, but I just know that they was cheating us and doing us wrong, you know? Everybody thought they was, and I think they was, too, now.

WSP: Were you there to help pack up?

JWT: Well, I don't remember helping to pack. All I remember was helping to move the stock. (laughs) I don't remember any of the rest of it.

WSP: Your big assignment was helping move the sheep and the cattle north to the new pasture, but you don't recall packing up the house for the move.

JWT: No, I don't even remember about that, I sure don't. I don't know how—I don't know who moved it, or—

WSP: In some cases, the army helped. Did they come and help you?

JWT: I think in some cases they did, but I don't think they did us.

WSP: Were you able to take anything that was unusually valuable—pumps, fence wire, or pipes, things of that nature?

JWT: I don't remember, I just don't much think so, but I don't remember for sure.

WSP: Your family moved onto his brother's property? Where was it again that you moved the sheep and cattle?

JWT: Well, we was moving them to the place my dad had bought. I can't even remember the name of the place, now, but it was about northeast of town, somewhere out that way.

WSP: Northeast of Gatesville?

JWT: Southeast! I guess it was southeast. But, uh, they didn't stay there very long.

WSP: Do you know why?

JWT: Well, they just didn't like the place. And it was an old house and part—in fact, part of that house was a, a log cabin. The front part of it was, had been, you know? But it had been other stuff built, you know, around it, walls and stuff, but—

They just didn't like it there, and I *sure* didn't like it. So when we got there—I don't know, I don't even remember spending a night there, but I know I must have, I must have stayed awhile. But I, I asked my mama about going into town, getting me a job. And, uh, so she let my brother—one day when he was kind of slack without anything much to do, she let him take me into town to look for me a job, so—

A girl my age and that status then, there wasn't much for you to do, but I got on at the steam laundry. And went to work there. And I went, and I found me a room, or—well, it wasn't actually a room of my own, I just stayed with them—they, uh—this young couple that didn't live too far from where the place was that I worked. And I got a room there for, I think it was three dollars—now I'm afraid to say, I don't know whether it was three dollars a week or three dollars a month—it wasn't very much. And they was real nice to me. They was young and, she treated me kind of like, you know, a sister or something, I guess. And I enjoyed that. I was making—I think I was making ten dollars a week. (laughs) And, oh, I just thought that was great. And so I just kept working there until finally—

WSP: We were talking about the move off the home place on the last tape. You said your parents didn't speak much about it. Do you remember any talk or discussion around the community, among your school peers, about the move?

JWT: I sure don't. I just really don't remember. Now they was probably something said, but I just don't know what it was.

WSP: This would have happened during the spring semester 1942.

JWT: Uh-huh. Yeah, we left—uh-huh, we left in the spring. We moved in the—I think we moved in March or April, one, moved out of there.

WSP: Can you recall if the army came to help?

JWT: Oh, they didn't come to help us. Unh-uh, no! They didn't help us any.

WSP: Then you got a job in Gatesville?

JWT: In Gatesville, uh-huh.

WSP: Working at a steam press—

JWT: A steam laundry.

WSP: As a way to get off the farm?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: But if you had not been moved off the home place, most likely, you would have stayed on the farm,

and not moved in town. Am I right?

JWT: Oh, yes! Um-hm, yes, uh-huh. And so—and I was seventeen years old at that time. And so I stayed with the laundry until—I was going with my first husband at that time, and I had gone with him for almost three years. And I knew—(pause) that he drank some, but I didn't—I didn't know anything about him, I mean, you know? My mother and dad knew his mother and dad, but—and they were good people—but, oh—he was far from being a good person.

WSP: Was he a local fellow?

JWT: Uh-huh, yes.

WSP: Did his family get moved off as well?

JWT: Yes, they was just renters. They rented.

WSP: I see.

JWT: Yes. And so when I was eighteen years old, I guess, we married. And—

WSP: Did you live in the area?

JWT: No—of course, I followed him around. We went—first lived in Louisiana, where he was stationed down there, and then after that, then he went to Guam. Had two boys then. And—uh—we went, he went to Guam. Well, we, we first went on vacation before he went over there, me and him and my oldest boy—he was about five years old or six, then—five, I guess. And he went with us. And the baby boy, we left him with my sister, my oldest sister and her husband. They lived—he was working at the State School then, and they lived over there. And he was just a year old and I knew he wouldn't enjoy it. I knew he wouldn't know anything about it, and I thought, Well, it'll just be miserable for him, so we'll just leave him with them, and we'll just go.

And we did. And, uh, we had an enjoyable time. And came back to Amarillo—and I had, had a cousin that lived there—and we, we went to their house and stayed two or three nights before we came on home. He—they took us down and showed us the Palo Duro Canyon, and, and, uh, then we came on home.

And, uh, then we went—then my husband had to go—I think it was in November that he had to go to Guam. And so in—it was in March, I believe, it wasn't very long, about four months, I think, after he went that we—me and the two boys went. And I just loved it over there, I really did.

WSP: In Guam?

JWT: Um-hm, it was wonderful over there. I loved it. We stayed two years. And I've always said that was the happiest two years of that marriage—(laughs) I ever knew. And—

WSP: Did he see action?

JWT: Not over there. No, he'd already been to the World War II in Germany, before that.

WSP: This was after the war when he's stationed on Guam.

JWT: Uh-huh, yeah, um-hm. Then after that we came back home, and uh—we lived out in the country, down the other side of Killeen, close to Nolanville. And we had—he had bought the oldest boy a horse for his birthday. And, uh—then my third boy was born in—after we came back in—oh, we came back in the spring, and then he was born in September, the third boy was, that lives at Austin now. And, uh—

WSP: Is this the same man you were married to in 1954? When you were stationed in Germany?

JWT: He—well, he was in the army when we married, and he was always in the army, the rest of our married life. He was in the army twenty-one years.

WSP: Twenty-one years.

JWT: And he would have been there longer—he, he made sergeant—right quick after he got in the army he made sergeant. And he got to drinking so bad that—that, uh, his CO down here at Fort Hood—I went down there—well, the sheriff up here, I knew him real well and he carried me down there, a couple of times his self, I think—and I think I went once on my own.

And—I talked to his CO when I went down there. And he said, "Well, Mrs. White," his—his name was White, he said, "I know you've got those boys, and you're having a hard time." He said, "I know all about it." And he said, "I was fixing to put him—I was fixing to give him a dishonorable discharge," is what he said he was fixing to do. "But," he said, "since you've come and talked to me, and you've got the boys to take care of and make a living for," he said, "I'm going to just keep him in the—." He had him in the stockade—he said, "I'm just going to keep him in there until I can release him, or until he retires. I think he lacked two years to be retiring. And so, he did, he kept him in there. And my dad died then, in 1962, I guess it was—

And they give him a leave to come home and stay three or four days, when my dad passed away. And, uh, but I don't know why—but anyway, they did. And—but his CO was so nice, and he told me, he said, "I'm going to keep him here just as long as I need to." He said, "Now, I'm going to try to help you all I can because," he said, "I know you need it." And I said, "Yes, I sure do." And he said, "Well," he said, "he won't draw very much now," uh, "but," he said, "he would have had more if he hadn't messed up like he did." He said, "Now, he's been stripped, stripped down," you know, "to a buck private. And he'll never be anything else anymore, as long—because he's just—he's just messed up."

So, I went ahead—and our sheriff up here, he knew him, and he didn't like him. He was—he'd, he'd come and pick him up anywhere. It didn't make no difference when he heard from me or what about it. If he heard something was wrong, he'd come and pick him up, take him and put him in jail. (coughs)

Got to where I was afraid of him because he shot at me one time, missed my head about that much—because he knew, though—he was a good shot, and he knew what he was doing. But he was drinking, he was drunk. And, so anyway, that's about the way it ended for us.

WSP: You hung in there for twenty some odd years?

JWT: Uh-huh, yeah. We'd been married about twenty-one, twenty years, I guess, or twenty-one, and he had been in the service.

WSP: Did you divorce him after he got out of the stockade?

JWT: Well. (sighs) I can't remember exactly just which way that went because I was up here at Gatesville and they was down there, and—and he was up here—at different times he was up here. And, uh, I guess they let him out of the stockade. I guess his time came, and he got out.

And, uh—but the sheriff then—and he had a real good deputy that, boy—the sheriff himself was kindly afraid, you know, he would—he'd send the deputy out ahead of him. (laughs) That's true. And—but that deputy, he was good! I'm telling you! He wasn't afraid of anything. And, uh—but they'd get him, and put him in jail, if he, if he just—and he told me to get a restraining order from

him, so he couldn't come to the house, you know?

Well, that didn't make no difference to him, he'd still come. And I'd tell him, I'd say, "All I've got to do is just call, and they'll be right down here after you." And I'd start to the phone, and he'd jump up and beat me to the phone, he wouldn't let me call anybody. So, that's the way it went. And I was just—I had just took and took and took and took until I just didn't think I could take anymore. And so finally—(sighs) the sheriff told him one day—that, that was it, he was going to have to leave.

WSP: Leave the county?

JWT: Or just leave, go somewhere—anyway he couldn't stay around close to where we were. And so he did. He left. But he come by the house first and wanted to know if I hadn't changed my mind, if I wouldn't let him stay. I said no. And, uh, so he left. And the next thing I heard from him he was in Florida, working for a circus or something. And—(laughs) and he would, he would accuse me of things, you know, that I hadn't done. And he'd do things, and then he'd turn around and accuse me of doing the same thing—and it wasn't so. So—

WSP: Well, that's then.

JWT: That's then.

WSP: And that's over.

JWT: And he's dead now. Uh-huh. But you know what—

WSP: You found a second guy, who was an good guy, right?

JWT: I *thought* he was! At least he didn't drink. I think that's what hit me, to be so good—no, he wasn't a drinker, no he never did drink, but he—

WSP: This was Mr. Wright?

JWT: No, Mr. Trantham. And he lied—both of them could lie as fast as you could take a drink of water. (laughs) And I found out about this one—after I'd been married to him twenty-one years—I found out what he was, so he left and went back to—he was from Jacksonville, Texas, and he went back down there. And he wasn't down there too long—he was put in the rest home—and then, and then he died. But, uh—I've had a tragic life.

WSP: Well, I think you've had a typically hard life that people—that other people have had, and still have these days. But there's more groups out there helping people, more resources to turn to, now—whereas before you didn't have all that much help—but it sounds like you had a better sheriff than a lot of women have these days.

JWT: (laughs) Well, he was kind of a ladies' man, but still, he wasn't mine—he wasn't for me. (laughs)

WSP: Well, he was keeping an eye out for you, and that was a good thing.

JWT: Yeah, yeah, he was good to me thataway. Yes, he was.

WSP: Do you remember your parents telling any stories about their early life, or about their parents, or grandparents?

JWT: No, I sure don't, I don't remember anything about it. But I know my daddy came here from Tennessee when he was just a boy, about thirteen years old, I think. And see, this part of the country, then, wasn't settled. There was still Indians here, and I don't know—

WSP: Which would have put it about when—about 1880s?

JWT: I imagine because him and my mother married in 1898. And Mama always said they were the first couple to be married in the courthouse down here, and it wasn't quite finished.

WSP: Which courthouse?

JWT: Coryell County Courthouse.

WSP: Oh, I think there were people married in the Coryell County Courthouse before 1893.

JWT: No, 1898.

WSP: When the *new* courthouse was finished.

JWT: Yeah—well, it wasn't quite finished. She said they lacked just a little bit having it finished when they married.

WSP: That's a nice looking courthouse!

JWT: Oh, it's a beautiful courthouse, I think. Yes, I think it's the prettiest one I've ever seen!

WSP: Yes, indeed. And, that wonderful dome—

JWT: Yes, its roof, yes. Yeah, it's a real pretty courthouse. Everybody thinks it is.

WSP: I'm sorry. You said it was your father's side that came from Tennessee?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: What about your mother's side?

JWT: Well, I don't really know where they came here from. She was a Graham, and—

WSP: Well, Grahams have been in this area for quite some time.

JWT: Yes, yeah, uh-huh. I've got Graham kinfolks all over everywhere.

WSP: How did your parents meet? Did you ever hear that story?

JWT: No, I sure never did. I sure never did hear it. They didn't talk about things like that. (laughs)

WSP: Not like they do today!

JWT: No! (laughs) Absolutely not!

WSP: We've talked about many subjects, but one of my favorite topics is the weather. Since we're sitting in your house at the end of May, and it's ninety [degrees] outside and we've got the doors closed because it's going to make it cooler inside—

JWT: (laughs) Ah, yes, well, it does.

WSP: Without any air conditioning, mind you, just the fans on. Tell me about that. What was it like on the farm, ranching and all, with out any electricity?

JWT: Well, we didn't know any difference, you see? It didn't bother us because we was used to it. See, like I told you, we'd go out and pick cotton in 90- and a 100-degree—I remember one time, I know we was picking cotton, and it was 110 degrees! But we—it didn't matter—it didn't bother us that much, 'cause we was used to it. We didn't know anything different. And yeah, it was, it was hot! But—

WSP: How did you stay cool?

JWT: Well, we didn't, we didn't stay cool! (laughs) I guess we cooled off at night, a little bit. But no, it—we just didn't have any—we just had these kinds of fans—that's the only kinds of fans we had.

WSP: Little hand fans?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: Did you have a swamp cooler back then?

JWT: A what?

WSP: A swamp cooler?

JWT: No, unh-uh.

WSP: That was what you were going to set up in your window here, a water-cooled—

JWT: Yes, but they didn't have them then.

WSP: Didn't have them then?

JWT: No, unh-uh.

WSP: Nothing to do but open the windows and hope for a breeze.

JWT: (laughs) Yeah.

WSP: Did you take any cool water baths, or anything like that to stay cool? Go swimming?

JWT: No. No, we just—we just took baths in the old washtubs, you know, number two and number three washtubs, mostly number threes. (laughs) That's all we had to take a bath in. And—I don't know, we just lived like—and we were, we was just real poor people. But—and I'm not ashamed of it, I enjoyed it then, and I—

I can think about it now, and know, you know, how it come out. It was wonderful, it was. They was real—my mother and dad was real good people.

WSP: Was there any year when it was especially hot, or especially cold?

JWT: Well, I don't know. I don't remember about that. It was cold, it was cold everywhere. It snowed quite a bit during that time, in the wintertime. And in the summer, it was just as hot. (laughs)

WSP: How much snow would you estimate you'd get?

JWT: Oh, I don't know. Well—(sighs) I know sometimes—now I can remember at Christmastime, all kids that was married—and the most all of them lived close to us—they'd come to our house on Christmas Eve night. And we had that big fireplace, and they'd start a big fire. And I had a brother-in-law that wouldn't go anywhere—he was from Indiana, married my sister Gertie Lee—and, uh, he wouldn't do anything hardly, but he'd come to our house on Christmas Eve night.

And we'd play games, all of us older people. Wasn't no little kids—seemed like they was growing up, or they was gone to bed, or something, I don't know, but they wasn't around to bother. But anyway, we'd get together in that one big fireplace room, and we'd push stuff over to the wall or against the wall, or make more room, you know? And we'd get out and we'd—we'd play—all of us would—play games, you know, in that living—in that fireplace room. And we enjoyed that so very much! I'm mean grown people now! We'd play those kid games, I guess you called them. We'd play Pussy

Wants a Corner, and—

WSP: Whoa! Whoa!

JWT: (laughs)

WSP: Okay, that's one game I've never heard of. We'll come back to that in a second, but first, give me some other games you played.

JWT: Well, we played Drop the Handkerchief part of the time. It was a small place to play it, but we'd play it.

WSP: Drop the Handkerchief?

JWT: Yes.

WSP: All right.

JWT: Oh, I don't know what else. And I don't know what you called it, but we played a game where somebody would have a broom—and there'd be one person start out in the center, and they'd have a broom.

I don't remember how that went. But, it was something alike—I think there were two games a lot alike because my mother would play, too! (laughs) My brother-in-law—that was from Indiana, and he never did go anywhere very much—he was *it* one night, in the center—I never will forget that—and my mother, she didn't want any man a putting their hands on her, whatsoever! And—(laughs) so my brother-in-law, Ralph, he'd have to go around, you know. And of course, he'd be blindfolded—and the one in the middle would be blindfolded, and the rest of us we'd just kind of try to stay from him and go around him, you know? But one night he caught my mother! (laughs) And he was feeling around, you know—(laughs) and he knew it was a woman. I guess he knew it was her. I don't know.

WSP: And she can't say anything!

JWT: (laughs) Yes. (laughs) And he guessed who it was then—but she couldn't hardly stand that, I could just tell. (laughs)

WSP: What was the name of that game?

JWT: I don't really know what it was.

WSP: Well, what's Pussy Wants a Corner? What was that like?

JWT: Yeah, well, we'd all have corners. We'd get in a corner, and then the person that was—that was *it*, we'd call—they'd go to you in the corner—they wouldn't go right up to you—but they'd go facing you, and they'd say, Pussy wants a corner! And we'd all change, you know, corners, every once in a while, and if he could get to a corner that was empty before somebody else got to it, then that person had to be the one out. (laughs)

WSP: So it's like Musical Chairs.

JWT: I guess.

WSP: Someone would say, Go! And everyone would rush to a corner?

JWT: Um-hm. Yes. That's all we knew to call it, though. (laughs)

WSP: Tell me about Drop the Handkerchief?

JWT: Oh, well, you know—you have a circle and you go around—the one that's got the handkerchief, they'd go around behind everybody, you know, and then they'd drop the handkerchief behind somebody. And if you knew it, and you'd pick it up—I think, and you can go around and catch him and touch him before he got to your place, then he still had to be *it*. But if you didn't, you had to be it. (laughs) Something like that. I don't know. We played that in school, too.

WSP: I do remember that one, now. And you've described it very well. You'd watch the back of your feet to see if they dropped the handkerchief at your feet. And when you'd see it drop, you'd whirl around, grab the handkerchief, and take off running.

JWT: Uh-huh. Yes. (laughs) That's the way it was.

WSP: But I'd never heard of Pussy Wants a Corner.

JWT: Well—(laughs) well, we always played it.

WSP: It would be just the four corners in one room?

JWT: Well, yeah, mostly. I guess—you know, I don't remember about that because we'd have—we had beds in there. And we'd just pick out something, you know—I guess they'd just designate what would be a corner. I don't know. (laughs)

WSP: But now back to the weather. Was there any droughts or severe rainstorms? Did it ever flood the ranch, or cause any kind of damage?

JWT: No. No.

WSP: Any tornadoes?

JWT: No, we never—we was always lucky and never had any.

WSP: But there was tornadoes in other areas?

JWT: Oh, yes!

WSP: Now did you have a radio to be able to—

JWT: Not for a long, long time. Oh, just—not—I wouldn't say, I don't know how long—but just for about two or three years, or four before we had to move out. My dad got a radio that was operated by battery, you know, and when you played out that battery, well, that radio was dead. And we just never—well as not have it because they wouldn't let us play it. (laughs) They wanted to hear something special, I guess, like the news or something on it, you know. And you'd turn it on, and they'd make you turn it off, Turn that radio off! It's going to play out! (laughs) And they wouldn't let us play it. (laughs)

WSP: Now the telephone was another matter—

JWT: Yes, we had—well, we had these old-time telephones, about so tall, you know, on the side of the wall. And they had a receiver thing. They went in and pulled that down, and it had that long, pretty long cord on it. And we had—I think it was seventeen we had on our line, one line.

WSP: On your party line—

JWT: In the country it was that way. (laughs) And every time it would ring—you know, everybody would have a certain ring, so many shorts or so many longs, or whatever. I think ours was a short and a long. And, uh, every time somebody would call, though, the rest of the line would know that the phone was

ringing, and they'd go. And you know, if you wanted to listen, all you had to do was go take the receiver down and listen. (laughs) And so that's, that's the way—but it was—we hated it then because we'd get mad, you know, because somebody would be on the line, and they wouldn't hang up, you know, so you could use the phone or anything. (laughs)

WSP: Right—because you couldn't call out, if someone was talking on the phone?

JWT: No, unh-uh! No, if they was using it anywhere else, we couldn't call out.

WSP: Did you have an operator somewhere?

JWT: Yes, at Copperas Cove.

WSP: So your telephone the line was tied into Copperas Cove?

JWT: Uh-huh.

WSP: And then from Copperas Cove they could connect you to other areas.

JWT: Yes. Uh-huh, yes.

WSP: Did your dad take the cotton to the gin?

JWT: Yes, most of the time he took it to Copperas Cove.

WSP: Would your brother go along, as well—

JWT: No! No, no, he'd stay there and pick cotton with us.

WSP: Oh, I see. Your dad would drive the wagon full of cotton in. Where would he take it? Was there a cotton gin in Antelope?

JWT: Unh-uh, no. Just Copperas Cove. Um-hm. It would take him all day, just about, to go over there and take it, get it ginned, and come back.

WSP: Did he bring the hulls back, or the cottonseeds?

JWT: Cottonseeds, most of the time.

WSP: There was a train in Copperas Cover, right?

JWT: Yes.

WSP: Did you ever take the train for any reason?

JWT: No. It was mostly a freight train. Sometimes, I guess, it was a passenger train, but we could hear it from our house, just as clear as a button! (laughs)

WSP: The whistle, or the train itself?

JWT: Well, the whistle. It was always blowing when they'd get close to Copperas Cove, and we could hear the train a-coming. (laughs)

WSP: One final question. What was the most enjoyable aspect of those days? You've told us about your love of horses, but was there anything else that you would like to remind people about.

JWT: Well, no, I don't guess. I loved my horse—I loved riding a horse better than anything else, I guess. That's about the main thing I did when I could. Of course, I had to work now, I didn't just do like kids do today, I didn't come home and just do what I wanted to, you know, and do nothing. I had to work.

My mama seen to it that we had work to do. And if I was sick, or if it was real cold, and I didn't go to school one day, I'd have to piece quilts all day long! (laughs) And I hated that! (laughs) But no, I don't remember—

WSP: Did you ever get a chance to do any horse riding after you left?

JWT: No, unh-uh.

WSP: Have you ever done any since then?

JWT: No, never have.

WSP: Do you miss it?

JWT: Well, I did at first, but no. Now? I couldn't ride one, now, I wouldn't be able to. (laughs)

WSP: I just wondering, since that was one of your favorite memories, whether you had been able to ever ride again.

JWT: No, I've never rode a horse since I left there, I don't guess.

WSP: I want to thank you very much for having me in. This has been very pleasant, and you've given me a lot of information in areas that I didn't know anything about. And I can tell you, vinegar cobbler—(laughs)

JWT: (laughs) Well, now I've never made one, so don't ask me to!

WSP: Well, thank you very much for taking the time—

JWT: Well, you're welcome.

WSP: I'll be back to you as soon as I get the transcript completed. But I really appreciate it—and thank you very much.

JWT: One of the older men at church this morning—they hadn't been there too long, they came down here from California. Well, their daughter and her family came down here first—they came to Hamilton. And they was going to church in Hamilton. And he told somebody up there one day, we just can't seem to find a church in Hamilton that we like, the kind that we want to go to. And, uh, that man, whoever he was talking to, said, "Have you ever gone to the Calvary Baptist in Gatesville?" He said, "No." He said, "Well, you go down there and see how you like it." He said, "I hear it's a pretty good church." And so they came down here—and it's been about seven or eight years ago now, and they're still here. (laughs) And they really like it, so they're still here. And so her mother and daddy was in California, too, and they moved down here last year. And they really like it. And he's just a sweet, jolly old man, you know, he's always laughing and going on.

And, uh, he told—I was telling him this morning about something about I was supposed to have a man come out today and talk to me about the—a new book that was being made or something, you know? He laughed, and he said, "Ah, that'll be wonderful," he said, "that'll be wonderful, to see your name in the book!" And I said, "Well, now you may not see that!" (laughs)

WSP: Oh, yes. You will see your name in the book.

JWT: And so he—I don't know, I just thought about that—he's a real jolly man.

WSP: Now that's your church right up the road, isn't it?

JWT: Um-hm, Calvary Baptist.

WSP: That's very convenient.

JWT: Uh-huh, it's right in the corner of [Highways] 84 and 116.

WSP: Yes, right up where you have your turnoff to Old Pidcoke Road up there—that's right up there, or am I turned around?

JWT: No, no, it's not Old Pidcoke Road up there at the church—it's just [Highway] 116 is Pidcoke Road.

WSP: Oh, okay. A little further down. I must be turned around. There is a church up at this intersection, isn't there?

JWT: Yes, well—yeah, well, there's two, actually. There's a Lutheran church not far from it, back thisaway, and there's another Baptist church—and I can't remember what the name of it is to save my soul! I never can.

WSP: Yes. It looks kind of new.

JWT: Yes, but it's not very new. No.

WSP: I thought it might be your church.

JWT: No. No, I've gone to Calvary all my life, I mean, as far as I can remember going to church and choosing where I wanted to go—that's where I've always gone—

T. A. Wilhite

Date of birth: 1911
Community affiliated with: Sparta
Interviewed by Thad Sitton

TS: This is Thad Sitton. Today is April 5, 2001. I'm interviewing for the first time T. A. Wilhite at Mr. Wilhite's home in Belton, Texas. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University. [Ruth Wilhite also took part in this interview.]

What do you remember about the place where you grew up at Sparta, your daddy's place?

TAW: Well, about everything that happened.

TS: What was there? What did he have on his place.

RW: He wants to know the kind of things you had, the kind of farm animals, don't you? Yeah, what kind of farm animals, and you had a barn there, and what kind of stuff like that.

TAW: Well, we had mules and horses. The mules plowed and the horses we'd drive.

TS: This was on North Nolan Creek, right?

TAW: Yeah, that's where I lived, just over the hill from Sparta—(unintelligible) there're three stores, three stores over there at Sparta.

TS: Did they all sell merchandise?

TAW: Yeah, they all kept groceries. One place there, they had a dance hall, a pretty big outfit. Old man Henry Jordan bought it out and filled it full of groceries.

RW: But did they have clothing in any of 'em?

TAW: No.

TS: Flour and lard and coffee and stuff like that, right?

TAW: (unintelligible) You know, everybody had a bank, and it's a cedar brake. And every Friday, they'd all go to the cedar brake and cut a little post, take 'em to Sparta, and trade 'em for groceries. I'd haul about two hundred cedar posts over there, and I'd get a wagon bed full of groceries. No sideboards, just a bed.

TS: Would they pay you in money, and then you used the money to buy stuff? Or would it go directly from posts to groceries?

TAW: Well, when we carried them posts over to Sparta, we traded 'em for groceries. Yeah, it was practically all a trade-out.

TS: So, they'd just say, you've got so much credit for groceries for these posts?

TAW: Well, we usually traded out while we're there. Carried it home. Yeah.

TS: So, everybody had some cedar—

TAW: And the ones that didn't have would go and—some fellow'd have a big place, you know, and he'd let somebody come in and cut on the halves. And everybody had—it's just like a bank, a cedar brake was.

TS: What else could you sell at the store to get a little cash? Eggs?

TAW: Oh, we'd carry the eggs to Belton. Sell 'em in Belton. Mama, women, mostly, got the eggs.

TS: So, they took care of the egg money?

TAW: Yeah. But they'd spend it for stuff we needed.

TS: Well, you got—let's see, I was reading a little about you, and you rented a farm two miles east of Sparta and were there for twenty years, right? When you got married, when you started out?

TAW: Yeah, I've lived down below Sparta. I'll tell you where I lived right here. (looks for photographs) That's me and my mules back in the mule days.

TS: This is a photo of Mr. Wilhite, about thirty years old or so, and with Johnny and Lila on the Boren place.

TAW: That's the name of my mules.

TS: On the Boren place. And the Boren place is where you farmed for twenty years, right?

TAW: A long time, I don't recollect just exactly the time, but it was a long time.

TS: What can you tell me about mules, using mules? Because people don't know mules from a hole in the ground, today.

TAW: Oh, well mules. You hooked them up and plowed, made a crop with 'em. Them mules right there was good mules to make a crop with. They'd work good, and I kept them—while they's there I hadn't had 'em for too long, and they was kind of thin. They didn't stay in my barn long until they were fat.

RW: Yeah, mules were used for working. And tell him how you hooked 'em up and everything. What kind of plows did you have?

TS: Yeah, what kind of working gear did you use?

RW: Yeah, what kind of plows and kind of harness and all that stuff.

TAW: I got a—(unintelligible) on her. These same two mules got harness on 'em. We could take a pair of mules and hook 'em to a cultivator and go out there and plow a lot of cotton or a lot of corn in one day. Yeah, they'd walk on out.

TS: Well, how much land were you working on that place?

TAW: About two hundred acres.

TS: How much would you have in cotton?

TAW: Uh, I don't recollect to give you an exact figure, but I didn't have a big lot of cotton. It was mostly corn and maize and stuff to feed my mules.

RW: That wouldn't be cotton land up there. That wasn't it any big cotton farming land up in there, was it?

TAW: Well, we all had cotton. That was our money crop, cotton was.

TS: But you needed to raise lots of other stuff, too. You had to have feed for the mules and corn to eat.

TAW: Well, we'd take that corn and have it ground and make cornbread. And we could feed it to the mules, and make them where they'd work. It was all a pretty good—it was set up to where everything worked.

RW: Well, uh, T. A., your daddy and mother had ten grown children, didn't they?

TAW: Had eleven grown ones.

RW: Eleven lived to be grown. How many acres did your daddy farm?

TAW: I think he had about 125.

RW: One hundred and twenty-five, and they had eleven grown children to feed. And in the summertime, y'all went out and chopped cotton and everything for other people?

TAW: When we got our place cleaned out, we headed to get a job and make some money, chopping. See, cotton made our clothes, the school clothes and stuff, that's the way we got school clothes.

TS: So, as soon as your place, you had all the cotton on your place, everybody went out and hired out picking for somebody else, right?

TAW: When we got through at home. Now, where I was at over there, it wasn't with my daddy, it was two hundred acres there that I had my own. I had some good mules, and I raised 'em and worked 'em there on that farm, and made a good living with 'em.

RW: Yeah, but whenever you were growing up, y'all worked out, and some of 'em went to West Texas, didn't they? Some of went to West Texas and hired out to pick cotton?

TAW: I's in the bunch. In 1925, two or three carloads of us went to West Texas.

RW: Everything—poor people was real poor, real poor.

TS: I just heard that from somebody else this morning. The crops were real bad, weren't they? A couple of crops failed because of drought?

TAW: You had a crop failure, you had a hard road to climb, then.

RW: Tell him how much money your daddy borrowed every year.

TAW: Every year, Daddy borrowed twenty-five dollars. I got the notes out there in the barn.

RW: Twenty-five dollars, can you imagine that, with eleven children, and they worked 125 acres of land.

TAW: Yeah, might near every year he borrowed twenty-five dollars to finish up cropping. But he's a pretty good manager, he seen that we all had plenty to eat and plenty to wear.

RW: Well, in the house, y'all had an old wood stove, didn't you? Didn't you have an old wood stove to cook on?

TAW: Yeah. Yeah, they had a wood stove at home.

TS: Well, what did—did your daddy raise cotton and corn, just like you did later?

TAW: Yeah. Yeah.

RW: Y'all raise maze, too?

TAW: Uh, he never did plant much maize. Planted a little highgear, and highgear's a better mule feed than maize. You could sure make a feed out of that highgear, it'd make better than maize.

TS: I understand that when you were on the Boren place you raised ribbon cane, is that right?

TAW: Well, I didn't use it for ribbon cane. I planted ribbon cane, and I cut it and baled it and made a hay for my mules.

RW: That's what they made syrup out of, wasn't it, ribbon cane syrup?

TAW: Yeah, some people did, but if you made syrup you had to plant it kind of thin. Take a blade and strip all the leaves down, cut it and put the stalks in the wagon, and carry it over to—wasn't very far over there where they made syrup out of it.

RW: Well, some of your neighbors made it?

TAW: Old man John Kelly, he made it.

RW: You want to tell him how they made that, and all?

TAW: Yeah. He had a crew, and they had some of those similar pans, similar to that only a whole lot bigger. And he put this in there, and they's dividing lines all the way, and when it went out at the lower end, it was cooked and ready to eat.

RW: Well, they had a mule, didn't you say, to pull that?

TAW: Two.

RW: Two mules. What was it they pulled around?

TAW: Pulled in a circle out there, around and around, and mashed that syrup out.

RW: Oh, they put the ribbon cane in the container?

TAW: They mashed that cane up. These mules would pull and turn that big outfit, and they'd feed the hay to that big outfit—I mean cane—

RW: Well, what was it, a big bowl or a big pot, or something?

TAW: Oh, it's a big pan made especially for cooking off syrup.

TS: So, the juice would go in one end of the pan, right? And by the time it had reached, gone through all the compartments to the other side, it was cooked down.

TAW: Yeah, it had a bunch of compartments.

TS: And it came out the other end as finished syrup.

TAW: Yeah. I know, I had a neighbor over at Brookhaven, he brought a load of cane over there, and it come up a big rain, and after the rain he headed out to go home. Well, Howard Kelly's wife lived over on a road not far from where they cooked the syrup off, and she's gonna ride over—so muddy and wet, you know, she's going to ride in the wagon with him. They drove into Nolan Creek and washed the team and everything, washed 'em off, and went down a little piece and they hit the bank and went over here, and he throwed her out on the bank and then jumped out his self. Got rid of her! (laughs)

TS: Well, a lot of the creeks didn't have—a lot of the places you had to cross didn't have bridges, right?

TAW: Well, this didn't have no bridge, it had a cement—one of them things.

TS: Oh, one of those low-water—

TAW: Yeah, low-water cement.

RW: Yeah, a lot of 'em didn't have anything.

TAW: And right below it, there's a deep hole, deep water, and it washed these mules, wagon, and everything off in there. And that was deep plumb on down to this brush, and it turned there, and when he got to the brush, he throwed Mrs. Kelly out and jumped out his self, and his mules was both drowned.

TS: They would have been all in the harness and couldn't—

TAW: They were all tangled up in the harness and the wagon, they couldn't swim.

TS: Well, I understand that you tried to keep five hundred dollars in the bank, if you could, as a safety. Why did you do that?

TAW: Yeah. Well, I always said, if I had five hundred dollars in the bank and a good set of mules, I had nothing to worry about. I didn't worry about nothing. Well, I ain't much different, now.

RW: He still doesn't worry, he never has worried about anything. (laughs)

TAW: I don't get no good out of worrying. That's the bad end of living.

TS: Well, five hundred dollars in those days was a good bit of money, too.

TAW: Oh, back in them days, it's a pocket full of money.

RW: Yeah, but you probably didn't have five hundred dollars when you first started out.

TAW: Oh, no. It wasn't too long after I went to farming all that good bottomland until I had the five hundred dollars.

TS: What was this place like, was it pretty good land? I'm talking about your—

TAW: Oh, it was some of the best. It's as fine a land as you could buy. Real heavy river bottomland, it'd make anything and grow anything.

TS: Had people been on this place before you?

TAW: Oh, yeah, old man Johnny Boren, he'd raised a family on it. Had one boy that got rattlesnake bit. He's picking cotton down there and picked up to a pecan sprout, and there's a rattlesnake under that sprout, and it killed him. He didn't live but a little while after that snake bit him.

TS: Were snakes bad there?

TAW: Yeah! I know one year—I lived on the lower end of the farm when I first moved there. Old man Johnny Boren lived up at the home place, where these mules was made a picture, and I'd go around there late in the evening, and he'd always want me to come around and see something on TV—the radio, it wasn't no TV. And I'd go around there, and nearly ever' time I went I might kill two or three rattlesnakes, coming out of the field or going in the field. Big high bluff and mountain on one side and a field on the other.

TS: You had 'em in the cotton field and the corn field, too, when you were working it? Would you

get rattlesnakes?

TAW: Them rattlesnakes just coil up most anywhere. Yeah. I know I was plowing with four mules and a double-row cultivator, I had my feet in the stirrups. I looked down there and there's a big rattlesnake coiled up, boy, I raised them just as high as I could get 'em where he couldn't bite me. And I pulled off a little piece, turned around and went back there and killed him.

TS: But, that type of cultivator, you run it with your feet, right? You directed it with your feet, so they're down there—

TAW: They had 'em—you turn and you go one way or another and they turn. But this'ne I had was—(unintelligible) and you just guided by it.

TS: What did you use to make your beds? Did you use a middle-buster, or—

TAW: Uh, we had what you call a John Deere Stag in them days. You could hook four mules to it, and it'd run around just deep as you want it to, and you throw up a bed of dirt, you put a good bed of dirt on it.

TS: Would it throw the soil both ways?

TAW: Yeah. Now, if you had a turning plow, it only throwed it one way. But middle-busters, it opened and throwed it both ways.

TS: So, you were making half of two beds at one time—finishing one bed and starting another.

TAW: Finishing one bed and making another'ne, half of another'ne.

TS: But it took four mules to run one of those, right?

TAW: Well, you could. But a John Deer Stag was built for three mules. It had iron singletrees, and they's three of 'em to work three mules to. And they could pretty well handle it, three mules could, but sometimes these—I wanted four, because I could just whup 'em on out and get a lot done with four.

TS: You're saying stag, s-t-a-g?

TAW: John Deere Stag, that was the name of the plow.

TS: That was the model.

TAW: Well, that was the name that the company made.

TS: Yeah, John Deere was the company and Stag was the—

TAW: Stag plow.

TS: I got you. Was that a riding plow?

TAW: Yeah. Yeah, you'd ride it. I got a picture somewhere of one of them Stags, and three mules hooked to it, and I'm sitting up on the Stags. There was one fellow, he went up on the Sparta mountains up there. I think he got him the posts from a fellow that had a lot of 'em up there. Him and his little boy went up there, and they come back, and they's going down this mountain, and it's a long way down and it's real steep. And the brake broke on the wagon, and, oh, he went on down. The mules couldn't even start to hold it. And it throwed him off down there, made a turn, and I think most of them posts fell on that little boy. That little boy, it just mashed him flat. Boy, it liked to killed everybody in that country. (sobs with sorrow) This big load of posts just mashed him flat.

RW: Well, things just happen like that. We have a lot of tragedies, now, but people don't think much about

it. But back then—

TS: But farming, there was some dangerous things to it. Working with mules and horses is kind of dangerous.

TAW: Yep. Some mules will run away with you. They'll just get up and run as hard as they can run. Scatter away everything you had. (laughs) Yeah, I don't know, he just had this little boy—

TS: People have told me a lot about gin accidents, cotton gin accidents.

TAW: Yeah, oh, yeah. Fellows that run that cotton gin has to be awful careful, they get a hand in there and it'd cut it off. Yeah.

TS: Where did you gin your cotton?

TAW: Generally, at Tom Bowles gin in Belton. They had a coop around there, and old man Tom, he had it around there. Most of the people dealt with him. He was a good fellow, and we nearly all dealt with him. And old man Lou Chaffin, he come around there and brought a bale—everybody's getting a good deal, you know, and he heard about it—he come around there and brought a bale of cotton. And Tom Bowles told him, he says, "Go up to the store and get you a pair of britches," says, "them damned old britches you wearing ain't fittin' to wear to town." (laughs) And the old man, he's just right in for that.

RW: Who was that, old man Bowles?

TAW: Old man Bowles was the one that was gonna buy this—

RW: Oh, yeah, Tommy's daddy, huh?

TAW: Yeah, yeah. Tommy he marked all the way, every way you come in, he'd run and jump up and mark what number it was. And he wouldn't get 'em mixed up when you went to ginning.

TS: You got ginned off in the order you'd come in, right? So, that way you could leave and go do something if you knew you had twenty wagons in front of you.

TAW: Yeah. They were kind of awful good that way. Old man Tom, he—I believe old man Chaffin ginned the rest of the year with him—after he bought him them britches. (laughs)

TS: Well, his britches must have been really bad for him to—they must have looked awful.

TAW: Yeah. It wasn't so bad, but old man Tom of course he made it worse than it looked and wanted to go up there and when they carried him up there to buy him a new pair, that cured it all, you know.

RW: And got some business there, didn't he?

TAW: Yeah, and I don't think that old man, uh, I don't believe he's always doing at the end of his—(unintelligible) I don't think he ginned anymore there, but after he got them new britches—

TS: Do you remember when you were young, were there any steam gins still working? Steam gins. Any steam gins?

TAW: Yeah, they was a whole lot of 'em run by steam. But I don't know, I didn't examine them gins too good. I'd just go there and gin the cotton off, and that's it, I'd go home.

TS: Well, you always wanted to get back and get the rest of it, right?

TAW: Yeah, get back to the field and get some more cotton.

RW: Well, you pulled it with a wagon and two mules, I guess.

TAW: Yeah. The mules would set right there until you'd ginned your cotton off.

TS: Would people hang around—did it take—when the most cotton was going into the gin, did it take you awhile, did you have to wait around most of the day for them to get to you?

TAW: Uh, they usually ginned you off, you didn't have to wait too long. They run that gin pretty fast. They had three gins there, then, and one gin wasn't getting—(unintelligible) they sort of divided it up—these three.

RW: Well, I guess sometimes they were real busy, you'd have to wait a long time, wouldn't you? I know Daddy did, he'd have to wait. Those wagons would be lined up. Have to wait a long time, and then sometimes it'd go pretty fast.

TS: Well, you know, the courthouse town has more gins, but it's kind of a good thing to be close enough to take it into a place that has several gins, because a lot of times you just had to go wherever you could reach. Well, did you—was cotton your main cash crop?

TAW: No, corn was my main crop, because I had a corn picker and I could do all my own gathering. And that cotton—(unintelligible) oh, I didn't fool with cotton too much. Had to have a little, but—we'd kind of mixed up our crop.

TS: So, you sold a lot of corn is what you're saying, right?

TAW: Oh, yeah, yeah. All our corn down there, sell it right where I sold the cotton. They had a place there that was bins, tall bins, they're still there. They'd fill 'em full of shelled corn.

RW: Down there at Bowles, is that where you're talking about?

TAW: Uh-huh, all them tall things was full of corn.

TS: What you're saying is, you had a corn picker, a mechanical picker?

TAW: I had a corn picker, I didn't have no other picker.

TS: Yeah. How did the corn picker work? That's what I don't know about.

TAW: Uh, it was a row on each side of the tractor, it was made just like that. And the corn would come up and get in there, and it's turning real fast, and it'd mash that ear off, and the ear would go right up in the wagon.

RW: Well, is that that thing you got out yonder? That's not a corn picker out there, is it?

TAW: No. I sold the corn picker to Collier.

TS: Was the corn picker—could it be used with mules, or was it part of the tractor time?

TAW: No, you had to have a tractor to use the corn picker. 'Cause it had a row on each side of the tractor, and the tractor run in the middle, and these other run the rows.

TS: I see, yeah.

TAW: Just—(unintelligible) from two ways, the corn went over in there.

TS: So, it was picking, it was picking two rows at a time, running down the middle.

TAW: Yeah.

RW: But, back in your—mostly it was picked by hand, wasn't it, in early days?

TAW: Yeah. I used to—old man Johnny Boren told me, me and one of his boys was the only ones that ever had put four loads of corn in the barn in one day. We done it every day. We could get that corn gathered and throwed it in the barn, I'd scoop it out.

RW: He used to be real strong.

TS: How would they, how would they do that? Would you go up with the wagon and pick on both sides of the wagon and throw in?

TAW: No. On one side, I'd have the boards on pretty high like cotton boards. Okay, on this other side it's back down lower. And I was on this side a little bit lower, and I's just picking two rows and throwing 'em over in there. And didn't take me but a little just to get a load, either.

TS: And so where the skill came in is moving fast, right? And just throwing those ears in. And the back of the wagon was like—

TAW: Yeah, I just grabbed that ear like that.

RW: And you had your own mules, they'd know when to move, didn't they?

TAW: Huh?

RW: You'd have it hooked up to a mule, hooked up to that wagon, and they'd almost know what to do.

TAW: Yeah, it'd have two hooked up to the wagon, and they's pulling that load of corn.

RW: And they'd almost know when it's ready to move, you know. You didn't have to say much to them, did you?

TAW: You'd just get up to their side and they'd start. And then after they got up there a little ways, you'd holler whoa at 'em and they'd stop.

TS: So, nobody was running the wagon. I mean, they were taking directions from you, right, from the ground? So, it's just you and the wagon and the two mules.

TAW: Right.

RW: Yeah, they'd be trained at that. They could tell when you was—'cause, I can remember doing that when I was a kid.

TAW: Yeah, I don't know, everything just worked off like a clock.

TS: Well, you tried to make everything on your place that you could, right, that you needed?

TAW: Yeah.

TS: What can you tell me about—what did you have? Did you have turkeys?

TAW: Had chickens. Yeah, had lots of chickens. Mother raised some turkeys, but I never did fool with turkeys. They're too much trouble. You might have to go four or five miles go round 'em up late of an evening and get 'em home. You had to get 'em home. If you didn't, you didn't have none of 'em left.

RW: Well, you'd sell your eggs, and that's what you'd take to town to buy some groceries, wouldn't you?

TAW: Well, not them turkeys' eggs.

RW: I know it, but I mean your chicken eggs.

TAW: Yeah.

TS: So, you grew up with turkeys, and when you started your farm, you didn't care to have any?

TAW: I didn't want no turkeys.

TS: Did you have to go follow them to find their nests when you were a boy?

TAW: My mama and older brother took care of the turkeys, I took care of the mules.

RW: Who was that, Preacher?

TAW: No, Spruce.

RW: Oh, Spruce, uh-huh.

TAW: Yeah, they took care of the—all of the stuff that come out of the farm.

RW: Well, you raised all of your garden stuff and canned.

TS: What kind of gardens did y'all have? What kind of garden did you have when you were on the Boren place? What would you raise in your garden?

TAW: Uh, just about whatever you want to eat. Some of that, you didn't want to eat 'em, you didn't want 'em, and you wouldn't plant them. But everything that's fittin' to eat and you liked, why, you'd plant a lot of it.

RW: I know, but like he wants to know kind of what y'all planted. What'd you plant? Uh, beans, cantaloupes, onions?

TAW: Yeah. Planted a little bit of nearly everything.

RW: Yeah, that's the way, I still plant a big garden.

TS: Well, you raised a lot of chickens. Did you sell the eggs?

TAW: Yep. Come a big tornado cross there, set my house back about nearly the length of his room. Pushed the whole thing back. And I had a clock, I had a clock like that setting up on the mantel, and that clock was still running the next day. Yeah. And I don't know how it ever done it, but it was. And I got a bunch of help there, and we lifted it back up and go on a-living in it.

TS: So it'd moved the whole house that distance. Your house was moved.

TAW: Yeah. Lifted the whole thing up, shoved it back.

RW: Well, how'd you get it back on there? What'd you have, those cedar blocks, it was on?

TAW: We didn't fool with them, we made new blocks?

RW: But that's what you used for a foundation, I guess, those great big old cedar blocks? Those great big old cedar things.

TAW: Yeah.

RW: Well, how did you—you just had you a bunch of help, and they pulled it back on there with mules?

TAW: All the neighbors from out of Sparta and Union Hill, it was so many people come to help that you

didn't hardly have room to work.

RW: Well, you probably didn't get it back the same shape it was in though, did you? You didn't get it pulled back—

TAW: Good shape, got it back in good shape.

TS: People would pitch in and help each other out in those days.

TAW: Yeah, so many come into help me on that house until it's so darn many of us you couldn't hardly work.

RW: Well, what about when you killed your hogs, what happened then? You kill hogs?

TAW: When I killed the hogs, why, usually there's one or two neighbors would come and help, and we'd kill 'em.

TS: Did people help each other house building?

TAW: Well, it's mostly—if you was gonna build a house, well you were kind of left alone, and they didn't fool with you. You know, like I was, mine blowed back, why, everybody come and helped me.

TS: Emergency, yeah. Early on, when you were a boy, did everybody have their land fenced, perimeter fenced? Or was there any open range around here where people ran their stock out?

TAW: Mostly, they had all the farming land fenced. They didn't have all the pastures fenced, 'cause they just turned, everybody turned their stuff out together. We wouldn't have our pastures fenced, but we did have all our farmland.

TS: So, you fenced 'em out, in other words. They were fenced out of the fields. Can you remember how that worked? Did they have hogs or cattle or both?

TAW: Oh, we had the hogs in a pen there at the house. They have a big pen, maybe big as this building, here. Put two or three hogs in there, and there'd be a great big thing, weigh four hundred or five hundred pounds, you know, time you killed 'em. We raised lots of meat.

RW: Well, you couldn't turn your hogs out, 'cause they'd root up your crops.

TAW: No, we made a—(unintelligible) out of 'em, kept them in a pen.

TS: But the cattle would run out, is what you're saying. They were marked and branded, and everybody's mixed together out there, right?

TAW: Back in those days, we didn't mark and brand 'em. When I went to putting 'em on Fort Hood, we had to mark and brand all of 'em. But back in them days—(unintelligible) everybody knowed his own cattle and he didn't fool with yours.

TS: So, you mean by sight, they would know their own animals by sight.

TAW: Yeah, yeah.

RW: But your people didn't have a lot of cattle like they do now, did they? They didn't have big herds?

TAW: No. They might have eight or ten.

RW: They didn't have those big herds, like we had when we ran cattle on Fort Hood. We had cattle over there for a long while.

TAW: No. Yeah, we had cattle on Fort Hood that kept us pretty busy a-keeping 'em marked and branded.

TS: So, am I right that some people had range rights on Fort Hood—had the rights to run their cattle out there, from the government?

TAW: All of the men that had any rights out there were the men they moved off. They moved him off, why they let him go back and put cattle there.

RW: Everybody that owned land or leased land, uh-huh.

TAW: That's how I got back in Fort hood.

RW: Then you paid the lease to the government.

TS: Yeah, you had a stock lease.

RW: That's right, 'cause I remember we paid the lease all the time.

TAW: Yeah, it was three stores there in Sparta. Doc Walton had the oldest store, and he sold a little big of everything—feed and a bunch of stuff. And then, old man Jordan, he bought that there dance hall out, and he had him a hole over behind the counter to chew tobacco. He'd go over there and spit that tobacco out that hole, he'd stick his head out, you know. And old Les Hallmark hit him in right there with a rock, and, boy, he come out of there trying to find who done that, and 'course nobody didn't know nothing about it. Wasn't nobody going to tell on him.

TS: What was in Sparta besides the three stores?

TAW: Uh, had a doctor there. Had a doctor and these three stores. The doctor was in a house down there and had an office in a house. Them three stores all sold groceries.

TS: I talked to your niece Bert Wilhite Bounds, and she said she thought there had been a fire in Sparta in the '20s and burned a couple of stores. Do you know anything?

TAW: I don't really know about that.

TS: She didn't seem—

TAW: I don't believe they had any fire, there, I'd of knowed it. Hell, I knowed it plumb back to the start—(unintelligible) and I don't believe there was any fire that every burned up any stores.

TS: Well, what sort of a place was Sparta? What sort of a community was Sparta?

TAW: People lived in the houses there, there's quite a few houses up and down the street there. Street was long as from here down yonder to the road, and there's quite a few houses, people living in ever' one of 'em. And up on the upper end there's a grocery store, and at about the middle there's another grocery store, and it's a pretty big one. And he bought lots of cedar. And, on down, there's Doc Walton, and he didn't buy much cedar, 'cause too much work for him. Cedar posts graded out, you know, he didn't want to fool with that. But old man Jordan, he put somebody there that would fool with it, and he got all the business.

TS: How much would you get for the cedar? It depended on the post, right, how it graded out?

TAW: Yeah. You take a number six, six-foot post, why it didn't bring near the money that an eight-and-ten did. And that eight-and-ten, it brought a whole lot of money. They all brought a right smart money.

TS: Let's see, did anybody have a blacksmith shop in Sparta?

TAW: Yeah, yeah. Francis Beck had a blacksmith shop. This grocery store belonged to old man Jordan, his wife mostly run it, and he run the shop. He's a good smith, he could make anything out of iron that

you'd make. And there's another old fellow lived there, his name was Jack Smith—stout big old—

RW: (brings beverages) There's one with a handle on it. I didn't give much to you because somebody drinked your diet Dr. Pepper. (to TS) He's a diabetic, and I didn't give him much.

TAW: Old man Jordan had a good store, there. He didn't build it, it was a dance hall, he bought it out and put it all in groceries. Nearly anything you wanted, you'd get it there.

TS: What kind of dance hall was it? I've heard that people didn't dance too much in Sparta. That's what your niece said.

TAW: It was a pretty rough place. They run a dance hall there, a man and his daughter run the dance hall. They had a pretty good bunch coming all the time. I never did go to dance halls.

RW: Yeah, but there was a wild bunch up there, wasn't it? They'd be fighting and everything else.

TAW: Oh, some of 'em was, they knowed who to fool with, though.

RW: Well, they'd have those house dances, didn't they—house dances a lot?

TAW: Yeah.

TS: What would they be like? What would go on at one of those house dances?

TAW: I usually played the fiddle for 'em myself. We'd have a guitar picker and a fiddle to make the music, and they'd be a-hollering what they wanted you to play.

RW: But people moved all their furniture out of one big room, didn't they?

TAW: Yeah, they'd clear it out and put cornmeal all over their floor. Boy, you could dance on that. My brother got in a big fight there, and I raised up and handed my fiddle over to John Birdsong at the door, told him, "Take my fiddle, somebody's gonna bust it." So, he took it over and got it back in another room. There wasn't no fighting going on back there.

RW: Tell him about the time those two old guys started fighting, they said they came from somewhere else. Do you remember that? Came up from the head of the creek? You remember that one?

TAW: I'm trying to.

RW: They was pretty rough. He said, "I'm up from the head of the creek."

TAW: Uh, he said, "I'm from Nolan, and the further up the creek you get the worse they are, and I live right on the head of it. And any of you son-o'-bitches want to fight, come on!" (laughs) I'll tell you, they had some rough dances up there. Nobody never did bother me. I's playing the fiddle, if they bothered me it'd interfere with the playing.

RW: Yeah, they didn't want to damage the fiddle player. (laughs)

TAW: Yeah, seem like everybody had a good time—good time.

TS: Well, were there any other fiddle players? You must have had a lot of invitations to these things.

TAW: Oh, yeah. Every time I'd go to play for a dance, there might be two or three come and want to play for a free dance. And we'd just fix it up, and sometimes I wouldn't have to play none. I'd just let them play and—

RW: You'd have two or three other ones?

TAW: Yeah, time they got around to all of them, I was ready to go home.

RW: Fiddle players were popular, huh?

TAW: Yeah, they watched out for them fiddlers, 'cause, if they didn't have a fiddler, they had no dance.

RW: Well, what all y'all have, a fiddle and a guitar?

TAW: A fiddle and a guitar. Occasionally, a fiddle and a mandolin. But mostly just a fiddle and a guitar.

TS: Well, would people come from all over to these?

TAW: Yeah, the whole community'd come. Not, they's a lot of 'em wouldn't go to dances, but all that'd dance would come.

TS: Well, did anything go on on the Fourth of July?

TAW: Yeah, they'd generally always have a kind of celebration.

RW: Where did they have it?

TAW: Uh, depended on where they's having their dance at.

TS: What about at the school? Would there be a school closing party or picnic? At the end of school?

TAW: Yeah, there usually was. It was on up about half a mile from Sparta. There's two communities there, and everybody come down there to—they went to all of the parties.

RW: They went on to have a picnic, or what?

TAW: Aw, they'd usually have a picnic, and they'd ride horses and mules, have a rodeo.

RW: Well, we never had anything like that. You've heard of him, Johnny Mellon?

TAW: Yeah.

RW: Well, tell him about Johnny Mellon. He was the deputy sheriff, wasn't he, around there for forty years or more. And Johnny Mellon came up there to those rodeos.

TAW: Yeah. His daddy generally run the rodeo.

RW: Oh, is that right. I'll declare. Tell him about when old man Johnny went in there to order in that restaurant.

TAW: Tell him what?

RW: Tell him when he went in there to order his meal at that restaurant—ordered his breakfast. Old man Mellon. He went in the café and ordered his eggs.

TAW: Yeah! See, he went in the café and told a girl he wanted two dozen eggs. He says, "Two dozen," he didn't say eggs. And she thought he wanted oysters, says, "Mister, we ain't got no oysters." "Hell," he says, "I don't want oysters, I want eggs." (laughs)

TS: Two dozen, huh?

TAW: Yeah. He'd weigh four hundred pound!

TS: Well, were you ever much of a hunter or a fisherman?

TAW: Hunted all the time, fished a lot. Lived there on the Cowhouse River, I done a lot of fishing there. When I was a kid, I was a little old kid, I hunted. When I was seven years old, I was going all over

them mountains by myself. I had some good dogs. One time, I broke the [lamp] globe up in a tree a-trying to find out what the dogs had treed, I broke that globe and didn't have no light. The rattlesnakes was just singing like everything down under there, and I waited until they settled down, and eased down and went on and got out of there. I don't know how in the world I got out of there without getting bit, but I did.

TS: Your dogs had treed something up the tree, and you were trying to see what it was, and you broke the light, and then you heard the rattlesnakes—

TAW: These snakes had a den there on the ground, back in under a little old bluff.

TS: It's like, how am I gonna walk out of here—now that I can't see 'em, how am I going to get out of here?

TAW: Yeah, it'll make you wonder. I's just a young kid.

TS: What did you hunt?

TAW: Possums, ringtails, and coons. I made expenses all winter hunting. I's selling the hides, you know, and make pretty good money. But I had some good dogs, and they'd tree everything that come along. And I never did have no trouble getting 'em sold when I'd get 'em caught.

TS: Would people buy those things, those pelts, at a good many places?

TAW: Had places here in Belton, one or two places there, that they'd buy 'em.

RW: Round at those feed stores, I guess. Wipe your mouth off, there. At the feed stores, is that where they bought 'em, bought those pelts?

TAW: Somebody else had a place around there, old man Anderson, I believe. He bought the hides. There wasn't no trouble selling 'em.

RW: Y'all just came to Belton in a wagon and brought your hides?

TAW: Back of the wagon or a-horseback or a buggy—the only way we had of getting there, we didn't nobody have no cars.

TS: Did you do any trapping—steel traps?

TAW: Huh? Yeah, I trapped. I usually'd catch 'em—(unintelligible) but I'd go a different direction for my traps. Hunt in another direction. I'd get a whole bunch of 'em, take me nearly all day to get 'em all stretched up.

TS: So, when you'd hunt—you didn't want your dogs getting in your traps, that's what you mean, you hunt over this way—

TAW: I'd hunt away from them traps, yeah. In other words, I'd go over here on this mountain and put out all the traps, and go over here and hunt with the dogs on this mountain. And I didn't take no chance on getting my dogs all bit up. Because, they'd get their foot in there and it'd cripple 'em up until I couldn't get to hunt with 'em.

TS: Were those ringtails worth something?

TAW: Yeah, then ringtails was worth around six dollars, and possums was worth seventy-five cents. Them ringtails was high.

TS: How about coons, were they worth anything?

TAW: Yeah, they was pretty high, too, but they wasn't high according to ringtails.

TS: Were there any deer in this country when you were coming up?

TAW: No, Daddy killed the last deer there was in that country there around Fort Hood. A great big old buck, and he killed him and brought him home, and we eat him. And there's nobody ever saw another'ne.

TS: So, you helped to eat the last deer that was on Fort Hood. 'Course, now, there's a few of 'em out there, right?

TAW: Oh, yeah, there's a lot of 'em out there, now.

RW: Yeah, and they've got some of those axis deer out there. I guess they do, when we had cattle out there I saw 'em.

TAW: Yeah, they got those axis deer, and they got them kind of deer that they worked with the wagon.

RW: What are you talking about there? Worked with the wagon? What are you talking about?

TAW: They worked them mules. Everybody had a wagon and could hitch up mules and go—

RW: Yeah, we were talking about deer.

TAW: Well, you would run into the deer when you was up in there.

TS: Did, uh—was either you or your daddy a fox hunter?

TAW: Daddy, he went with a fox hunter ever' once and a while, but I never did go much with 'em.

TS: That keeps you up late.

TAW: Yeah, and it makes you too many miles. I went with old man John Wiseman, and we'd get on a high point, a mountain, you would hear 'em for miles ever' way. And I'd go there and get up there with him. When he died—his boy come up there and was running a fox pretty close to his house, and he died listening to that fox race.

TS: So, he died of a heart attack, like, or something like that.

TAW: Oh, he's just sick and died, I don't know.

TS: But he was at the fox race.

TAW: Aw, he was in a bed, but had to go raise the windows, and he could hear these dogs running pretty close, you know. He died listening to the dogs.

TS: You were just talking about the wolf hunters, and the wolves would go out a lot further, they would cover a lot more ground than the foxes. But, you were about to say, you were about to tell something? Well, I messed you up.

RW: About those wolves, wolves hunting and running.

TAW: Oh, them wolves, he'd hunt a lot of 'em, and he'd tell by his dog's bark what they's after. When they went to barking, he'd say, "That's a wolf." Or a fox, he'd tell you. He taken them dogs hunting every night, nearly, and he could sure tell you what them dogs a-running. But I don't know, I'd go with him to get to listen at him tell about the dogs.

TS: I'm sure he could tell all of his dogs from some other man's dogs, too.

TAW: Yeah, tell ever' dog he has. He'd usually call his name when he barked. Yeah, if the dog started something, you know, he'd say, "Old so-and-so's getting a start, now."

RW: Well, just like people's voices, I imagine.

TAW: Yeah, yeah, yeah, he knowed them dogs just as well as I know his voice.

TS: What sort of place would you set a trap for a ringtail? Like, if I was to go out and set a trap and try to catch a ringtail, what kind of place should I—

TAW: Lots of 'em, there's a little old spring running out of the ground over there in one hollow, and that's all the water that was there. Well, they'd come there to drink, you know. And I's baiting this trap, there, and I'd catch them ringtails, possums—whatever come along, I'd catch him.

TS: What did you bait with?

TAW: Aw, different things, mostly birds. One old fellow lived up there above me a little piece, and he had a big log barn. And there's a place around at the back where there's a pretty good hole there. And he noticed his corn was getting out of there. So he got a big wolf trap and set it in there. This fellow come that night, and it happened to be his closest neighbor, and stuck his hand over in that trap. And hell, he had to stay there all night. I don't see how he stood it, but he did.

TS: Well, sometimes you just have to stand it, you know.

TAW: Yeah, that was the way he was. But when he got through, he told that old man, he says, "If you ever tell this on me, I'll kill you." The old man didn't tell it until after he died, never did said it. After he died, why, then he told about it.

TS: That's that other guy that got caught sticking his arm.

TAW: Yeah, this other guy was reaching into that hole and get some corn ever' night to take over to feed his horses. He's reaching back in there, and he got his hand in that trap, and he couldn't get it out. The fellow had the trap set where he couldn't pull it outside.

TS: So, he's got his hand stuck in, and he can't get his other hand into get his—those traps, you have to depress 'em with your foot, they're so strong.

RW: We've got some of 'em out there. Yeah, I imagine that was pretty bad, when that old fellow caught him there. (laughs) Probably pretty miserable sitting all night long with that thing.

TS: Did Sparta have any outlaw families or outlaws or people that were dangerous? I know it was mostly good citizens that took care of each other, but—

TAW: Not for people that raised there.

RW: Well, y'all didn't have any of those old characters? Any of those old characters like that old guy that drank that wine out of that—did he live up at Sparta?

TAW: Who?

RW: Oh, that old guy that drank that wine, you know, he had his—(unintelligible)

TAW: Oh, yeah, Web Doss made a barrel of wine every year, and he had his bed sitting right across here, and his barrel over in a corner. And he had a tube that come over and come into his bed. And he'd wake up in the night and want him a drink of wine, he'd just undo the clothespin and suck him up a drink of wine. He had a water washtub, and he always, it come a black cloud, there's a cement bridge

right there in front of his house. He'd take this washtub and go get in under that bridge. And it come a bigger rain that it'd ever come and washed him out, washed him into a big hole of water right below and liked to drowned him. So, next day, he was digging back in the bank up there back of his house and made a hole dug in there to get in. He's afraid of them clouds.

TS: Did anybody make whiskey?

TAW: Oh, yeah, gosh dang, they made whiskey behind every bush.

TS: Tell me about that, anything you know about that.

TAW: About all I know about it, I never did go around 'em a-making the whiskey, but about all I know about it is they'd bring the whiskey out and sell it. And there at my place, a big old rock right above the road down there, and they'd always bring that whiskey out from over on Bear Creek, bring it over there and put it behind that rock. And then sell it and go back there and get it, you know. I's watching 'em when they put it there, and sometimes I'd go down there and take it all out, and there wouldn't be none there when they come back.

RW: Well, one time you said that the chickens got ahold of some of it, didn't they? They got drunk?

TAW: My—(unintelligible) dog, he got after a bunch of that beer, too. Them Mexicans was making beer down there. 'Course, somehow, he gets to going down there, they's giving him beer to drink, you know, and he'd just go ever' day.

RW: You didn't know where those stills were?

TAW: Huh?

RW: You know where any of those stills were, where they made that—

TAW: I knew where there's some of 'em. But I never would go around 'em, I's always afraid if I went around 'em they'd come in—that law wouldn't catch 'em, and they'd catch me in the deal, too.

TS: Well, so the big rock was where they were stashing it. They would bring it in and hide it around there and then go around to sell it, right? They didn't want to haul it around with 'em.

TAW: Yeah. It was over in the Cowhouse Valley, and they made it over on Bear Creek. There's a mountain between 'em.

TS: You don't want to sell it right where you make it. (laughs)

TAW: Well, they would. They mostly wanted to get it clear to where there wouldn't be nobody bothering 'em. Marlis Drake made it up there, and I know old Joe Drake, he made some. He drank through so much of it. And up there on this bluff, you'd walk around that bluff on a narrow place and get around there, and there's bees had its nest down there, and, boy, you'd see 'em. He was gonna go down there and rob that bee gum, and he got started around there, and he's too drunk to get there, and he fell off, and fell in an old thick tree, and it saved him.

TS: Well, he had taken too much of his own stuff. Did any community have more of a reputation for making it, more people making it there?

TAW: Bear Creek. Bear Creek was—(unintelligible) the sheriff couldn't hardly get over there to look. They could bring it out if they want to sell it. I know, the last time—the old man Drake had died, they brought him out of there in a wagon, and had just a pretty good row of wagons behind that one that's hauling his dead corpse down, you know. There's a bunch more there, and I's—(unintelligible) down there, too, I didn't know he died. I saw 'em come out, I learned later who it was. I don't know, he

just—they always did kind of get by with lot of stuff nobody else could.

RW: Made a lot of whiskey, old man Drake made a lot of whiskey?

TAW: Yeah.

TS: Well, you know, they usually made it in places that were hard to get into. They made it in rough places and brush and bottoms and—

TAW: That's what they made it over there. Bear Creek was over the hill and down in a rough canyon, and they'd make that whiskey down there and bring it out and put it over there behind that big rock and sell it. It wasn't no trouble. If there's a dance up in Sparta, why, hell, they'd run back down there and get that whiskey out of there right quick. I found out what they's doing, and I got out a lot of it myself.

TS: They were using your land to stash it, right? See, you always pick out somebody that's unlikely, and that's where you want to hide your—

TAW: Yeah. They knew if they got it there that the law would never fool with it because they didn't think I'd be a-making it, you know.

TS: Yeah, that's right.

RW: I imagine you sipped a little of it, didn't you?

TAW: Aw, not so much, I never did like whiskey. I know old Ben Owens come across over there from his. He was back over—got to where they made it and he come along there one evening, and he sold my brother that's dead, he sold him a quart of whiskey. So, he bought it, and he carried it out to the seed pen and buried it in cottonseed.

RW: You talking about Ira?

TAW: Yeah. And, so, that night, old Preacher he got out there and got it and got a pretty drop. He, uh, I don't know, he just went around and around on his hands and knees. His wife walked right round him hollering, "Ira! Ira! Ira! What's the matter with you?" He'd been off over there, he's gonna move over on—(unintelligible) and he'd been over there plowing all day, and he didn't eat no dinner. Boy, that knocked him for a loop.

RW: (laughs) Well, he's the least one of the Wilhites. They named him Preacher because he was so—(laughs) I can see him crawling around on the hands and knees.

TAW: There was one of these rooms had a drop off, 'bout that much, and he'd just go off of that drop off—(unintelligible) and she's just hollering, "Ira, Ira, Ira! What's the matter with you?" But I knew what was the matter with him.

TS: She was saying, "Ira! Ira! What's wrong?" I see.

TAW: So, that night, Ira, he come in, and he's pretty well full of it. I laid in the bed with him, Frank Humphrey brought him in and put him in the bed with me.

TS: Well, let's see what I can pick out. (looks at notes) Did you have—you used coal oil lamps, right?

TAW: Yeah, coal oil.

TS: Anybody have those carbide systems?

TAW: Well, there was a Aladdin lamp come in following the other lamp. Boy, you could see with them. You couldn't see with that old coal oil lamp.

RW: I didn't ever see a carbide.

TS: That's a total house system. Some places they would peddle 'em, and some places they wouldn't. Uh, yeah, I know, tell me about—you liked to go to trade square.

TAW: Yeah, every First Monday of the month everybody'd take whatever they wanted to get rid of and go down there to the square there in Belton. And you could go there and buy just about anything you wanted, somebody'd have it. And I was always down there selling something. I'd trade mules, I'd go there and take them mules in and trade 'em off.

RW: Tell him about that time when you were a kid, and you traded your mules. You were trying to get those good mules from that fellow, when you were a kid, about seventeen years old? Don't you know, you went down there, and you wanted those mules? You were just a young boy. And you made that real good trade that time, tell him about that.

TAW: Uh, I went to trade mules when I's a real young boy. Oh, I had a pair of little old mules. My brother that got drunk that night and crawling all through the house like, he had a pair of little two-year-olds, and he sold 'em to me on credit. Well, come time to pay for 'em, I had my money to pay him, and him and me come to town, and they got $125 and put it with them little mules and get me a pair of good mules. I did. And, boy, I got down there, and old man Bill Magen from up at Moffett, he had a pair of real good mules. And he wanted a hundred and a half between my mules and his. I told him, I said, "Now, I can't give you no hundred and a half. I've got $125, and it's everything I've got. I ain't gonna eat no dinner." So, I got on a wagon with another man and rode down the avenue and come back, and when I got back he's standing there waiting for me. He thought I was gonna trade with this other man, I know. And when I got back there, why, he told me, says, "Well, I want to trade you my mules." I never told that fellow nothing, I just crawled out and away we went. I didn't like them mules. But any mules I'm getting from Bill Magen, now, they was real mules—heavy, young mules, six years old.

RW: How old were you, then?

TAW: Oh, I guess I might have been eight or ten years old. I know every mule trader on the square was following me around and watching me trying to make these trades. And the old man from Waco, he's a mule trader, he followed me and after he saw I had the mule trade done made—(unintelligible) he walked up there and he said, "Kid, you made the best mule trade of anybody in town." That made me feel good.

RW: Drink a little of your Dr. Pepper, there. Drink a little of this, that'll pep you up a little bit.

TS: But you traded mules down through the years. You did that whenever you could—

TAW: I've had mules from the time I's a little old kid until I's grown. I's still trading after I got grown.

TS: Well, it's hard to do, because, I mean—I wouldn't know how to do that, I don't think, because everybody's trying to get the best deal with everybody else.

TAW: Yeah. You learn pretty quick what route to take and get you the best deal. It'll all come around.

RW: And then he started trading horses, too, after that. He traded horses all the time.

TAW: I traded horses plumb on up until I bought this place here. I had two good horses, I used 'em to rope cattle on Fort Hood. Boy, they was a roper, too.

RW: You talking about Red Man?

TAW: Yeah, and old Bud. Old Bud, he's a good roping horse, too.

TS: Well, you had to be able to look—you had to be able to tell a good horse or a good mule. Not everybody could look at 'em and see it, right?

TAW: Naw. I guess from a little old kid I learnt the good one and the bad ones.

RW: Yeah, he could size 'em up, those horses and—

TAW: I could just look at 'em and I could tell whether I wanted 'em or not.

RW: Yeah, and he was the same way about horses. He could just size up a horse, tell how it's built and everything.

TS: What would you look for in a mule? What would be a good mule? The size I know, but—

TAW: His right ear tells you a lot of it.

RW: Yeah, but what are you looking for? His hips or all over?

TS: Look at the whole animal, right?

TAW: Yeah.

RW: You want the length and the hips, or what?

TAW: (points to a photograph of his best mule pair) See how they match up?

RW: People wanted matching pairs, didn't they?

TAW: Yep.

RW: If he had muscle on him? Is that it, or what?

TAW: Well, you wanted 'em to have muscle, and you wanted 'em to have the right kind of disposition.

TS: So, you were looking at—part of it was their disposition. Part of was their personality or their disposition, right?

TAW: Yeah. Yeah, if he didn't have the right disposition, you didn't want him. Get one with the best, quiet disposition and—

RW: Well, they'd run off with your plow, wouldn't they?

TAW: Well, sometimes, but mostly they'd just kick and cutup and do a little bit of everything.

RW: You couldn't harness 'em up, I guess.

TAW: Hard to.

TS: What about tricks that mule traders use, like doping 'em up or making 'em—you had to watch out for certain things that they might do, right?

TAW: Some you would. Most of 'em, they wouldn't do nothing. But—

RW: You ever do that? You ever dope 'em up? Did you ever dope 'em up?

TS: No. No, I didn't believe in that. I didn't want to dope none, and I didn't want to trade none that I considered was doped.

RW: But a lot of 'em did that, though.

TAW: Uh-huh.

TS: If you knew what to look for, you could see that they're doped.

TAW: Yeah. You could usually see it from the look of their eyes. You look at them eyes and could see if they's glass-eyed.

RW: He had a story about an old guy that doped 'em up and painted 'em and everything else.

TS: Yeah, they did lots of things. I'm kind of changing the subject. What kind of peddlers would come around? The Rawleigh man, maybe?

TAW: They'd be a peddler come around, he'd have a little of everything—groceries, a whole bunch of stuff. He'd come from house to house.

RW: Was that the Rawleigh man or the Watkins man?

TAW: Not every time, it was part of the time, but not every time. They come there and you look at 'em and you could tell what's wrong with 'em. You might get scalped many times until you learn what to look for.

RW: Yeah, those peddlers, though, that came around—

TS: (to RW) That's okay, that's okay.

TAW: Those peddlers that come around, they'd have a little of everything in that wagon to sell. They'd pull up to your house and hand stuff out and let you look at it. If you wanted it, you could buy it.

TS: Would they take chickens? They'd take chickens, sometimes, right?

TAW: Aw, hardly ever. Mostly they didn't fool with chickens. They didn't where I was at. They might some places, but—

RW: Well, y'all just gave 'em cash for it?

TAW: Yeah.

TS: Did any Gypsies come around here? Gypsies? Like, my grandmother lived out in rural Nacogdoches County, and Gypsies would come around occasionally.

TAW: Well, I never did know of any around here. Might have been, but I didn't know it.

RW: I remember one time, they'd lay out in those ditches. One time, we were going over to my aunt's, and like they'd throw out a purse, and they had a strong tied to it. And I know we were going up to my aunt's, and there was this purse lying there with this string tied to it. Well, you'd get out, and you'd think, well, there's the purse, you know, and wonder what that that is. And when you did, those Gypsies would pull that purse in, you know.

TS: A trick, yeah.

RW: I remember that once, but I don't know what we did. I think we—

TAW: I've been going down the road a lot of times and see a purse laying in the road. I'd jump out and go back to get it, and it wasn't there.

RW: Yeah, they'd have a string tied to it. Well, that was the Gypsies that did that. Now, they did that.

TAW: I don't know who done it.

RW: Well, I didn't know too much about 'em 'em, but I knew that. They did that.

TS: Yeah, that was an old trick. What else would happen at the trade day? Would it go on all Saturday, is that right?

TAW: No, on First Monday.

TS: Oh, it would be on court day, then, on First Monday.

TAW: Yeah, ever' First Monday in the month's trading day. You take whatever you want trade off and take it down there and you'd trade it off. They's trading on everything, some of 'em would bring milk cows in there and maybe a baby calf on her. Right there on the square. They'd bring everything—mules and horses. It's mostly men, women didn't want nothing to do with that trade day.

(interruption in taping)

TAW: He's about a half comedian anyway, and he talked funny all the time. They lived up there close to me. And an old fellow lived right next door to 'em, he went over to—(unintelligible) and he found a pair of shoes over there for a quarter on a bargain counter, you know. He thought it fit this woman. He come back bringing 'em, he met this man and his wife going over to buy groceries. And he pulled them shoes out and told her, "Try 'em on." They did fit. And this old boy, he's kind of funny old dickens, anyway, he says—(unintelligible) he talked funny, kind of tongue-tied.

RW: Yeah, imagine getting a pair of shoes for a quarter.

TAW: They's lots, lots, lots of rattlesnakes up in that country. Nearly every day that I'd ride it I'd run into a rattlesnake and kill him. I asked one of them soldiers one day, I says, "How do you boys keep from getting bit up here?" He said, "We don't keep from bitten." Says, "Last night, one of 'em bit one of the soldiers right up there on the mountain. Had to carry him in." They bite you if you get close to 'em.

TS: What about when the army took the land? What can you tell me about that? That was bad, right?

TAW: Oh, they just come in and took over everything, and you didn't have no say about it. But they did pay a little for you to move. I think they gave me seven hundred dollars to move everything, but I had so much to move it took nearly all the time a-moving stuff out.

TS: Well, they had to pay—you didn't own, right? But they were paying you to move your stuff off?

TAW: They paid you if you owned it or if you didn't own it—pay you to move it off.

TS: Yeah.

RW: But they bought the land from the people that owned land, didn't they?

TAW: Yeah. Yeah, if you owned a place, they paid you off for it.

I know what year I moved off from up there, 1952.

RW: Nineteen fifty-two. Wasn't you one of the first ones?

TAW: Well, naw, most all of moved were moved at the same time. There was a bunch of 'em come at me. It was eighteen loads went off my place and went down to where I's moving to.

RW: Had a lot of junk, huh? Well, do you remember anybody up there that didn't want to move, they had

trouble with 'em?

TAW: Yeah. Hugh Armen wasn't gonna move. They kept after him trying to get him to move, and he wouldn't do it. One morning they drove up there to his house with a bunch of trucks. Asked him, Where you want to move to? We're gonna load you up. They loaded him up, and he moved out to Killeen.

TS: So, they just—that was, like, he didn't know they were coming, he hadn't said he was gonna move, they just showed up, right?

TAW: Well, at that particular time, but they'd been a-trying to get him to move.

TS: Yeah, I understand.

TAW: He wouldn't do it.

RW: Well, that's that old man, you know, when you go down to, uh, Miller Springs, there was somebody on the right-hand side, before you went to that Pittman orchard, they didn't want to move out of there, did they? They had a bad time getting them out.

TAW: Os Morgan.

RW: I think so, uh-huh.

TAW: (unintelligible) 'Cause, I'm gonna shoot the one that puts it there. They didn't nobody live there, either.

RW: But he finally had to move, didn't he?

TAW: Oh, yeah.

RW: Did you hear about that big Pittman orchard all being under water? Dr. Pittman and them? Tell him about that big orchard Dr. Pittman and them had. Oh, it was a fine orchard.

TAW: Yeah, Dr. Pittman, he had to move out of there like the rest of us did. But old man John Pittman, now, he had all that stuff they bought. He moved out and settled up with 'em.

RW: Well, they had that big Pittman orchard, and that all went under water, didn't it? They had fine peaches and everything. I remember going by there to buy some apples. People from all over, they'd go out there and buy all that fruit.

TAW: Yeah. Well, you could go there and buy just about anything you wanted.

TS: Well, did your land, the land that you lived on so long, did it go into Fort Hood, or is it under the lake?

TAW: It's under the lake. Yeah.

RW: Well, the Pittman orchard's under the lake, too.

TAW: Yeah, that whole area down in there, ever' bit of it's under water. There's a big bridge crossed the river right in front of my house. It's an iron bridge a-going cross the Cowhouse River. They didn't move it, they left the old thing there and water covered it up. It's still down there.

RW: Well, did it cover your church up? When they had the church up there at Sparta, did it cover all that up?

TAW: Yeah, uh-huh. Deep, too.

RW: They had those revivals in those little old brush arbors, didn't you?

TAW: They didn't have no brush arbors there, Sparta had a tabernacle there. But at Brookhaven, now, they had a thing like you talking about.

RW: They had those revivals. Tell him about when you had your revivals. Everybody'd go there.

TAW: Yeah, I's a little old kid, and my brother, he used to carry me with him everywhere he went, nearly. And got up there, and when they's all just coming out from under that brush arbor, I got right down by where they all come out. I caught him by the coattail, he says, he called me Spook, he says, "Spook, I'll be back in a few minutes." And I just thought, Yeah, I'll be with you when you come back. I went out there, and he had a rubber-tire buggy with a top. Had a flap under the back. I raised that flap and went in first down under there. He carried that gal about a mile up there where he carried her, he carried her up there and unloaded her. Started back, and when he's going down that hill, that old mare, she's just trotting. She's a race-trotting mare. And he come down there, and I come crawling out where I was, and he says, "Where in the world you been?" I said, "I been under that seat."

RW: That was his date, his brother's date.

TS: I see.

TAW: I told him, I said, "I ain't gonna stay around there. They say them ghosts comes around them cemeteries." And I said, "They have to go to that arbor to have funerals," I said, "I didn't know whether they's ghosts or what they was, there." I wasn't gonna stay there.

RW: Tell him about that time when Preacher was leading that singing. Now, he was real straight-laced. Tell him what happened with Preacher and that bird. Preacher was leading the singing, had on a white shirt and everything.

TAW: Oh! He's down under this arbor. That was my oldest brother, and he always led the singing at the church. And he's standing up there, he's just bought him a brand new tie. And a screech owl, he's right up over his head, and he didn't know he's up there. And he messed on him, and it hit him right there and just sprayed the whole front, that shirt, tie, and everything.

TS: Hit him right on his forehead and splattered down his front.

TAW: Yeah, just splattered all over him. He had to go up to old man Jordan's store and wash up.

RW: Well, he was leading the singing. Wonder what the people thought, there when he—

TAW: Well, everybody's just a-laughing. (laughs) Everybody seen what was going on.

Hazel Graham Wilkinson

Date of birth: 25 December 1917
Communities affiliated with: Antelope, Eliga
Interviewed by Martha Doty Freeman

MDF: [Today is May 3, 1998, and we are in Lampasas at the Antelope-Eliga Reunion. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.]

HGW: I was born at what is now Fort Hood on the old Kinsey place down near _____ (??) area in the eastern part of the county. Then we moved to the Chuck (??) place near Eliga and then I was old enough to go to school than I went to school at Antelope. It was a three-teacher school at that time. It was later made into a four-teacher school. Antelope we thought was a very big school with lots and lots of people. I was born in 1917 and I was nearly eight years old when I started school—in 1925.

My parents were Curtis Beason [Graham] and Madie [Johnson] Graham. My great-grandfather was Elder Jesse Graham. He moved to the Eliga area in 1855 with his family and settled in that area. They were some of the first people to settle in that area. He brought whole _____ (??) of relatives of friends with him from Alabama. I think he had about ten or twelve children who settled in that area. Some of the people who came were related and some of them were just neighbors. My grandfather was his son—he was Curtis Beason number one, and my dad was Curtis Beason number two. And my dad was born in Harmony. Some of the people that came from Alabama to that area with the Grahams were the Mannings, the Blackwells, and some Lambs (??). A lot of them were related.

They lived in Alabama, and it seemed that the land there was being taken up. They had a big family, and great-grandfather knew that in time he was going to need more land for his sons to settle on, so they just decided they would move to—they had heard that land was opening up in Texas—and would move to Texas. So a whole bunch of them loaded up their things in wagons, I think they were pulled with oxens, and they moved on the Natchez Trail across the Mississippi, and they settled around Rusk, Texas, for five years there and farmed. Then they decided they needed to move on, so he rode on his horse to Coryell County, looked around, and he liked what he saw. So he went back and they all loaded up their things again and they moved again in those wagons, drove their cattle, and moved to Coryell County. The same group of people made both moves. They stayed together in Rusk County.

The first thing they had to do was try to build them some kind of home to live in and grub out some trees to where they could farm and plant some crops and plant some gardens. There were still Indians in the area. Sam (??) Graham was killed by Indians, and it seemed like the Indians killed more around the Sugar Loaf area than what they actually did around Eliga. I don't know anybody in particular who—my aunt _____ (??) told me that _____ (??) was killed around Eliga.

I think some of the Blackwells served in the Civil War, but I can't answer that [question about Civil War service].

Elder Jesse Graham more or less settled in that same place and probably lived and died in that area. In

the literature I have it says that his children—of course by then they were grown—settled in that area. Then from there his children began moving west and other places. His old house place was on an old dirt road that people traveled on. It was an old house—I can't tell you much about it. It was in a wooded area, and he had some fine horses and cattle. Just a normal farm. He lived there until he died. He was buried in the Graham Cemetery first, and then when Fort Hood moved the graves he was moved to Gatesville to _____ (??) Cemetery.

My grandfather lived near the Harmony School. The Grahams gave the land for the Graham Cemetery and for the Harmony School. My great-grandfather was a Baptist minister who traveled on horseback all over the area, preaching. He was a Primitive Baptist minister in addition to his work on the farm.

My father lived with his dad until he was a grown man. And then he kind of sprouted his wings and did different things. He went to the army for a while, and he came back home and he got him a wagon and some mules, and he and Charlie Heel (??), who was one of his relatives, went to the Waggoner Ranch up past Fort Worth and worked there for a while. Then they were coming home and as they came through Alvarado, the town where I live, they were driving a team and leading a team, and they went on the road across the railroad track and there was a curve there. And they testified that they did not ring the bell on the train or blow the whistle. When they hit my dad's wagon, it killed the mules and threw my dad completely over the engine, nearly killed him. Mr. Hill was not hurt very badly. And they lived in the old hotel there until they got able to go on to Coryell County where they had started. Then my dad went to Will Rogers (??) and picked cotton and met my mother and married. And then they moved back to Coryell County and Cowhouse Creek. And they lived there and had all us kids there. It was known as the old Chalk farm on the south side of the Cowhouse Creek. And on the west of our farm was Jim Manning's property, and across the creek was where the Blackwells lived.

Dad raised corn and cotton and some maize and grain, oats or wheat, mainly oats. My dad didn't have a whole lot of cattle. We just had a few head of livestock, Hereford cattle, and he farmed with a team. He had a team of mules. My dad didn't have sheep. Across the road from where we lived was where his half brother Johnny Graham lived and, yes, they had a lot of sheep and goats, and the Mannings had sheep and goats, and most everybody right in that area had sheep and goats. But we didn't have enough land to have very many.

I think we had around two hundred acres. Uncle Jimmy had maybe five hundred acres. Jim Manning had quite a lot of property. Everybody in that area was kin to the Grahams—Blackwells, Mannings, Flemings, Whites, Currys, Grahams, just most everybody was kin to the Grahams.

I thought [Antelope] was the biggest school I ever saw, but it wasn't all that big. We just had three large rooms taught through the tenth grade, first through the tenth grade. Three teachers, and then later they built another room onto it and we had four teachers. We always had some good ball teams, good basketball, mainly basketball, little bit of baseball, and it was a lively community. We lived near Eliga. We had to ride horses to school six and a quarter miles, which we did for a few years. Then there got to be so many kids, Daddy didn't have enough horses. So he let us go in the Model T car. My sister and my brother took turns [driving].

MDF: Were there community centers that you could identify? A store, maybe? How did you differentiate among the communities?

HGW: I guess the school district was kind of what told you. Whether you'd go to Antelope. And if you lived over on the other side of Cowhouse Creek, you went to Clear Creek. The first teacher I knew was Sam Sertliff, G. W. Willacy, the principal, Margie Thompson, Miss Grace Myers, Dierdre Carroll,

W. A. Freeman, Ida Stockberger. I guess that's all I can think of right now. I studied reading, writing, and arithmetic. We had a good school. The basic subjects.

Most of the time school wouldn't start until October because the kids had to stay out of school to pick cotton. We hardly ever got to start right at the first of school because we were picking cotton. We'd get to go just as soon as we could. It was in October when the school would start, and it was usually out about the middle of May. We had eight months school.

We got up early most of the time. When we went to school we had to get up early to get to school on time. In the summertime our dad farmed and we worked in the fields, and we had to get up early. Maybe we'd be picking cotton by the time the sun came up, and we'd pick until late afternoon. We worked hard. My mother grew a garden and she canned. My dad worked hard and he was appreciative for things to be done well. And my dad liked to sing. The Grahams had a nice quartet that he sang bass in. They were well-known in the area for singing. About all we got to do was work and go to church and go to school. The group was known as the Graham quartet. They sang in Coryell County. We'd have singing conventions and they'd go to singing conventions around. They did some shaped-note singing. My cousin, Dad's nephew, taught singing in school and taught music. Yes, I've heard lots of singing schools that he taught.

The school and church were in separate buildings. At Antelope, they had a Baptist church on the grounds close to the school, and they had a church there. They never had church in the school building. We went to church in the Eliga Church of Christ down near Eliga. And near Eliga was a Free Will Baptist church. My Uncle _____ (??) Graham preached there, and that's where we had a lot of the singings on Sunday afternoon, Sunday night. In the summertime we would have revival meetings, but back in those days, didn't have a lot of lights. Didn't have any electricity or lights at the Church of Christ, so we couldn't have anything at night. But the Baptist church did have gasoline lanterns, and my dad's family took care of them.

We were gone from our homes [at Fort Hood] before there was electricity. We had coal oil lamps, gasoline. One man near Antelope, Mr. Middick, had a Delco plant. But didn't anybody have those but the Middicks.

At our school when we went to Antelope they had a dug well. It had a pump that had a handle on it, and we'd get enough water for our drinking water.

I was married when they had the Depression. I remember times was hard. Didn't have much money. Didn't get much money for what you had to sell. I married in 1934. When Luke and I married, we moved in with his family near Pidcoke and lived there for about five or six months with them. Because he had a little farm down below Eliga, and someone lived there. So we lived with his family until our house was empty and we moved down there. I didn't like to live with his parents. I enjoyed going swimming in the creek and riding the horses, and those things, but I didn't like living with them. The farm below Eliga was a little over 300 acres, 250 to 300 acres. It was on Cowhouse Creek. We had some sheep, some cattle, Hereford cattle. I believe he had four mules and saddle horses, and chickens. We got by. It was where the three boys were born. Dave was born in September 1935, Jack was born in December 1936, and Dutch was born in January of 1939.

MDF: What was the house like that you lived in?

HGW: You wouldn't want to live there. It was a two-room house. It had a front porch, and that was it. We built a wash house and a smokehouse and those kinds of things to help us some, but no, we didn't have a very good house to live in. One of my uncles, George Wright, built that house. He probably lived there. This farm was known as the old Jess Liverett farm. He lived in an old rock house by our barn, which was—a lot of it was torn down when we moved there. And it's all torn down now.

The legend goes that he would not allow any lights to be burned in the house, and he had holes in the wall to stick his gun barrels out. And there's lots of history in that area. I think that George Wright married into that family, and he built the little two-room house that we lived in. It was wood frame, double-wall. It had a flue that we used. We bought a kerosene cook stove while we lived there. We cooked on a wood stove for a while. But then I think I raised turkeys to get enough money to buy a kerosene cook stove.

I don't know if there were [any home demonstration or county agents who came around during the Depression]. The year the government killed the cattle was the year we married. My husband's family had a lot of cattle, and they had to have a lot of cattle killed. Some they killed and some they sold. But I remember when they came to kill the cattle. We had to cook supper for the guys who did that job. The next day, we canned some of that meat. They had to dispose of it someway. I guess they must have buried it somewhere. It was a terrible thing. People didn't like it, but they didn't have much choice because cattle were so cheap they couldn't sell them and get anything out of them. Just had to do something to get rid of them. We were allowed to can some of [the meat]. My mother and dad came and helped and we canned some of it.

MDF: Where did you live relative to your parents?

HGW: My mother and dad lived near Eliga and we lived near Pidcoke, so I imagine it was ten or twelve miles.

MDF: When did you first hear rumors about the government's taking the land?

HGW: As I told you, we lived on a farm on the Cowhouse Creek. Here these guys came just a few yards from where our house was, and they began cutting the trees down going towards the creek. And we were told that they were thinking about building a dam across Cowhouse Creek. So we didn't know what was going on. There was just kind of rumors. And then when Pearl Harbor was bombed, on December seventh, just soon after the first of the year, we began hearing rumors about how they were thinking about making a military reservation in the area. So I think it was in January that the government announced that they were going to build a reservation there and the people would have to move, 350 families, and we had to be out by the first of May. It was pretty hard to find a place to move, find a place to live, take your family and take what little possessions you had. We had relatives near Alvarado in Johnson County that lived there, and so we wrote to them and asked if they knew of any place that was for sale, and we went there and found this one and moved there. It was hard because you didn't have much time. And it wasn't hard on us because we managed. But was hard on my in-laws. They were old and they had really a nice farm, a nice house. It was hard, but they all managed. We had to help support the war, do things to support our troops.

You asked about our school. At the end of school each year we had a big picnic, and they served barbecue, and the ladies brought vegetables and desserts. And my Uncle George Wright was in charge of the barbecue. He did a wonderful job. And they would have different men to do different things for entertainment in the morning, and then we'd have our lunch, and then Antelope and Copperas Cove always played baseball. And then that night they'd have what we would call now a senior play. They'd put on a big play and everyone would come. They would order books and there would be a play and chose characters. I can't remember the names of any of them. The barbecue was beef, they could have some goat. Most of it was beef.

When I was in the seventh grade, there was a teacher told us that there was a drugstore in Gatesville, Finch's Drugstore, that was going to give a twenty-five dollar watch to the girl and boy at the end of school that made the highest grade countywide in the seventh grade in Coryell County. You had to make the highest grade, you had to read thirty books and make a written report on it, and the county superintendent graded those. He decided maybe I had a pretty good chance of winning. So he gave

me a valedictorian address to learn for the end of school. He took us at the end of school to Gatesville for the graduation exercise. And after a while he came around and he was grinning from ear to ear, and he said, "Hazel, you won." Don't you get nervous? I was already nervous enough, but I managed to say that speech, and that was an honor to me.

I finished ninth grade 'cause I got married. I didn't finish school, I'm sorry to say. I've always wished I'd gone to school, but I didn't. Most kids don't have the money to go farther.

We started working around the house very young. We were taught very young to make our beds and help with the dishes and sweep the floors. Just the usual housework. Most girls worked in the fields, same as the boys did. Of course, the boys carried the heavy end of it. But my sisters and me had to shock oats when they cut the grain. We picked cotton, we had maize. We didn't have to gather corn much because we were in school. But, yes, most families the girls worked in the fields same as the boys did.

We didn't have silos or make ensilage. My dad put up corn to feed the mules and he put up oats to feed to the mules, and grain to feed to the cows. We would cut the cornstalks off past the ears and he bound that up and made some hay to feed the cattle. I guess he must have baled some hay for the horses and cattle. He would plant some cane and somebody would come in with a baler and bale some hay. My dad didn't have a sorghum mill, but my daddy-in-law did. Just had a sorghum mill and made syrup. My husband made some syrup. They had ribbon cane. They had the evaporator. They had a vat that they cooked it off in. We planted cane at home to make sorghum syrup, and my dad would carry over it over to Mr. Richards and he would make the syrup. I didn't actually see it made. But the cane, when it would get ready, it would get ripe, we would have to strip the leaves off the cane where there wouldn't be any leaves in the juice. And then he would cut it down and we would cut the heads off, and he would load it in the wagon and carry it over to the sorghum mill.

We enjoyed visiting with the neighbors. We enjoyed the games that children played together. Annie Over, a little baseball, and we'd go swimming when we could. We didn't get to fish much. My daddy usually had jobs for us. We didn't get to fish much. When we were working, we got into bed about nine o'clock. About all the fun we actually had in those days was visiting with family and friends and going to the singings and going to church. You didn't go to town to go to the movies. I imagine my dad went to town about every two weeks. We had this little Eliga Store that had a fairly good grocery supply, and that's where we got most of our groceries. Furman Curry ran that. He was one of Dad's cousins.

Andy Gordon Wolf

Date of birth: 19 January 1927
Communities affiliated with: Brown's Creek, Maple
Interviewed by Thad Sitton

TS: I'm interviewing for the first time Andy Wolf. This interview is taking place in Mr. Wolf's home. The address is 10401 Highway 195, Florence, Texas, 76527. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

AGW: They's brothers and both of them had big families, and they was five or six miles apart. And they was kind of community people, you know what I mean, they lived there always.

TS: Yeah. Well, you were saying before we started that the Wolfs and the Hills lived pretty close together?

AGW: Well, naw, they's about five miles apart.

TS: Yeah, that's not too close.

AGW: Naw, and uh, but—it was closer for me because I walked up there barefooted lots of times to see my mother and grandmother and granddad, you know. My grandmother—my granddad—was deaf, and my grandmother was crippled, on the Hill side. And uh, Richard Hill was his daddy and mama, Grandpa John Hill. They lived until '37, 1937. I was a pretty good-sized boy, I remember them.

TS: I'm just looking [at the tape recorder], keep going.

AGW: All the people in that country, you know, lived in those neighborhoods there. And there used to be a—(unintelligible) neighborhood over there, and it finally broke up 'cause it didn't have enough kids, and the kids all come to Maple where we went to school, see. And Brown's Creek did also.

Well, we lived about three miles from school. And Mrs. Caufield was a widow woman, and she had four or five kids, anyhow. Five, I guess. Naw, four. Naw, five, because—(unintelligible) and so she raised her kids—not with money, 'cause there wasn't no money, you know. And, but she lived in a rent place, you know. What they called a rent place then was third and fourths or something. If there was a vacant house in the country somebody could move into it, you know, and kind of keep it up. Just far as I know they didn't pay no rents, couldn't afford to, you know. Other than if you made crops, well, you got a third and fourth, you know, whatever. But Mrs. Caufield she moved from one place to another, you know, 'cause she's a widow woman and didn't have no money. Didn't none of us had any. But—she, uh, raised a garden and milked a cow or two, you know, and raised her family. And everybody worked, you know. You had to. And we did also, and we lived in Wolf Valley—Wolf Hollow, they called it. And the head of it was Egypt Hollow.

TS: Was what?

AGW: Egypt, Egypt Hollow.

TS: Was that next to it?

AGW: Naw, it was part of Wolf Valley.

TS: Okay.

AGW: But we called it Egypt Hollow. I don't know why, I guess it was far back up in the sticks. And—

TS: Egypt Hollow.

AGW: There was a spring, and there was a creek they call Wolf Creek, now—I don't remember it ever had a name or not, but it run most all of the time, you know, from that spring.

And I remember back in the '30s—I don't remember what part of the '30s, about the middle, I guess, about '34 or '35, 'cause I's a pretty good-sized boy—and this spring up in Egypt Hollow, a cow got bogged down in it. And we had to go up there and take horses, you know, and pull her out. We all pulled that cow—(unintelligible) finally, I don't know how long she'd been in there, but—after a while they lose the will to fight, you know—but after you get them out and they stay out. 'Course, that water was cold, too, you know, but after they stay out for a little while they get to where that they'll get enough strength back to get up and go on, you know. And sometimes, one of them might walk off in it again, you know. Cows don't have much sense. Well, Egypt Hollow was at the upper end of our place, you know, and there was some caves up there called Bat Caves, and another one was called Shotgun Cave, I think, and that's what we done for pastime—kids, you know—we went up there and walked through them things and sometimes without a light and sometimes with one in the dark. And sometimes there's rattlesnakes in them. But it was a deal, you know. We found this Shotgun Cave, one time—now, there was two fellows come back in the '30s sometime or other and got my granddad's permission to go up there and pan for gold, or dig for gold. And they dug a hole 180 foot deep digging for gold. In fact, they claimed they got enough gold out of there to pay for their expenses, you know. And whether they did or not, there's nobody knows, you know.

TS: That's a pretty good-sized hole.

AGW: (laughs) Yeah. Well, they's there for a year or two, yeah. But we had a post cutter one time, and him and his family moved up there in a tent by that spring, and he lived there and cut posts and everything.

TS: What would be the deal with a post cutter? Would the landowner take a portion?

AGW: Well, yeah, yeah, yeah. They uh, well uh, I's gonna say one of my uncles he cut posts for us for years and he cleared the cedars off. Cut them clean, see, and he got the posts off of it. And so that was—

TS: Yeah. So he's doing you a good turn by clearing the land?

AGW: Yeah. He got the clearing, he got three dollars an acre for clearing the cedar, see. And my dad cut the posts out of it, if there was any posts on that, because it was kind of a flat prairie out there, you know. Most of the good posts come from up in a holler, something like Egypt Hollow. Most of them been cut off, and—

Back then, we didn't have no cars or anything, you know. In the early '30s, Pa got an old Model T. I don't know how he got the Model T, but he did. And my youngest brother, William, come down with pneumonia. And he's two years old, that was 1932, he's born in '29. It had been raining like it is now, except that it just had dirt roads, you know, and had to take a four-mule team and pull that Model T out three miles to where this road's solid enough to run this Model T on, and he went to town and got Dr. Brown, old Dr. Brown, and Dr. Brown come out there and stayed three days and nights until the boy's fever broke. 'Course, the neighbors come in and helped set up with him and all that.

TS: Would neighbors do that a lot?

AGW: Oh, you bet. Yep. Everybody helped everybody. Now, Dick Hill, he had a big family, and they lived back up on Manning Mountain—(unintelligible) my Granddaddy Hill and them. And they farmed up there, and they had a big family, and that was my mother's first cousin, see. And so they'd bring all their family down and stay two or three days or whatever, you know, and everybody would put them a quilt on the floor, whatever, you know, and sleep. And have a big domino game, and we'd chase down a chicken or whatever and have chicken and dumplings and have a real fine time. They went five or six miles in a wagon like that, see, take them all day to come down there.

TS: Yeah, you couldn't run down for half a day and go back. It didn't make sense.

AGW: Naw, that's right. And 'course we had a game we called High Five, and everybody'd get excited at that High Five game. It was a card game—it wasn't gambling or anything—choose up partners and play. Nobody plays it anymore. One of my brothers died, and we don't even have anybody knows how to play it anymore.

TS: Oh, no.

AGW: But that was some of our pastimes, you know, and we had a neighbor that bought two or three places over there and put in a ranch, and him and his wife would come over, and we'd pop a big dish or two of popcorn that we'd raised. Couldn't buy it, but we raised it—popcorn—and we'd have a domino game and eat popcorn.

TS: Neighbors would visit neighbors, and that was one of—they would generally stay overnight because—

AGW: Well, now he didn't, because we had cars then, that was in the late '30s. He was raised in Belton. You know this Cochran, Blair, and Pots building? Well, his family would own a third of that, see. I guess they're all dead, now. But he had money, you know, and he come in and bought two and three of the old places. The old—I call it the Will Wilson place—I don't know if it was Will Wilson's place or not, but him and his mother lived there. And the reason I remember it, I was four, five, or six years old, and I'd go by there to go to my grandmother's up there—five miles walking, you know, when I's five or six years old. And they had a bunch of geese. Mrs. Wilson, she raised them geese for feather pillows and things—for featherbeds. Back then, everybody, that's what you wanted, you know. If you was first class you had to have a feather pillow or a featherbed. But anyhow, ever' time I'd go by there them damn geese'd get after me! (laughs) You heard them squawk, you know, them things would just squawk, you know, set their old heads out and try to get ahold of me. And I out run them. 'Course, if they knew that I was there, that their geese was after me, they'd stopped them, but they didn't know it. I just went by their house, that was just the way to go to get out to the main road. Brown's Creek, where you crossed it down, there was just a road across solid rock, wasn't no bridge on it. But I walked it many times.

I went up to see my granddad and grandmother one time, and Grandpa Hill, like I said, he was deaf, and he had two or three old cur dogs, you know. One of them was a screw-tailed bulldog or something, and another'ne something else. But anyhow, he said, "Come on." I's five or six years old. He said, "Come on, I'll take you possum hunting." Well, there's a bunch of big persimmon trees down on the creek down there, or branch, so I went with him, and we walked down there and got down there, and it was in the fall and the persimmon trees was full of persimmons. Possums, you never seen the like of possums in that persimmon tree. I climb up there and grabbed one of them by the tail, you know. The old persimmon tree's a hundred foot high, I guess. It's a big old tree. But I'd climb up there, and I'd grab one by the tail and throw him out, you know, and the dogs would kill him when he hit the ground. Killed five or six of them like that. And my granddad before he died, you know, he was setting there one day, and he said, "You remember when I taken you possum hunting?"

I said, "Yeah. I do remember."

TS: That's something I wanted to ask you about. What kind of hunting did people do?

AGW: Well, we didn't have any deer. If there'd been a deer in the country the whole country'd been after him—for meat, see. And we didn't have no electricity. My dad always had a bunch of goats, and we'd kill goats. But when you killed one, you'd have to cut him into quarters or whatever and go round and divide him with the neighbors. Sell it to them or give it to them, it didn't make any difference, because you had to get rid of it or it'd ruin. And then you could barbecue half of one, well that would just last as long as meat ordinarily lasts, might last two or three days. And you had to be out of it by then, see. And you didn't kill a beef because there wasn't no way to keep them.

TS: And they'd do the same thing, right? When they'd kill a goat they'd quarter it and—

AGW: Well, they didn't nobody have goats apart from us in that part of the country. I remember one time—we used to have a last-day-of-school barbecue, and sometimes there might be fifty to a hundred kids going to school and there'd be five hundred at that picnic, you know. And each little community had one. I think Brown's Creek used to have one after there wasn't any kids going to school there, you know. But it was just something that you did, all the neighbors and everybody got together there.

TS: Well, what was uh—you may think I know this, but you're talking about your community. The name of your community that you grew up in was—

AGW: Maple. Or Silver City, some people called it Silver City.

TS: Silver City, that's interesting. And the Maple School was where you attended, and you talk about walking there. What other—could you tell me a little more about that school closing?

AGW: That school never did close. Brown's Creek and Harmony and all of them, they just got to where they didn't have enough kids to keep the schools there, and they consolidated, and all of them come to Maple, see.

TS: No, I mean that social affair at the school.

AGW: Oh! They had them all over the country, ever' school had them.

TS: Tell me about those, I don't understand about those.

AGW: Okay, well school turned out, all the people got together and they had a big pit and they barbecued. One time, I started to tell you awhile ago, we had, I believe, nine goats and a big cow, fat cow, you know, and all of them made up a barbecue and never was any left over. And they cooked it for two days, and then everbody'd bring pies and cakes and things and they had tables outside. Just line them up, and everybody'd put their things there.

TS: Would the school put on any kind of a show?

AGW: They would. The school would have a stage show, sometimes. Not always, they didn't have to, you know. But they'd have a school play or something. And Gilbert Colvin and his family was a family singing deal, you know, and they'd always sing at these places. And some of them, like Archie Culp and some of them, would play his guitar and sing, you know. And they made all these deals, too, and we really had country dances also.

TS: Where would the country dances be?

AGW: Be at somebody's house. We had a lot of them, you know. We had one—sometimes they'd all get in a fight, you know, get drunk on that old home-brew and white lightning, whatever. And then sooner or

later one of them get to saying how tough he was, you know, he'd challenge somebody else and first thing you know, you'd have everybody fighting. I remember we went to—(unintelligible) one time, they had a big dance and they put us under the wagon. We went down there in a wagon, it was five or six miles from where we lived, put us under a wagon to keep from getting them rocks. (laughs)

TS: Because they were throwing rocks at each other?

AGW: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Well, how would somebody set up, let's talk about—

AGW: They'd clear a room out like this here, they'd clear it out, you know, and have musicians there, and everybody'd dance.

TS: Just move the furniture out?

AGW: Oh, yeah, yeah. Move it for a little room.

TS: And a family would do that, right?

AGW: Well, they'd take turnabout just about every dance. My dad and them give a dance several times, and they'd have musicians, you know, mostly guitar and fiddle players. They'd have one or two, always, that was the—Arlee and Randall Paul, their daddy used to run the Maple Grocery Store, Silver City Grocery Store, down there. They was both musicians and they'd come and play some. They was young men then about my age or maybe a little older. And they run the country grocery store down there, and they ground meal, you know, corn up for meal. And such as that, you know. Little country store done all that.

TS: How did they grind it, did they have—

AGW: They had a mill—had some kind of old motor that was running, maybe Model T motor or something.

TS: Some kind of gasoline—

AGW: They did, I think it was gasoline. 'Course, I don't know if they had electricity there or not at that store, but they didn't for a long time.

You know the first picture show I ever seen? They had a tent come in, I was pretty small, had a tent come in. I don't think I was six years old. And this fellow showed this picture show, and he got up there and cranked it by hand, and it showed pictures and some writing come up on there, you know. (laughs) Hey, big crowd there, too, 'cause that was a big deal, you know. Never seen a picture show or nothing.

TS: Where he was setting this up?

AGW: That was Silver City School—no, not the school, the store. Also in the cedar yard, you know. Used to go there to sell cedar posts. Usually you'd sell cedar posts and trade them for groceries or go buy groceries, you know. Same way with eggs. We had eggs and cream and stuff like that, you know, and when you went to town you taken a jug of cream and several dozen eggs, ever what you had, you know, and traded them and got coffee, lard, and stuff like that.

TS: Just trying to—if you had stuff that you could sort of turn in for what you needed without getting into money, you knew—

AGW: Well, you'd get money for it, you know, they had a price for it. You maybe get ten cents a dozen for eggs and stuff like that, but see for a quarter you could get six sacks of tobacco. And everybody

smoked. We didn't have ready-rolls or nothing like that.

TS: The gristmill, would he take a portion of the cornmeal as pay if you wanted to do it that way?

AGW: Right. You could take fifty pounds of corn down there, he'd take five pounds of it, or whatever, and he'd grind it for you. Old man Jim Stevenson, now he never did have no—(unintelligible) and he kind of taken up with this fellow Greenway that run this store after Luther Paul was there. Luther Greenway bought it from him. And they two or three kids, too. And he bought a lot of cedar posts, you know, they'd pay so much for cedar posts. If you could cut a hundred cedar posts a day you might get—a four-inch-top, eight-foot post bring eight cents—so, that was eight dollars. That's a whole lot of money then.

TS: Absolutely. I've talked to people that chopped cotton in the '30s for fifty cents a day.

AGW: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, we hired people to work on fence and things like that, my dad did, all the time. He was a trader, you know, and I guess he had a little money, must have had it, but all the boys in the country just about, they's growing up, worked for us at one time or another for fifty cents a day and keep. Give fifteen dollars a month, you know. That's not an eight-hour day, either, that's—when you woke up in the morning you got out and fed the cattle and everything before daylight, see, and when it got daylight you was ready to go to the field or go to the post yard, or whatever.

TS: Let's just talk about—everything we talked about is what I wanted to ask you about. That's the reason I'm not saying anything. I would like to know about your family's operation on the farm. Could you just tell me about the farm that you grew up on—the house, the outbuildings, just whatever y'all raised and did?

AGW: You know what? I've got nearly all the plough tools that we used with mules out there.

TS: Uh-huh, right out back.

AGW: I guess we'd get rich with them by now. I'll take you up there and show you after while. Yeah, it was something. Back when them tractors started coming in, Pa traded all his mules off and got a F-20 or F-12 Farmall tractor, you know, with lugs on it.

TS: Steel wheels, right?

AGW: Right. And we farmed with that, and you couldn't do a lot more than you did with mules, 'cause it wasn't all that fast either. But it would do a little better job, maybe, and a little faster, and maybe it wasn't as quite as hard to get along with as them mules, you know.

TS: Well, how many people was in your family and what were their names? Let's just name them. I mean your brothers and sister and mother and father.

AGW: My mother was Effie May Hill, and my dad was John Daniel Wolf, nicknamed Tuck Wolf. And his daddy was named Uncle Jack, everybody called him—Grandpa Jack Wolf. That wasn't his name either, his name was John. Nickname, you know. But my dad and his brothers all lived there one time and their names was Buck, Tuck, Jack, and Jim.

TS: Buck, Tuck, Jack, and Jim.

AGW: Yeah. That's nicknames. All of them gone, ain't none of them left, now. And I guess that my dad was the only one of them that ever tried to own anything, you know. All the rest of them just rented, you know. Or Uncle Jim, he worked for us and helped make a crop for a long time, but there's a—everybody just done the same thing.

TS: What about your brothers and sisters?

AGW: I just got two brothers, John and William, and William's dead, see. He died a couple years ago. And Andy and—(unintelligible) what we call our younger brother, John, J. D. And you'll see him over at Gatesville when we go over there. But what I set into do is tell you about all of our neighbors, too, you know, 'cause we all lived in a community. We might have been three or five miles apart, but because the kids all went to school together and everything, everybody knew everybody. And they went to these country dances, too, and everybody knew everybody at them dances, you know. And like I say, they all get in fights sometime, but I don't know, they never did—(unintelligible) like Bailey McBride one time. Old Bailey's still alive, he lives in Fort Worth up yonder. He's Demp McBride's boy. Demp had four or five. And Gerald Ray, I went to school with him, but he's dead now, too. I was teasing old Bailey here awhile back, he was married, you know, and he had one of them dances and everything, and old Bailey got out in the yard and said, "I'm toughest man here, I can whip anybody in here." Been drinking that old booze, you know. (laughs) 'Course, didn't nobody fool with then, he couldn't of whipped nothing anyway. (laughs) But that was just the way it was, you know. Like an old uncle, you know. They had ten or twelve kids under Uncle Buck, and they lived down there, and once a year, well, he'd take cotton off to the gin, you know. And he'd get him a—I don't know where he got it, but he'd always manage to get him a bottle of booze, you know. And he'd come in, hollering just loud as you could hear him for three miles down the road. (laughs) And that's the only time I ever know of him drinking, that one time a year.

TS: That's when he took the cotton in, ginned it, and sold it.

AGW: Yeah, yeah. That's the only time he had money enough to buy anything like that, you know. And the Brookshires, one of them lived in the Brown's Creek community and the other lived in New Hope community, and both of them had big families. Gilbert Colvin, he was married to one of them Lee Brookshire's kids, and I seen one of his boys at the reunion last year. They was smaller, they wasn't as old as I was.

TS: Did your family raise any cotton? Did y'all have cotton?

AGW: Everybody raised cotton, that was all the money crop we had, then. But back in the '30s, wasn't too long into the '30s, until we started to raising broomcorn, because broomcorn was a better money crop. And then, you know, everybody had to have a broom.

TS: I don't know anything about broomcorn.

AGW: Well, we dealt in it—my dad dealt in it—for years and years. I pulled many a head of broomcorn, you know. You know what broom straw is?

TS: Yeah.

AGW: Well, it growed up like cane or something, you know, we clipped the ears—you can pull a head off it like that—and then you had to thrash it, and finally you got to baling it. At first we bundled it, and you could set it in the barn. And the first thrashers we had, you'd take an old Model T wheel and put a tire on it and punch nails in there, you know, and start that old Model T engine and that thing running and knock all the seeds off the broomcorn—with nails, you know.

TS: You call it a [thrasher]?

AGW: We had a lot of broomcorn.

TS: What would one of these—what would a broom factory look like? What would have in it, what kind of machinery and stuff?

AGW: Well, it'd have a thrasher and a winder that you could put that straw round the handle, you know, and everything—laid it on there—and then they had a threader that would run them threads across it.

TS: Okay, I see. To make a broom you got to bind it to the wooden handle, right?

AGW: Well, we had a blind fellow, lived with us for years, that had a hand-operated broom factory. He's blind, and he made brooms all the time, blind, and he'd take them and sell them.

TS: Well, now, cotton—cotton prices were real low during the '30s.

AGW: Well, this is in the late '20s and early '30s. Back there, they didn't have nothing but cotton, you know, and it wasn't worth pulling sometimes. I remember when the cotton wasn't worth six cents a pound or something. Wouldn't even pay for the picking. Like everything else in the Depression, you know, there just wasn't anything worth anything. 'Cause money was a just a thing of the past, there just wasn't any money at all.

TS: How would you plant broomcorn? Was it kind of like a sorghum? It was a sorghum kind of thing?

AGW: Yeah, yeah. Well, you couldn't plant it too thick, you know. If you did, well, it'd get too thick and it wouldn't have no big head. So you had a range—we planted 640 acres in the Rio Grande Valley one time and sold it, and that was back during the '50s when we had such a drought, you know. It wasn't always a lot of money in it, but it was more money than there was cotton. (laughs) And yet, cotton was our money crop, see. You didn't count eggs and cream for money crop, they's just something you traded for groceries when you went to town, you know. If you had to spend any money at all, that's where it come from. And you didn't buy chickens, you raised your own chickens, you know. You'd have an old hen and she'd lay a dozen eggs, and you set her on them eggs and she'd hatch out the little ones.

TS: How would you harvest broomcorn?

AGW: By hand. Yep. It had a big long head up there, and you'd grab ahold of a shuck with one hand and the head in another and pull it off. And you'd put it in a pile and let it dry out, and then you'd bundle it. You'd haul it into the baler then, the thrasher, and you'd thrash it and bale it.

TS: So, you'd go up the rows and pull the heads off and pile them up the middle, right?

AGW: Well, naw, you'd break some stalks over that you'd pulled and then lay it on them so they'd keep it off the ground so they wouldn't mold or anything.

TS: But you're leaving it down the middle in the field to dry—in the field—before you fool with it?

AGW: That's right, three or four days for it to cure, you know. And, 'course you had to keep the green color on it and everything, see, and that's the reason you kept it off the ground and all that. Then they dyed it, and you put it in the deal, and dyed the broom handles and put labels on them and all that. It's a pretty good operation. And that old blind man, you just wouldn't think a fellow could do that, but he'd get up in the middle of the night and go out there and make brooms.

TS: I guess it doesn't make any difference to a blind man if it's the middle of the night.

AGW: Naw. He was a strong man, it was a shame that he was blind, you know. 'Course, he was limited in what he could do, but he always wanted to be working. He stayed with us for years. My dad picked him up 'cause he's staying with a sister-in-law, and his sister-in-law kicked him out. He didn't have no place to go. And my dad went by there and sold him some broomcorn. He'd go by and let him have two or three bales or whatever he wanted, you know. Bale'd weigh about four hundred pounds, average. And so he told him one day, he said, "Mr. Wolf, you ain't got no place I could go, would

you?" Pa said, "I don't know. What's wrong?" He said, "Well, my sister-in-law's told me I was gonna have to get out." His brother was dead. He was from Tennessee. And he lived with us for years, my dad brought him home and set his little old shop up in a shed, you know, and he made brooms.

TS: Well, is how you sort of got into the broom-making thing for the first time, maybe—the family?

AGW: Yeah—making brooms. We never did make them, but we bought and sold broomcorn, see. And we could haul to Keene, or wherever. This is on up in the '30s, you know—(unintelligible) and in the '40s and '50s, 'cause that was in 1951 to '54 when I farmed in the Rio Grande Valley and raised broomcorn.

TS: That's a lot of broomcorn. And that's good soil, right?

AGW: Yeah, but it's dry, see. Didn't have no irrigation or nothing, it's just dry. And some of our neighbors down there would raise some, too, you know, and my dad bought it from them and taken it off and sold it.

TS: What was that country like around the Maple community for raising cotton? I mean the ground. Was it good cotton or was it chancy, kinda—

AGW: Well, it never was a good cotton country, you know. You might take ten acres and make a bale of cotton. I had two uncles, Oscar [Hill] and O. C. Hill, when they's growing up, they left home and went down on the old Cooper place, which was an old house that's setting down there where Coopers had lived at one time. So they lived there for a year and had ten acres, and they made one bale of cotton and they lived for year off that bale of cotton. It might of brought twenty-five dollars. So you could just imagine. 'Course, they had chickens and milk cow and everything, you know. So that's just the way you got by, everybody did, and you was just blowed up if you didn't have a milk cow or something, you know.

Let me tell you a little story. Back in the early '30s, we's living back up in Wolf Hollow up there on the old Henry Wolf place. And I was four or five years old, wasn't very old, you know. Had a lane that went down through there and big bloodweeds on both sides of the road. And I's walking up that road, and I met this fellow that had come across the mountain. It was old mountain trails up there that people had used always, you know, they'd always been there. And this fellow was leading an old sway-backed horse—I don't know if you know what a sway-backed horse is—and he had an oat sack throwed across the old horse, and his wife was riding that horse, and he's leading it, and he's barefooted. I thought that was funny because I'd never seen a grown man that didn't have shoes on, you know. I said, "Feller, where is your shoes?" He said, "Son, I don't have no shoes." And that shows you what the '30s was, you know. And he wasn't by himself, they's a lot of people like that. Uncle Bob Dorsey, he was an old fellow. He had a daughter, I think he lived with his daughter, I don't know. But he come through the country about once a year, and he'd stay with us for about a week, you know. And he'd talk. We'd have to make a crop and everything, so we'd just finally have to go off and leave him—keep on talking, you know. But he was a fine old man, you know what I mean? And that's what he done, you know, he'd visit people that he knew.

TS: He would visit around, that's what he did. He didn't have a permanent—

AGW: Yeah. Naw, his daughter, you know, lived up there. But he's always clean and everything, wasn't nothing wrong with him other than he just—and we just knew him as Uncle Bob Dorsey, you know. And 'course he had kids there, too, that was Cecil Dorsey. And so, his kids—I think maybe Cecil Dorsey married Clyde Moulder's daughter. And I'll tell you now, Clyde Moulder and them, they lived up on Owl Creek up north of us, that's—(unintelligible) hollow up there, see. And 'course, we lived three miles from school, we'd have to walk from there, but they come to school down

there, you know, and they'd walk from up there. Except Kirby, and Kirby had one leg shorter than the other, and he's kind of lame, you know. And Kirby had a big old bay horse he rode down to school all the time. And old Kirby's pretty active. He'd run and put his hands on that old horse's hips and jump up in the saddle, you know. I thought that was really something. I never did get to where I could do that. (laughs)

TS: That's a pretty good jump.

AGW: Yeah, that's a pretty good jump. And he rode that old horse all the way down there, six or seven miles, you know. And I was about to tell you about the Caufields over there. Now, I think that they're all dead. I don't think that they're any of them left except one of the boys that a grandson of them—of Mr. Caufield—is a policeman or something here in Fort Hood. But they walked three or four miles before they got to our place. See, we was three miles from school.

TS: Would people cut across to come into the school? I mean, they couldn't just come around by the roads, right? Would they go—

AGW: You never heard nobody say nothing about a fellow walking across his place. (laughs) Naw, you didn't. I'll tell you, we had twelve hundred head of goats one time. I mean there was goats everywhere, you know, and goats were worth fifty cents apiece. They wasn't worth nothing hardly. And that's the reason we never did get them all out of that mountain. That's the reason we had the barbecues, you know. We'd barbecue goat or something. We had an old black dog, called him Old Tade, and Old Tade would catch one of them goats and never pull a hide on him, or anything, just hold him until you could get ahold of him, you know.

TS: How would he grab them? Where would he grab them? Did he have a special place to grab them?

AGW: Naw, usually by the head or something, and he'd just sit there and hold them, you know. He never would put enough pressure on them to break blood from them or anything.

TS: Now, I don't know—I've talked to people about hogs and cattle a lot, but I don't know anything about goats. Tell me about—how did y'all get goats, what did you do with the goats beside barbecue them?

AGW: Well, my dad bought twelve hundred goats because somebody just couldn't afford to keep them anymore. They'd keep goats until they cleared off the land, see what I'm saying? That's what they bought them for. And they'd shear them for mohair, you never did heard of anybody having slick goats, back then—called them milk goats. And every once in a while some old person would have two or three milk goats, you know.

TS: But these were mohair goats, and people wanted them originally to clear the land off because—

AGW: Well, they cleared the land, and the hair was worth something.

TS: (unintelligible; speaking at the same time) The mohair goat. Well, how would you take care of goats? Do goats take care of themselves, or what do you do with goats?

AGW: Well, we lived up there, and 'course we didn't have no fences or nothing, you know, and had all these goats, and there was a peddler come through one time, and he come up to our house. Well, you know, it didn't make no difference if he was a peddler or what you was. Everybody's glad to see you, 'cause they might go two, three months without seeing anybody. So this fellow come up, and he had a brand new Model A, Model A automobile, you know, and it was a roadster or coupe, had a rumble seat in it. You know what coupe was?

TS: I know what you mean, yeah.

AGW: Okay, this fellow had a rumble seat, but 'course it was closed up, you know. There wasn't nobody but him. So, he was setting there trying to sell whatever he's selling, and these goats was a-jumping on his new car. And it had a cloth top on it, see, and they'd jump up on the top, and then they'd slide down that thing, you know, where his rumble seat was. And man, I'm telling you what, in a minute that fellow seen that, and he got up and left. He didn't sell anything or try to sell anything. (laughs) But they take all the paint off, I'll bet they's fifty goats, and they was a running and jumping on that thing like that, you know. Goats like high places, you know.

TS: Yeah, I've seen them. So, y'all had a lot of goats, after a while.

AGW: Yeah. Well, there wasn't no fences to hold them, you couldn't—but they run on a mountain pasture, you know, that's the reason we never did get them all out of there. We had to shear them a little early one year, 'cause you had to start early, and we had people to shear them, you know, charge so much a head for shearing. And they sheared them a little bit early, and it come a cold rain, and it killed three hundred of them. They piled up in caves and things, you know, back in the mountain.

TS: Well, did y'all have a fence around your property, or did people let things—

AGW: Oh, yeah, you had fences.

TS: You had a perimeter fence?

AGW: Yeah, yeah, but it mostly wasn't goat fences, you know. Barbed-wire fences, sometimes. Well, we had some net-wire fences, I guess, because we had them goats and things, and had a hog pasture and it had hog wire around it. We always had five or six hogs. You'd usually kill one—our family'd kill about three or four hogs in the wintertime, you know. You'd put the meat up and smoke it. Everybody had a smokehouse, you know. You'd put the meat up and hang it in there and salt it down good, you know, and keep the fire going in there all the time so it'd smoke it. And our meat kept pretty good like that.

TS: How big was your hog pasture?

AGW: Oh, four or five acres.

TS: Just enough room for them to move around into kind of—

AGW: Well, we milked seven or eight cows, so we'd get three gallons of milk at a milking. Maybe not that much, maybe two gallons. So, we couldn't use that much milk, and you made bread and everything from milk, you know. If some milk soured, you know, you just poured it in a slop bucket, you know, and put some grain or something in there with corn, shelled corn or whatever in there, and slopped the hogs with it, you know. And they done pretty good on it, I guess. And we had two or three beehives and raised honey, and things like that.

TS: Well, I'm interested in all those things that people did to get food to eat and make a living and sort of cut down on how much cash they had to use. You tried to raise as much on your place as you could, to get as much of a living on your place as you could?

AGW: That's right. Well, flour and coffee, and grease if you run out of hog lard, you know, you'd have to buy grease to cook with, and things like salt and pepper and stuff like that, you know. You'd have to have your chickens and eggs and things and swap them all for that stuff, you know.

TS: So, some of that stuff you'd eat on the place, but you had an excess of, say, chickens and eggs that you'd trade in the store.

AGW: Right. And cream. When that milk sours or something you'd dip the cream off of it, you know, and

put it in a big jar, and when you went to town or wherever there was a place to swap cream for something else, you know—usually they had a mohair place and wool. And we run sheep, too.

TS: When you're saying town you're talking about—

AGW: Gatesville.

TS: Gatesville.

AGW: We went to Killeen sometimes, but mostly went to Gatesville. We lived in Coryell County.

TS: But the place you traded in the most, and that you were closest to, was Gatesville?

AGW: Oh, yeah.

TS: Y'all were kind of on the north side. You weren't too many miles out of Gatesville, right?

AGW: Twenty miles.

TS: That's a long way.

AGW: That's a long ways on a horse. (laughs) That's the reason Dad got old Dr. Brown. He come down there and stayed with my brother for three days and nights, see, with that Model T.

TS: Where did you gin your cotton?

AGW: Well, they had a gin at a little community called Ruth.

TS: Ruth?

AGW: Uh-huh. And had three gins in Killeen and two or three in Gatesville and—I can't remember the name of the place now—had another one down on Leon River. I'll think of it. But mostly we went to Ruth. It was about seven or eight miles, about halfway to Gatesville.

TS: And that's a good way to haul cotton in a wagon.

AGW: In a wagon, that's right. Take all day.

TS: What was the Ruth gin like? Did you go, did you ever go, ride up there?

AGW: Oh, yeah.

TS: Can you describe the Ruth gin? What was the Ruth gin like? Would there be people waiting in lines and that's sort of thing?

AGW: Not much, you know, 'cause you always took four and a wagon, and they wasn't too many people lined up, 'cause they had done got out of your way before you got there. Yeah. Well, it was a little gin, you know, they had a little penny peanut machine and bubble gum place and things like that, you know. But that was mostly what it was. You could get a handful of peanuts for a penny. And a pretty big treat, too. Hell, I's fifteen years old before I ever had anything bigger than a fifty cent piece. (laughs)

TS: Diesel gin, diesel engine gin, or was it a steam engine?

AGW: I don't know if they had diesel back then. Naw, it was a steam deal. Yeah, 'cause they trucked wood in—(unintelligible) they had one at Evant when we moved up there on top of the mountain, and it closed not too long after we moved up there. Well, I guess—I don't know why that you didn't have one in our neighborhood down there, but they didn't, and that was the closest one we had was at

Ruth, and it was six, seven miles. 'Course, you knew everybody up there, see. My dad he was a fox hunter, and he kept two or three hounds all the time, and this Noog Black, he had a bunch of hounds. And they'd all get together and run them hounds, run fox, you know.

TS: How would they do that?

AGW: Well, they'd all get together, and Luther Greenway who run that store later, well he had a couple of hounds, and they'd all get their hounds together, you know, and go back and sometimes run one fox all night long. He'd get him in a tree and then hold the dogs and chunk him out of that tree, you know, and he'd run again, you know, and then the dogs would pick up his trail and take it up again.

TS: So, that's the way to get two runs out of the same fox, is to hold the dogs—

AGW: Well, they didn't like to kill one at all. They never killed one, hardly, 'cause sometimes you'd have to go a long ways to find a fox.

TS: Well, would they sit and listen to the fox hunt, or—

AGW: (unintelligible) Naw, they'd uh—you couldn't follow the dogs, they'd run too fast, see. But you get up there and build you a big fire somewhere and listen to the dogs run, and each one of them dogs had a different sound in his voice. Them old fox hunters, they could each one of them tell you which ones was barking. It was a—I know a fellow here in Florence now who fox hunts. It's a great deal, you know, and 'course you running around with rattlesnakes and things, too, but they didn't nobody pay attention to that then.

We killed rattlesnakes in the wintertime sometime. You'd go up there and take a long stick and put a hook on the end of it, you know, and you find a cave with rattlesnakes in it and you pull them out and kill them with a rock. I remember one time I killed eighteen out of one hole and piled them all up and it's a stack of rattlesnakes that high.

TS: Well, that was fun, but there was also a sense of getting rid of something you wanted to—

AGW: Well, we did. And then you see they started to paying a bounty on them—in Coryell County and Bell County, both. In Coryell County they paid a dime apiece, I think, and Bell County paid fifteen cents, or something like that, I think. So if you killed twenty rattlesnakes in a day, you know, you made two dollars. And two dollars was a whole lot of money, then. (laughs)

TS: Were there other kinds of varmints in the county? Were there wolves, coyotes? What was out there?

AGW: Possum, coons. 'Course, we never caught any coons much, I don't guess there was that many coons around, but we caught possums and skunks and things and skinned them, you know, and sold their hides. Old possum hide'd bring a nickel. In Texas—

TS: How would you trap them?

AGW: With steel traps. You catch them and knock them in the head and kill them.

TS: Where would you sell them?

AGW: Well, nearly ever' feed place, in town, you know, had a hide place—people that'd buy hides. Just like you would selling your cream and eggs and stuff like that? Well, that same place would have a place where they would buy hides. 'Course, that's just trapping season, see, just lasted the wintertime. The hairs wasn't any good on them in the warm months, see.

TS: What kind of foxhounds did people use? There were different breeds, I don't know. I've heard of Walker hounds.

AGW: Yeah, right, they used Walkers and red tick hounds. They's uh—I don't know just exactly. Old Noog Black had an old dog called Old Redwing, and he sold her to Pa, and there ain't no telling what Pa paid for that animal. More than he had, I imagine. (laughs) But they was worth a whole lot, people wanted them real bad. And she had pups, and uh, let me see, I did know the name of them pups, I can't remember right now, but—but they was worth a whole lot. They went right on and run with her, you know, and made good foxhounds.

TS: Well the people that care about fox—I've talked to some fox hunters, and the people that care about it, or cared about it, really cared about it.

AGW: You doggone right. It's addictive, you know, and always they enjoyed it. Get up there and build a fire and listen to them hounds run, it's pretty, uh, pretty good pastimes.

TS: Red fox or grey fox in this country?

AGW: Grey fox. Occasionally you'd find a red fox, but mostly grey fox. I see one in my pasture down here every once in a while. If it hadn't set into this raining I was gonna take you down in the pasture, but, and, uh—it looks like maybe it's quit, now. We might go out there and I'll show you that old farm machinery that we had back then, you know.

Uh, old man Jim Stevenson always had a bunch of wild horses, you know, couldn't be worked, and he kept them just fat as they can be, feeding them corn and stuff. And Uncle Jim, he cussed a whole lot, and we was picking cotton up on the hill there close to Maple. And old man Jim lived just down they road there, and there was a steep hill there come off my Grandpa Jack's. And them horses ran away with him on damn rolling stalk cutter, and you could hear him all over the country, "Whooh, you son-o'-bitches!" (laughs) But they throwed him off, and they run that stalk cutter over him and broke some of his ribs and things, and he never did get over it. His health was bad from then on. And I think he finally—he committed suicide. 'Course, then they told him he's gonna have to move out of Fort Hood, and that—

TS: Yeah, that didn't help him.

AGW: No. And—

TS: So, your father, he raised cotton—I know this is not all at once—he raised cotton part of the time, he raised the broom straw. These were money crops, I'm just getting—he would sell the mohair. This is a serious—and wool—

AGW: And wool. You had to have a variety of things, you know, to keep money coming in, you know.

TS: Because one might go down the drain one year, you know, the cotton wouldn't make—

AGW: You never had a good market, so you just had to take whatever you could get, you know, and hope you made a little off of it. But we had some good sheep, Delaines and Rambouillets.

We moved to Evant up there and the damn things all died. That grass on that place up there didn't have anything on it, it's knee-high all over. Well, that's not a pasture for sheep.

TS: This is after you got off Fort Hood?

AGW: After we left Fort Hood.

TS: So, what kind of pasture do sheep like?

AGW: Well, they keep it grazed down close, you know. And so—they're not hard to keep or anything, you know, except that back then you had screwworms. You know, flies and everything, and them

screwworms—sometimes ever' time a cow would have a calf you'd have to dope that calf's navel for screwworms, 'cause you'd get screwworms in there before he'd get on his feet, you know. 'Course, they eradicated the screwworm finally with them—

TS: But they'd get on the sheep, too?

AGW: Oh, they had wool worms. And them things, I've seen them eat all of the top of a sheep's head out, you know. Yep, you'd have different kinds of worm medicine, and you'd catch them and dope them for it, you know.

TS: Well, did the dog catch the sheep and goats? I mean, did you use him as a catch dog?

What you just said off the tape is that your father bought two places in Wolf Valley that totaled four hundred acres.

AGW: Right, and we had them paid for and everything, and we had a good herd of sheep and had good fences on all of it, and cleared the cedars off of it and all that, you know. And then the army come along and taken it, you know. Well, they said, You got six months to move. 'Course, it was during World War II, so you didn't argue with anybody about going in the service or something. Whatever they done was right, you know, and we had to protect our country. And so—it wasn't right, you know. They sent an appraiser out there and said, Well, we'll give ten dollars an acre for your land. You got six months to move. You take all your fences, your barns and everything. Well, the old barns and things was a hundred years old—made out of logs, barns was. So, we moved, you know. They just give us so long to get out, and that's all you can do.

TS: So they really were not giving—in your opinion, they weren't giving what the improvements on the land were worth?

AGW: Well, they didn't want the improvements, you know, they just wanted the land, and they knew pretty well—'course, the lower price for it is about what they paid everybody, you know. We had nine hundred acres up there where—this was in Wolf Valley—where we run them goats. And they taken that, I think they paid a dollar an acre for it. That's where them bat caves and things was up there, too, and where the gold mines was.

TS: Well, how many pieces of land did the family own? You said—

AGW: Well, owned all that valley, you know, and I guess there was two thousand acres or more in there.

TS: So a lot of other people living around there were renting, right?

AGW: Right. They, uh—I don't know, I can't say too much about that. All of Wolf Valley had been sold to the kids, or the kids was living there, you know—of the family. And same way—my grandmother on my mother's side lived on a little place, and it's just a rock hillside up there, and they carried water down the side of a mountain out of a spring. And that was their water, one bucket full of water, cold water, out of the spring, you know. Didn't have no electricity at all. Never did have any at Fort Hood. We used kerosene lamps and a kerosene lantern if you had one, you know. Sometimes you'd have to get out at night and have to light one of them lanterns or something, you know, to see how to get around or get on an old rattlesnake.

TS: Or try to see how to get around, right?

AGW: Or try to see! (laughs) Wasn't much seeing to it. It was a little different. Back then, you wasn't used to electric lights or anything anyway, so—I think we got along pretty good. My dad, he was trucking back in the '30s, and he'd go sometimes and be gone two, three days. My mother would go with him. So, me and my brothers got along pretty well by ourself, you know. When you got hungry you'd go

out and get a hen egg, you know, and fry you an egg or something. You never were hungry. Might not be what you wanted to eat, but you always had something, you know. And we squirrel hunted and rabbit hunted. A good cottontailed rabbit is hard to beat, you know. And squirrels, you could always kill squirrels.

TS: So if you went hungry around there it was your own fault, you were too lazy or something.

AGW: That's right, too damn lazy to get up and go get something. Back in the '30s, you know, didn't nobody have water. We'd take a bath, and we'd either fill a washtub full of water and take a bath or you'd go down and pull water out of a spring well, you know, that was eighteen or twenty foot deep and throw water on one another. Use that old lye soap, you know. And I don't know if you ever got clean or not, but you sure got enough of it pretty quick. That water was just like ice.

TS: So, you dumped a bucket on your brother after he lathered himself up, and then he'd return the favor?

AGW: Right. (laughs)

TS: That's better than the washtub thing, where it gets dirtier all the time.

AGW: Yeah. Well, the thing is, you have to carry the water from the well. Sometimes it was half a mile.

TS: How did y'all move the water? Did y'all have a sled? I've heard of people—

AGW: Naw. Aw, hell, you'd take a bucket and go down there and you'd pull water out of a well with rope, pour your bucket full of water, and haul it to the house. You had a bucket of water at a time like that. You take a bath in the house, you'd carry enough water up there to fill a washtub full, and it'd take a little while. And, you know, in our gardens and things, we always made a garden. Had to or starve to death if you didn't, we had green—

TS: What did you have in your garden? Tell me that.

AGW: We had tomatoes and onions and turnip greens and—

(telephone rings; interruption in taping)

TS: I knew y'all didn't have electricity. It hadn't gotten out there before the end came. What about the telephone system? Tell me about that.

AGW: Well, I'll tell you something. I don't know when, 'cause it's 'fore my time, but sometime or other they had a telephone line run across there, because that old wire stuff was all through cedars and things, you know, up on top of the mountains in places. So, at one time they had to have a telephone, but we didn't have no telephones and no way of communicating with anybody, you know.

TS: What would you do if you had an emergency or something and you needed—

AGW: That's what I was telling you about my brother. Went to town and got the doctor. It taken me all day to go up there and get the doctor, and he come out there and stayed until he got better. Had these old country doctors. Naw, you just—let me tell you, in 1929 one of my uncles died. He had a burst appendix. There wasn't no way to get him to town to the doctor, and the doctor had to come out there, and he died with a burst appendix. 'Course, now, it probably wouldn't have amounted to anything, you know, but back then—he was eighteen years old. I remember him. It was 1929 and I wasn't very—that's all I remember is him being in bed, you know.

TS: What's your birthday? I meant to ask you.

AGW: January 19, 1927.

TS: Nineteen twenty-seven.

AGW: I was two years old when my uncle died, and I remembered him. 'Course we've talked about it all my life, but I just remembered him being in bed. He had an old paint horse that he called Old Bess, and they kept her until she died. That was his horse.

TS: You know, you could get something like that now, would just be a trip to the hospital, and you would die of it. And if you had a medical emergency—

AGW: That's right. Well, you can imagine if you have appendicitis and they put you in a wagon and haul you twenty miles to town what's gonna happen. You never would make it. Oh, we had some doctors that we could depend on, then. If we hadn't've I guess a whole lot of us would of died. My aunt, like I say, she had ten or twelve kids, and I don't know how many of she had 'fore the doctor got there, you know. 'Course, they'd come see about her, but too late, you know. She'd had a baby before they got there.

TS: Would the neighbors help, would the neighbor women help?

AGW: Oh, sure, yeah. Yeah, you always had some—and then we had some midwives around, too. Mrs. Baker was a midwife, and she's a pretty good medical person, you know. Of course you wouldn't want your life to depend on her.

Naw, like I say, I just was a kid, you know, and I went everywhere barefooted, and we walked three or four miles down there to Stephenson's Branch to a swimming hole. It's a good deep swimming hole, you know, and I learned to swim in the damn thing. I'd dive in one side 'fore I could swim a lick and come up on the other side. Just go in the water, you know, and the water twelve or fourteen foot deep. Just a little hole, wasn't very wide, you know. Spring creek's what it was. That water's cold. In the hot summertime, you walk down there and sure enough cooled off.

TS: Did y'all ever go fishing?

AGW: Ever' year my dad and us would load the wagon, and we'd go. And take a seine and seine fish and have a big fish fry for three or four days, maybe a week. Pa would say, "Let's get through the work, boys, and we'll go fishing." And so we'd all load up in there, my mother would make molasses cake and molasses cookies and things, you know. We had a molasses mill, you know, and everybody used the molasses mill. We raised four or five acres of cane, molasses cane, you know, and then make that old blackstrap molasses, you know. And that's what we had all winter long, you know—blackstrap molasses.

TS: Everybody had to have syrup.

AGW: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. When I was a kid I'd get me a biscuit and punch a hole in it with my finger and pour some of that molasses. Taste pretty good.

TS: Well, y'all would get in the wagon and get the molasses and get all the provisions, and where would you go for fishing?

AGW: Oh, it was five or six miles to the Cowhouse.

TS: Cowhouse Creek? How would y'all fish?

AGW: Oh, we set lines out. Had to go by hand, you know, you wouldn't have a boat or anything. Generally, we'd wade the water and we'd seine. Always had a seine, you know, and you'd just seine a hole of water and catch round suckers and things like that, you know, and sometimes catfish. Them old round suckers was bony but they's awful good, you know. Had a good taste.

You know, I found—I guess a fellow's always finding something strange in the world, but I went to Canada, I've been to Alaska two or three times and Canada two or three times, or four times, and I seen something. I found a skunk down here in this field on my place down there one time. I come down here, and that skunk was albino—solid white. Well, that's an unusual thing, you know. I don't know of—but I thought, Well, I've seen that one time in my life. And I'd have caught the thing but didn't want to get that stink on me. But I always talked about that thing, and I went to Canada up there, and this fellow had a little animal park, you know. It was kind of like a zoo or something except it was owned by a person, you know. Anyhow, this fellow had an albino skunk in there, and I commented on it. He'd de-scented it and everything, you know. I told him, I said, "I thought that I never in my life would ever see another albino skunk." And so he taken the skunk out, and it just like a little kitten, you know. 'Course, he'd had it de-scented and everything so it wouldn't—but you see things sometimes, it occurs in your life somewhere, sometime, you know.

TS: You think that's the only time you're going to see something, and then you might see it again.

AGW: Right. Some unusual circumstance.

TS: Well, uh, let me ask you another question about the molasses mill. Did, uh—

AGW: Well, let me tell you about it. You ever seen one?

TS: Yeah, but it's fuzzy. I don't know how it works.

AGW: Okay, well, we'd tie a mule on it, and it just runs around and around. And you run a wagon up there, you know, with cane, and you unload that cane out there. And then you got a fellow sits up there and pokes that cane through there, and the juice runs out. And then you got a big pit over here like a big barbecue deal or something. You got it over there, and you put that juice in there and cook it off. And put some sugar in, I think, and it turns out molasses. Everybody in the country used it.

TS: Yeah, that's what I wanted to—the neighbors would come and use y'all's—would he make it for them, or would they just use it?

AGW: Naw, they just used it. Everybody made their own molasses. Wasn't nothing to it, you just had to work together, you know, to get it done. You got that pan full over there, my uncle and them, they had all them kids, one time they had a fifty-five gallon full of it, you know. And they eat that molasses and butter and biscuits all winter. You know, I don't believe I've seen them people eat eggs. And they had chickens and things, but I think maybe they kept all their eggs and take them to trade them for coffee or something. And I know that's what we did. We eat an egg every once in a while, you know.

TS: I had one relative that liked molasses so well he would pour it on fried chicken. He ate it on fried chicken.

AGW: (laughs) Yeah. I can't eat anything like that anymore 'cause I'm a diabetic. But we didn't have anything else, then, you know. We made jelly ever' summer out of wild plums and things like that, you know, and always had homemade jelly and things, but we run out of it before the year was over, you know. Just like hams and things, you put them up in the winter but they wouldn't last all summer. You'd run out before the summer's over, and then you'd have to buy salt pork. You probably never eat any salt pork.

TS: Not in a long time.

AGW: (laughs) Well, salt pork is just old fat-belly hog meat, you know. You slice it off thick and put in a skillet and cook it a little bit, and it's so salty you couldn't eat it, hardly. But it was meat, and that's the only kind of meat we had, so—

TS: There's something I wanted to ask you about when you mentioned the peddler before. What kind of peddlers were there, back in those days? What kind of peddlers might show up on your doorstep?

AGW: Well, we never had any money. If you bought anything from one of them—you had the Rawleigh man come around and everything, you know, once or twice a year, and you'd trade him an old hen or a pig or something for whatever you wanted, you know. That Rawleigh stuff, we used all that stuff for medicine, back then, you know—cough syrup and everything like that.

TS: What did the Rawleigh man have? He had some patent medicines and stuff like that?

AGW: Well, I don't know if it was patented or not, somebody made it up, I guess. (laughs) Yeah, they had cough syrup and things, you know, that you buy. We used to get a cold or something, you know, or a flu, and your head and chest be congested. My mother'd take camphor and mix it up with kerosene and two or three other things like that, you know, and make a poultice, tie it around your neck, and that'll ease the congestion, you know. I don't know whether breathing it would, or drawing it through your skin, I don't know.

TS: I've heard of that. Did your mother believe in spring tonics? Did she have the kids take something—

AGW: We had that castor oil and Black Draught.

TS: Oh, God!

AGW: Yeah. That's what you taken. Sometimes, they'd catch you, hold you down, and hold your nose before doing it, but that's what you'd do. (laughs) Yeah, it was a dose. But everybody was under the same deal, you know, so—the neighbors, they wasn't rich people and poor people, they's all poor. Even the rich ones was poor. (laughs)

TS: If nobody rich is around, you don't feel poor, I guess.

AGW: Naw. I went up to my granddad and [grand]mother, and he was deaf, you know. Like I said, he taken me possum hunting, and he always had them big old persimmon trees down there, and since they put Fort Hood there now they've used flame throwers and killed every one of them big persimmon trees. I don't know, they's a few young ones, I think, but I haven't been down there in a little while. They just keep on destroying things like that. Big walnut trees, black walnut trees, there around our house, big one in front. And there was a rosebush, I never will forget, there's a rosebush in a pile of rocks, just like that right there. And somebody sometime or another put that rosebush in there, it's more or less kind of a tree, you know, and that thing was there as far back as I can remember. And these prune plums, they's a big tree of them. My granddad walked a mile or two down there every day to get the mail. And like I say, he was deaf, and he'd go along and throwed rocks out of the road, you know, and that's the way the plum trees got—but it made plums every year—got all them rocks piled around it, you know.

TS: So, whenever he walked to get the mail he'd pick up rocks and—

AGW: And throw them out of the road.

TS: Throw them out of the road.

AGW: Yeah. He always done that. And he farmed there. He had two little old Spanish mules, and he took them mules up to plow, you know, and they'd plant corn, popcorn, turnip greens—just about everything, you know, and that's what they lived off of.

TS: Well, what about any other kinds of peddlers besides the Rawleigh man? The Rawleigh man—is he in a car, or is he horse drawn?

AGW: Well, he was horse drawn for a long time. One time—one of the worst whippings I ever got, I guess, was I come from my grandmother's and them, I was going down the road and a peddler come along in a wagon, you know. And he had candy and stuff like that, see, I liked it pretty good. And I rode a mile or two down the road with him, you know, and when I got off I got off at Bill Hopson's place, and they boys, you know, that was mostly older than I was. So, I spent the night with them. And nobody knew where I's at. My dad found out where I was at, and he beat the hell out of me with a lariat rope.

TS: (laughs) So you had essentially followed the peddler on off across the country because he had candy?

AGW: Or rode with him, yeah.

TS: Rode with him.

AGW: And I never—I knew all them old people, you know, and so I never thought anything about it, you know. And I knowed where the Ike Bay place and the Verd Beck place was and all that, you know, 'cause I walked—went by there—all the time.

TS: Uh, how about Watkins, Watkins man?

AGW: We had Watkins people, too. Yeah, they come around ever' once and a while. That's the only people you'd see. It didn't make any difference who he was, somebody come along and it might been a month or two months or three months since you'd seen anybody, see, so glad to see them. There's an old saying, you know. Fellow'd come up there on his horse, you know, and they'd say, Tie your horse and come on in! You know, if it's time to eat, said, Well, we're fixing to eat. Just pull up a chair there. That's just the way everybody was, that's the way it was.

TS: Well, I mean, you wanted to be friendly to them. But they were also a novelty, and you wanted to talk to them and hear news. They had information, but they were an amusement, too, right?

AGW: Right. That's from a different world, see. Uncle Bob Dorsey, he'd come around all the time, you know. Well, he'd been to town and all that, you know, and he'd tell things, and he's interesting to listen to him talk. And we had old man Bill Colvin over there. Old man Bill was, I guess, as good a blacksmith as I ever seen. And he didn't have anything to eat or anything. His people kicked him out 'cause he was old and nasty. He lived by himself, you know, and I don't know if he ever washed or not, but—(laughs) he's always telling these big windies, you know. We was down there fooling with him one time, he said he was skating on the ice of the creek and the ice broke through. The reason he's telling that was 'cause he didn't have no shoes. He had a pair of old basketballs tied on his feet, you know, with a string. And he said his feet froze and busted open, you know, and he couldn't wear shoes. But he didn't have no money to buy shoes, 'cause he just made that story up, you know.

TS: So, he had taken an old busted-down basketball and had made a pair of shoes and had those tied on his feet—that's what you're saying?

AGW: Yeah, yeah.

TS: And he had made up a story to explain how come he'd got those on his feet?

AGW: Yeah, yeah. Skating on the ice in the wintertime! I don't know if it ever got that cold or not, but he said it did. (laughs)

TS: That's a Depression story.

AGW: Well, he was a depressing thing, his folks should of took him, but there didn't nobody want him 'cause he was old and nasty, you know.

TS: But he was a good blacksmith?

AGW: Oh, he was a dandy. He used to make these cow horns. When you was hunting with foxhounds you'd take a cow horn, holler it out, and made a horn out of it, you know. You've seen them. So, he could make them things, you know. Up to he got too old, he used to come around from over the country, and he'd shoe horses or whatever there was to do, you know, to make a little money—(unintelligible) with.

TS: So, he was that kind of a blacksmith. He would come around to your place and say, "You got any blacksmith work that I can do?"

AGW: Yeah, he was, up until he got too old.

TS: He didn't have like a shop that you'd go to, he just was a skilled man.

AGW: Yeah. He had a little old shack that he'd just throwed up down there. He's a little windy, and the boys all fooled with him, you know. I don't know how old he was—fifty-five years old, I guess—and we was all down there, and the Hubbard boys was kind of mean, and they told him, said Bill, they just come out with a new deal, they gonna kill all these old men over fifty years old. He said, (speaks with raspy voice) "By God, I ain't fifty, I'm just forty-nine." (laughter) That's the way he talked, he'd had pneumonia or something and his lungs was messed up.

Well, that was kind of mean, but we had mischief in us and everything. Yeah, we'd ride horses every once and a while and go down on the Cowhouse. Everybody let you in, you know. And we went down there and tied our horses up, set lines out, you know, and we'd catch fish. Stay a day or two, just boys—four or five boys, you know—and you had to go five, six, seven miles, ride the horse. And over to Eliga, Eliga was another community. They didn't have a school, but they had a church and a tabernacle and everything, you know, and a store. And Furman Curry, he just died a year or two ago, he run that store for years and years, at Eliga. And had a good swimming hole up there. When they hold big meetings and everything, you know, we all knew where the swimming hole was. We'd go up, and uh, had a swing tied up in a big elm tree or something, and we'd swing out across that, you know, and the water's fifteen or twenty foot deep. So, we went up there one time—boys, I believe the Manning boys and us and maybe one or two of the Hubbard boys—and we set lines down there and slept in the church house. The church house was open, that's all we done was slept in it, you know. I can't imagine a kid now wanting to sleep in a church house. Be kind of like sleeping in a graveyard, you know.

TS: Well, what about—let me ask you about Maple School. Do you remember any—how would the teacher run things? First off, was it a one-room or a two-room?

AGW: Naw, it was four rooms and a stage and things like that, you know. Had outdoor crappers and had big wood heaters.

TS: In each room?

AGW: Yeah. And everybody'd get together once a year, and they'd saw enough wood to last the school all winter. And the boys, me and whoever else that had to, get wood to put in the stove, you know. Haul some in and put it by the stove. Never had no complaints that I know about, you know. They's some of them pretty well—(unintelligible) but then we had a rough bunch of boys. You know, I mean snuff dippers, you know. And it's pretty hard to get along with that old Ralph Bundon one time, he's a great big old tall boy, you know. I don't know what grade he's in, I've forgotten, but we had a teacher name of Huckabee, and he told old Huckabee, "You ain't big enough to whip me," and old Huckabee grabbed him by the back of the neck and throwed him down on the bench and taken an old wide army

belt, you know, and whipped him with it. But we had that kind of people, you know, that's just the way it was. It's a rough bunch. We didn't have playgrounds and things, we had a schoolyard and rocks, just like this damn yard out here. Our basketball court was made—that's what you had, you know, and if you fell, you'd skin all the hide off of you, you know. (TS laughs) And the water come out of pump, we had a well down there, and you'd go down there and take a hand pump and pump you some water, you know, if you want a drink. Really, I thought it was all right, you know. And you had outdoor crappers, girls up one way and boys the other, you know. So, that's where you had a fight. Get mad at somebody and say, "Come on and go with me out yonder and we'll fight." I've been there several times. (TS laughs) One of my cousins, he died—

I guess we had about a hundred kids, you know. We had all the kids that come from Brown's Creek and from Harmony and New Hope and all them other schools, you know. And Friendship, and Friendship. They taught school there for, well—some of the people, when they moved them out of Fort Hood, lived in that Friendship schoolhouse for a year, 'cause it was in the North Camp and where we lived down there was in South Camp. And Owl Creek Road, where it's at in there now, divided the South and North Camp.

TS: So, those little schools would go through grade six, or so? Is that right?

AGW: Yeah, yeah. The first, second, and third grade and the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade.

TS: Yeah, but I mean after they came to the top of the grades in those little schools, then they'd start coming into Maple, right?

AGW: Right, for a long time, for a long time. But that was after they—on up in the years, you know. But for years and years all of them taught school and everything. My uncles and all of them, they went to Harmony School. And Harmony, you know, I don't think just taught to early grades, you know. I don't remember them ever teaching all of them, you know. That school stayed there for years and years, and we'd have meetings and things over there and a barbecue just like we did at the other school. And Brown's Creek, they taught school nearly up until the Fort Hood taken that, about two years before then, about '39, I guess, 'fore they started coming, too. And then we got school busses, you know. And the last year, I think maybe 1940 or somewhere along there, we had a school bus that went all the way to Gatesville. Had to ride the school bus twenty miles to Gatesville for high school.

TS: That took a little while.

AGW: It'd take a pretty good while, yeah.

TS: Well, what kind of affairs would go on at the school besides what would happen at the end of the school that we talked about, the barbecue? Would they have a Christmas program?

AGW: Oh, yeah, yeah. We always had Christmas programs and Halloween and Thanksgiving. All that stuff was celebrated, you know. These women teachers, you know, they'd get together and they'd decorate all the building and everything. Like Valentine's Day and all such as that. I think it probably taught a hell of a lot more than these fellows are getting now, you know. Well, that's just my thought on it.

TS: No, that's—

AGW: They kind of bypass a whole lot of that now, they don't have time for it and got too many kids or something. I kind of liked having the separated schools, really, because kids didn't have to go so far to school, you know, and they could do something else. I know, back when I was a little kid and it's cotton-picking time, whole lot of kids laid out to pick cotton. So, they'd be through with cotton picking before—then they'd come school and pick up their grades and everything.

TS: Well, the school kind of had to run around the cotton, around the agricultural season, didn't it? I mean, you had to let the kids—

AGW: Everybody had to make a living, you know. We done whatever we could, you know. And each—(unintelligible) by getting together like that you always met everybody in the country, and most of them was kinfolks. In a little old community, somewhere down the line there'd been kinfolks, you know, married in, you know—intermarried communities.

TS: Did some of those communities have different reputations than others?

AGW: Well, Brown's Creek always had a bad reputation. They'd say, The meanest people damn people in the world come from Brown's Creek. (laughs) But yeah, it did, they drank that old white lightning, you know, and always getting in a fight or something. They, uh—well, we's cooped up. You think about living off a damn bale of cotton for a year, that'll make you mean. If you got a chance to get out, cleaned and everything and rode your old horse with a bottle of that hooch on you Saturday, you know, you liable to be pretty meantime you got here. And I've seen them ride a horse seven or eight miles, you know, girls and boys both.

TS: If that was how you lived, you were gonna make the most of a social occasion.

AGW: That's right! Any social event was just something else, you know, 'cause you just didn't have nothing like that. And like they'd have big meetings at the church, you know, for two weeks. Well, hell, people'd load their wagons and go down there and be six, seven, eight miles to the church down there. They'd take their dinners and things and barbecue a goat or whatever, and they had a big dinner ever' day. Everybody would lay out a table and put their pies and cakes and things on the table, you know. Would you like a soda pop? I've got a Dr. Pepper or—

(interruption in taping)

TS: What you were saying is that in the '30s, there was very little money to be had, but your father probably had more people to work for him, cutting posts—

AGW: Yeah, cutting posts. And he got a truck up in the early '30s, so then he'd take a load of posts and go peddle them somewhere, you know, and make enough money off of them to pay his hands.

TS: So—and he might have them build fence, maybe? Just give people a little work when he needed it?

AGW: Yeah, right. Young boys.

TS: Tell me about your father's trucking business. He got a truck, and most people didn't—

AGW: Well, he hauled cedar posts for years, and then he got into that broomcorn business. So then we hauled broomcorn, at first in bundles, and then when we finally got a baler then we baled it, you know.

TS: Well, you said your mother would go off with him, and he'd be gone for two or three days?

AGW: Aw, yeah. You didn't go anywhere very fast. We had an uncle that worked at that cement plant in Waco down there, you know, in McGregor. You know where that cement plant was between McGregor and Waco?

TS: Yeah, I think I do.

AGW: Yeah. Well, he worked there for forty-something years, and we'd go see them every once in a while in an old flatbed truck. Me and my brothers would sit on that bed back there and hang our feet off. And I remember we went down there and visited them one time, and we come back to Gatesville and the Leon River was out all over the bottoms down there. And we didn't have no choice, we had to go

home. You know, there wasn't no way to get past that Leon River, you know, and so Pa forded that thing and got over there and the water running in the floor boards. It was up that high, you know. And got up to the bridge and went across it and went around—they couldn't go cross the—(unintelligible) bridge at all—had to cross this other one and go round it, but we got home, you know. But we's sitting back there in the back, and that old blind fellow was with us. And scared to death, 'cause he couldn't see, you know, and didn't know didn't know what we's doing there.

TS: (laughs) Exactly. Didn't feel like swimming in the Leon River. The, uh—people don't understand how bad the roads were, right?

AGW: Well, they was mostly gravel roads, but they just had them old iron bridges, you know, and so when you had flood—that water that time come up into Gatesville, you know, in the lower part of Gatesville down there. 'Course, on that road there was a blacksmith shop and all that up on a hill kind of away from the Leon River there, you know. And so all that's closed, now. They done away with that. I think the old bridge is still there, but they built a new bridge across it—on [Highway] 84 there. But we went around, that's the—where we went home. We went through Straw's Mill usually down there. At one time Straw's Mill had a blacksmith shop and a grocery store and everything there, you know. Trading place, you know, general store, they called it. But it finally quit. Fellow that was running the blacksmith shop died off or just whatever happened, you know, back then. It seems to me they had some kind business at Ruth, too, where we taken that gin up there, but I can't remember. I think it was a little old—Noog Black's store was not too far from Ruth. And I think they had some kind of little store there, but I've forgotten now. It wasn't there very long after I got up in years, you know.

TS: Well, most of those gins had to have somebody, some kind of blacksmith or mechanic, around near. Or the ginner had to do it.

AGW: Yeah. Well, most everybody did their own works except if you've hauled your stuff up there and a wheel got dry and everything on a wagon. Well, you'd either had to soak it in water or you had to pull it off, you know, and soak it overnight, and then put it back on there, you know. If you got out of grease—everybody carried a can of axle grease, you know, and you'd take the hub off and throw axle grease in there, you know, and grease them up.

TS: Well, if a wheel got real dry the outer rim would get loose, right?

AGW: Well, it'd start squealing and everything, you know. And then they had bearings and stuff in them, you know. Did pretty good, too. They had a way to handle everything, you know. It wasn't, I don't know—we never did have a blacksmith, but Pa was a cowboy and he could buck-shoe a horse or a mule or whatever, you know. And we had some old people around. My Uncle Jack, he would shoe a horse pretty good, you know.

TS: Well, you needed to be able to do as much for yourself as you possibly could. I mean—

AGW: You had to. Yeah. There's times that you just couldn't get nobody to go up—hell, when you think about putting the grease in a hub or something like that, time you'd got somebody to do it you'd have to ride a horse five miles to get somebody to come back up there and do it, see. So there wasn't no way to do it, you just nearly had to do it yourself. I remember after we got that old tractor, that was in the late '30s, you know, that thing would get stuck in the field, it'd run into a seep or something, you know, and them lugs would just sink that thing. It'd just sit down on the axle, you couldn't move it, you know. Had to hook four, five mules to it and maybe even more than that, you know, to get enough power to pull the thing out of there.

TS: Yeah. What kind of work stock—did y'all have mules for work stock? Is that what y'all used?

AGW: Yeah, we used mules or horses, both. Horses was pretty good, but a mule was more steadfast and everything, you know. You'd work mule and horse together, that old mule's too slow for the horse, but the horse would—they worked pretty good together. Sometime you'd get one that'd balk or something. That made a mess, you get a big old wagonload of corn or something, couldn't get to the barn to unload it, well then you have to do something. So—

TS: I'm sure you grew corn every year, right?

AGW: Everybody had a crib of corn, you'd have to live. For feed and for—we used to raise five acres of white corn, 'cause white corn wasn't as strong. That old yellow dent corn that we raised back then was so strong that you could smell that cornbread for five miles cooking, you know. It was too strong, and so we raised white corn all the time for that. So, that's what we had ground, you know, and it didn't smell so strong.

TS: And used the yellow dent to feed the stock, the chickens—

AGW: Right.

TS: What did you have—did you have anything beside chickens, any kind of—

AGW: Yeah, we had turkeys, everybody raised turkeys. That was another one of our money crops.

TS: How—tell me—now I'm still trying to understand this—how did people raise, how did people raise turkeys this way? How'd they do it?

AGW: Well, they run off grasshoppers and stuff they could catch in the summertime, you know, and I've herded them many times. Ain't nothing as crazy as a damn turkey. (TS laughs) I imagine I killed one or two chunking rocks at them. But you just take a flock of turkeys, you know, might be two hundred of them or more, you know, and graze them over an area. When I was a kid I'd have to stay with them, you know. We didn't have fire ants and things then like we have now, just red ants. And when they got up big, sometimes you didn't get nothing for them, but it's all you had for money crops, you know.

TS: So, you'd kind of herd the turkeys out in the field, and they were eating grasshoppers.

AGW: Yeah, grasshoppers or whatever they can find. You just keep them moving, you know. If you didn't they're liable to go plumb out of the country or something. I know we had—Ike Bays was a couple of miles across the valley from where we lived, and his turkeys roost on our cow lot over there. And didn't think nothing about it, but it'd make you mad sometimes, you got your hand in that. (laughs) Set down up there on the rail fence and set down in a pile of that turkey dookey.

TS: So, his turkeys would get on your place and your turkeys would—did the turkeys—the turkeys, would they just forage around on their own?

AGW: Well, that's the reason you was a herding them around, see, 'cause if you didn't they just keep on going, you know. And so you had to go bring them in at night, you know, then they'd roost in the same place all time so you'd stay up with them.

TS: They would roost there at the house, around the house.

AGW: Right.

TS: But then they'd move out again.

AGW: Yeah.

TS: Uh, what would happen in the fall, when they got big?

AGW: Well, you'd gather them up and take them to market. And they had a turkey buyer all the time that'd come around and buy them. And take whatever—sometimes they didn't bring very much, but you take a couple of hundred of them, you know, and if you got a dollar apiece for them, that two hundred dollars was a hell of a lot of money, back then. And I don't know if they brought a dollar apiece—a nickel a pound or whatever, you know.

TS: How did you get them to the turkey buyer?

AGW: Oh, he come around. Or you'd take them to town, they always had a market in town for them, too. 'Course, it wasn't hardly worthwhile to load a bunch of turkeys on a wagon or something and haul them to town. Had buyers that'd go around.

TS: A lot of people would come out like that, would come out to you, right? Like, somebody, the post buyer might come around and the turkey buyer might come around?

AGW: Yep, yeah. If you wanted to buy some posts they always had a post yard where you could go buy posts.

TS: Would the turkeys eat acorns in the fall, or did you fatten them—I'm sorry—did you feed them corn?

AGW: Oh, yeah, fed them corn. Yeah. Not regular, you know, but sometimes you'd feed them when they needed it. You'd feed them when they's a growing, to fatten them out. Fattened everything out. I had a cow come across here awhile ago, I'm gonna have to sell her. She's lost two calves, and she's been foundered sometime or another, somebody fed her too much. And her hoof grows out, cripples her, gets lame, you know, where she can't hardly walk. But she's pretty fat, and I guess I'll keep her for a little while until she gains a little weight, then sell her by the pound. Registered cow, but if one of them don't produce you can't keep them. Like we been—I been pumping water, you know. Hell, I ain't had no water since way back in—(unintelligible) sure hadn't rained. And we had bad times back then, too. An everybody accepted it, you know, you got by. Still had a barbecue at the end of school and things like that. (dog whines outside) Got a girlfriend down there, see?

TS: Oh, I see.

AGW: Talking to you. (laughs)

TS: Did y'all grow hay? Did you put up hay?

AGW: We always put up hay.

TS: Uh, what kind of machinery were you using when you were growing up?

AGW: We used row binder. And it bundle cane, we didn't have highgear and stuff like you got now. And one of them bundles weigh forty, fifty pounds. And you shock it, you know, and season it out. You'd stack it heads up like this, you know. And so when that got cured out, you taken it and put it in the stock pile. In a big stack, you know. Just layer it in there so it'll turn water.

TS: I have seen pictures of hay stacked around poles in a sort of tipi-like thing with some sort of cap on the top to keep it—

AGW: Yeah, yeah. Well, you don't have to have them poles. You can just stack it heads together, you know. You got two bundles and stack them up, they'll stand up, see?

TS: (speaking at the same time; unintelligible)

AGW: Then you put two the other way, and you'll have a big shock like this, you know. They're called

shocks. And so then, when it got cured out—that way, on the inside of it, it'd keep its color and everything, see. The outside may dry out, but the inside'd still be pretty green, 'cause—so then you load it on a wagon—and that was a job—and haul it to the barn, you know, and put it in a stack or you could load it in the barn or whatever you wanted to put it, you know, to keep it out of the weather.

TS: Are we talking about grass hay, or are we talking about sort of sorghum hay?

AGW: We didn't have grass hay, back then. Talking about sorghum, red-topped, red-topped cane, something like that.

TS: Not the sort of sorghum you make syrup out of, but the kind that's really a feed sorghum?

AGW: Yeah. Well now in the late '30s, like, Pa, he got hold of a—soil conservation people, agricultural department, and we put in a silo, ground silo. And we hauled broomcorn stalks and cane stalks and everything over there and ground it up and throwed it in this big pit, you know. And cows eat off that damn thing for two or three years. 'Course, it'd cured out, you know. Wet it down in there and everything. And it just made a feed that the cows liked, and the cows would just bury up in it.

TS: So, what—you mixed up corn tops, chopped up corn tops—

AGW: Well, I don't think we ever used corn tops, but you could. Yeah. But now, we'd put cane and broomcorn stalks, mix them all in there together. And them broomcorn stalks has got a little food value in them. Not all that much, but—and I don't think we ever put any seed in there, that we'd thrashed broomcorn and everything, but just the stalks after the broomcorn been pulled off of it. Uh, we, we—that 640 acres we raised in the valley down there—there's Czechoslovakian people, a whole neighborhood of them, and they come up there, and 'course we had a big seed pile, you know. And they wanted to know what we was gonna do with that seed. Said, Well, you can have it, I guess. I think the fellow said, "Well, I'll give five cents a pound for it." Said, Well, get with it. And he brought wagons and things over there, and he'd load that seed on that thing and feed it to his cows. That's the only people I ever knew of going—they always—cows always grazed in there all year, you know, in that seed pile. When we raised a lot of broomcorn and we bought it and baled it, we had a broomcorn baler and everything, and we baled that for several years in the '40s and '50s.

TS: When you were—in the '20s, say, do you think that all that country over there, did everybody have their land fenced, or was anybody running stock out at that time?

AGW: Naw. Now this nine hundred acres I was telling you about that I thought they paid one dollar an acre for, or something, in Wolf Valley down there, that wasn't properly fenced. It wasn't fenced goat-proof by no means, you know, had a barbed-wire fence around it. And so, it was more or less considered outland. That was about the nearest thing to outland in that country. Nearly everything was fenced.

TS: Well, that was—I come from a part of East Texas where they really didn't perimeter-fence in some parts of until the 1950s. It was just a matter of custom.

AGW: Well, it was timberland.

TS: Yeah, it was woods.

AGW: Yeah, they didn't want cattle on it, didn't have no way. But you could run now, see. My wife come from Louisiana down there, and that's what they did down there also. And I run cows down there for a while, just turn them on the open range. They might be gone for a week or so before you ever seen one of them. And you might find one of them ten miles up in the big woods somewhere. But most of the timber'd been cut off of it, see, this was second-cut timber that was coming on.

TS: Yeah, that's right.

AGW: So, I'm pretty well acquainted with that also.

TS: Yeah. But that wasn't the situation in the Fort Hood lands.

AGW: Oh, no, we didn't have nothing like that, everything down there was owned by somebody. Now, what I was telling you is that—I've asked and asked, and my aunt died here awhile back, she's was last one of the old people, and they lived in this house one time, it was in Wolf Valley but it was back across the valley over there. And uh, it had a little bit of farmland there, too, and they farmed it. And I've knew of several families that lived there. And matter of fact, one of these school bus drivers that we had back then, his wife is in the care home over at Gatesville now. And she don't know anything, you know. She—I imagine she's ninety years old—and I talk to her every time I go in there. I can tell she's just as happy as she can be to see me, and she don't have no idea who I am.

TS: Just somebody coming to visit her.

AGW: Somebody coming to visit her. And Nora Keener—that's, uh, Gladys Merle—she's one of them that's gonna be over there with us, her mother's still in there, and her mother's, I thinks, ninety-six. And she don't know of anything. But she's a—(unintelligible) and them gals go see her every day.

TS: (looks at the interview guide) Let me jog my memory here. Uh, how often would you go into town when you were growing up? Was it a common—did you go in—I'm speaking of Gatesville. Let me put it another way. How often did people go into town?

AGW: Aw, maybe two, three times a year. And probably not that much before they had cars and things, you know. But, oh, up in the late '30s you'd go in pretty often, you know. 'Course, Pa, when he started doing business with the bank in Gatesville—he was a First World War veteran. Me and my two brothers, all of us was in the service in World War II. I was in the navy. But back then, Sam Shultz, he was a veteran of the First World War, too. And the banker in Gatesville was a World War I veteran.

TS: So, there was a little bit of a—

AGW: Well, you uses poison gas back there in the First World War, and Sam Shultz had been injured. We went to see his daughter, she lived at Port O'Connor. She's a schoolteacher, a schoolteacher for years there, too. And her daughter teaches school there, too. And we went to see her. That's the first time I been there. I didn't know she's down there, but I've been fishing several times at Port O'Connor, and I didn't know she was there, you know. But it was real—my brother and I went to the coast down there at Port Aransas, so we just went on over there. And he'd told her that we was coming by. We went over and spent the day. I'd just bought that truck out there, so we went over there in that new truck, you know. But, uh, just been away from them so long, you know, that you—'course we always had to see one another, you know. It's like we's part of the family, 'cause we all growed up in Fort Hood, see. Well, now Sam and them, they lived, oh, if you went straight cross the mountain it'd be couple of miles over there in the middle valley. But you never did see them anytime, you know. I don't know how bad shape that Sam was in, but he bought another place when he moved off of Fort Hood and lived in Copperas Cove for a while. Now, you wouldn't get no information out of it, but I've got a map down there of that thing. Did they show you a map?

TS: I've seen a map of the area, a road map from 1934, that I want to get a copy of.

AGW: Yeah. I think that's what I've got.

TS: I hope to get one of those today.

AGW: Yeah. Well, it's a different world, see. They didn't have—they had a dip went across Brown's Creek down there, you know. And when we's moving out down there, they's some soldiers come along, you

know. And so we setting there, and we's going on up to help my grandmother and them or something, and it's raining a big rain and the creek was up, you know. And that thing was probably waist deep in water, I don't know, and these soldiers come along in a jeep. We can go across there. Fellow, you better not get out there. Oh, yeah, we can make it. And they got out about four, five feet from the bank and that jeep started—and they backed out. So, we knew how to go round through the country. It was muddy and everything, see, and they went with that jeep, and they could pull us out, you know, if we got stuck.

John Daniel Wolf Jr.

Date of birth: 16 July 1924
Communities affiliated with: Brown's Creek, Maple
Interviewed by Thad Sitton

TS: This is Thad Sitton. Today is November 28, 2000. I'm interviewing for the first time John D. Wolf. This interview is taking place in the offices of the Gatesville Historical Association one block off the courthouse square in Gatesville. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

Tell me about the farm where you grew up.

JDW: Are we recording, now?

TS: Yeah, it's going. What was there and how did y'all make a living and just anything—I have learned something today by driving across [Highway] 116. And I don't know what I thought the landscape was like, but it's much dryer and more open than I realized it was, at least on this side.

JDW: Well, let me start at the beginning and give my perspective on the whole thing. I was born July 16, 1924, on what was then called the McNeece Ranch in the Brown's Creek community, Coryell County. I'm not sure, I kind of think my dad was an employee of the ranch. But they furnished us housing facilities. We lived there I don't know exactly how long. We moved from there before I could comprehend anything, you know. And I was the first grandchild on my mother's side of the family, very well petted and everything. I can remember that. So, then we come into where I can recognize and remember things. We, we didn't—the facilities where we lived and everything were very, very primitive. We didn't have kitchen cabinets. My mother had a table, and she had tables to cook on, and she had storage, but it was very crude facilities. Uh, it was a time when employment was very rare. Sometimes I wonder how in the world in those very early days did people make a living. Now, it became easy for my family to this extent compared to everyone else—not easy but compared to everyone else. There was only three boys. Everyone around us had from five to eight or ten kids. It's always a mystery to me how in the world they could feed that many, but they did! They made it all right, not good, but all right. Uh, my dad, we had an old car, and then we didn't have a car. This was in the very early years. For the early years of the Depression through the early '30s, we depended on my grandfather, who had a car. If one of us got sick he took, he took us to Gatesville to see a doctor. Uh—excuse me, go ahead.

TS: Naw, naw, I was just—y'all were—where were you located at this time? You're not describing the place where you were born, but the place—

JDW: Naw, I'm sorry. We moved from that place where I was born onto my grandfather's land in Maple, in the Maple community. And I spent the rest of my life in Fort Hood in the Maple community. Just to go on record, my mother's folks lived at Brown's Creek, and my father's folks lived at Maple.

My grandfather someway managed to hold on to a good bit of land during the Depression. Uh, we started coming out of the Depression, we lived on—he had some little old houses on his place, and he had four boys. Three of them that had lived on his places, there. And he was the one that contributed the land to the Maple School. It came off the side of his farm. But my early years were my dad making a living off of my grandfather's place. He paid rent, but, (laughs) he didn't pay very much. But we lived on what we had, mostly, and got by all right. And my dad was a trader. My dad was a cattleman and not a farmer. He didn't farm—we farmed, we made the biggest mess of it that anybody could, but he got a few goats, he got a few sheep, and he had a few cattle. We had a payday coming in more than just one time a year, where you would if you were raising cotton, you know, and had one payday. But we had, we had, paydays spread out a good bit. So, we made it pretty doggone good.

TS: (speaks to visitor who enters room) Do you want to get to the refrigerator? Okay.

JDW: So, we did, we did pretty well, but even up until I was grown and left home, he was still a trader. He managed to purchase one farm from my grandfather—one of the Wolf farms in Wolf Valley from my grandfather. Then, after my grandfather passed away, he purchased another farm from his estate, and he was the only Wolf to have any land when Fort Hood was taken over. The rest of it had been sold off to other people. So, he managed to retain—I don't know—seven or eight hundred acres in the Maple community. And we were doing fair, we came out, we starting doing better. And my dad started raising broomcorn, and he promoted broomcorn with the other farmers. Because cotton was going out, it was a poor crop, so hard to raise, the boll weevils took it over. And he started promoting broomcorn, and he had—my dad just finished the third grade—but he was just about as astute a mathematician as I ever knew. When you gave him a group of figures, he listed them in his head and by the time you got through—he couldn't give you the exact answer, but he'd tell you whether you were wrong or not. I don't know exactly how that works. But a guy had a calculator when he sold three carloads of broomcorn and took them down to Mexico, and that guy was sitting there with a calculator doing all these figures and everything on these three little carloads of broomcorn, and when he got through my dad said, "You're wrong." And, you know, it took them until nine o'clock the next morning for this guy to find his mistake. He had a mistake all the time, and it was in his favor, too. But, anyway—

TS: But you said he was a trader, so—you know, traders don't want to be seen making little calculations. They need to—

JDW: Exactly, exactly. You must recall one.

TS: Well, I've interviewed them. I'm the worst trader in the world.

JDW: Well, that was my dad's second—he lived and breathed trading. He was a trader. But this broomcorn—we started doing a little better, and he started—we had, he had, a half a dozen groups around Texas, and he would deliver broomcorn to them.

TS: This whole thing about the broomcorn is very interesting, and I had never encountered it before I interviewed Andy. Uh, people remember differently. You can interview two people about the same thing and they remember different parts of it. Explain to me—now, the broomcorn—well, just talk for a while about the broomcorn industry and what it amounted to. I don't understand it.

JDW: Okay, okay. At that time, no broomcorn was raised in this part of the country at all. It was raised south of San Antonio and raised in New Mexico, and it was raised in Oklahoma, and I can't remember the name of the community, right now. But there was a few communities throughout the country. It was raised in other places also. But broomcorn is a sorghum, and the sorghum is kind of adapted to our part of the country. Kind of an arid country, and it's kind of adapted to our part of the country. And at that time brooms were in use by everyone. They were an essential commodity.

They made crude warehouse brooms that were pretty big to the little delicate brooms for the woman to clean the house with.

And, and there was a different quality of broomcorn used in each one of those brooms. And these different areas of the country usually raised different types of broomcorn. And my dad got pretty well versed on that, and he got pretty well involved with the industry. I'm talking about in the late '30s and early '40s. And even up into the early '50s. And he did fairly well at it, he did fairly well at it. Had his own truck and everything. It was tremendously hard work, there was really—well, for a summer job, while I was in college, I came home, he bought a baler-shredder—uh, seeder—and that's what I did that summer. I ran his baler-seeder on the halves. I did all the work, hired the crew. He furnished the machines. I got half of the profits, he got the other half. And it worked pretty good.

TS: You were on the halves.

JDW: I made a little over five hundred dollars. This was in '49.

TS: That's a lot.

JDW: You're not kidding. My wife and I—I was married then and in school, and boy, it sure helped us out.

TS: But it started—when did he start growing broomcorn on the place?

JDW: He started when he bought the first place from my grandfather. He was independent to raise what he wanted to. It was difficult, he had to talk the banker into financing it and the banker, "Well, what are you talking about? I never heard of it." You know, if you get bad enough that you can't afford a broom that you buy at the store, you can put you a group of broomweeds together and tie a string around it and sweep the floor with that. (laughs)

TS: You plant it like sorghum, and it grows like sorghum, but what happens when you harvest it? That's got to be different. How do you process it into broom straw?

JDW: You want the long straw, so you come along and you take the leaf, the top leaf, on the stalk, grab the head and jerk it down. And when you do it breaks off at the first stem. Now, back when we first started—and this was—you would jerk you a handful, and then you would push the stalk over and lay it on the stalks for it to dry. And it laid there for a few—four or five days—and dried. And then you came along and bundled it up after it dried enough it wouldn't heat and bundled it up and took it out. Took it out and put it under a shed or something and then seeded it in an operation, uh—

TS: Seeded it. I see what you're saying. It was a seed head like other sorghums, so what you had to do was strip all the seeds off leaving the structural straws, or whatever.

JDW: That's right, that's right. Those seeds were of not much value. The livestock wouldn't hardly eat them, so to that extent it wasn't like sorghum.

TS: It wasn't like a feed sorghum.

JDW: Well, they'd eat it, but they wouldn't overeat it—just a little bit now and then. The first time we started seeding that stuff was, we took an old car and jacked up the back wheel and drove nails through a tire, just real solid nails, and then stuck it down there under that wheel that was running, and it'd knock the seed off of them. And then they got a table like this where you had a conveyor belt, or conveyor chain, and it would pull it along and knock the seed of it, and you could pick it up on the other side.

TS: So, it just ran through the thing, and it'd strip the seed.

JDW: Had a drum with nails in it, had a drum that'd do it.

TS: But it was still kind of a homemade rig, right?

JDW: Those were not, those were not. Those were the drum, because they had a belt and everything. And it'd go through there and it would strike this drum and knock the seed off of it and come out the other side. It was kind of a table, a metal table, with that built into it. It was manufactured in Oklahoma, my dad went to Oklahoma to get this one.

TS: So, you'd just continually feed in the seed heads, and they'd run through the table, and the seed would spill out on one side, and then they'd come out stripped. Then what would happen?

JDW: There was a group of individuals, here, that took it—(unintelligible) and loaded it into a baler, which is a big old press. And when you got that baler full, you pulled it down and pressed it, put wires on it and kicked it out—three-, four-hundred-pound bale.

TS: So, it'd be baled up kind of like cotton in a way. Maybe not as compressed?

JDW: No, but same thing.

TS: Just for transport.

JDW: For transport. Now, earlier, when we first started raising broomcorn, we didn't do that. When we used the back wheel of a car, we bundled it. And my dad would take his little old truck full of bundled broomcorn and would sell it to the factory in the bundles, just like oats or something bundled, you know. We didn't have no baler, we just did it in the bundles, and that's when it really got hairy.

TS: Where were the factories that made the brooms?

JDW: My dad got real well acquainted with a man in Sealy. And I can't remember his name, now—just east of Houston. And he sold a lot of broomcorn to him, and I remember the old man 'cause he came up and stayed with us overnight a time or two. Wanted some broomcorn, and he and my dad—(unintelligible) and he came up a time or two. He came quite often to visit, but stayed with us one night or two. There was a little factory in Evant, there was a little factory in Abilene. The one that I guess he sold more to than anywhere was the Seventh Day Adventist School at Keene, Texas, near Cleburne. There was a college there. And they ran a broom shop for extra employment for the students, and he sold them a tremendous amount of broomcorn.

TS: Well, were there any little—did anybody in the Fort Hood area make brooms?

JDW: No one in that whole community down here ever made brooms or anything. When we moved to Evant my dad got so involved—now, we had a blind man that lived with us, and he had some machinery and he made brooms. But he didn't make very many, he just made a few. But when we moved to Evant my dad bought a place and put in a broom shop and made brooms for five or six years.

TS: So, sort of cut out the middle man.

JDW: Cut out the middle man. That's right, that's right.

TS: Well, did you do any work in that factory?

JDW: I helped harvest it and everything, but at that time I was going to college and I'd already left home, so I didn't have much to do with that. I had nothing to do with it, really. The only thing I did was when we first started out, first started raising it, I helped harvest it back when I was a little kid. But later on—the only connection I had with it later on was when he bought this—see, what happened was, he went to New Mexico, and he was a trader, and he could see that New Mexico had a quality of broomcorn that

was gonna be almost impossible to get anywhere else. So he went out and he contracted, I don't know, half a dozen different farmers, most of the broomcorn in the Jon area of New Mexico. He contracted for, oh, somewhere around $200, $250 a ton, which was a good price, it brought $450. And he had it under contract, so he really hit a jackpot right there. And, and I helped him. Weigh it and put it into boxcars in Jon, New Mexico, and that was my last dealing with broomcorn.

TS: Well, people must have been buying a good bit if you're shipping boxcar loads out.

JDW: There was—I can't remember if it was three or four boxcar loads, and it went to a broom shop in Denver. Ever' bit of it went to a broom shop in Denver.

TS: Well, did anybody else in the Maple community start raising broomcorn, or was that just something y'all did?

JDW: Uh, now, some family members did, and a few others in the community started raising it also. But my dad was able to take a pickup load or a small truck load, and was able to make twice as much as you could on a bale of cotton. So, some people started raising some—not a whole lot, but a good little bit. And when we went to Evant, a lot of people at Evant started raising it.

TS: What did your grandfather, what did he raise on his—what had he done for a living? I know he was a farmer-rancher.

JDW: Cattle, sheep and cattle, very little row crops other than to provide feed for his teams. Sheep and cattle, mostly. Grandpa was a patriarch as we think of it today. He was a big man with a mustache and the old hat that was pulled down over his head, you know. And he was the master, you had respect for him. And then on the other side of my family my mother's folks lived at Brown's Creek, and they was the same way, only my grandfather on my mother's side was totally deaf. That was a little bit of a deal. He was an intelligent man, he had no mental inabilities other than he went deaf as a child.

TS: What was your mother's—I'm sure I've heard this but I don't remember, what was your mother's side? Family name?

JDW: Hill, Hill.

TS: And they were just totally Brown's Creek?

JDW: Right, right, and the whole clan of them. Her, her—my grandfather—great-grandfather—on that side was a patriarch over there. Richard Hill.

TS: Was Brown's Creek adjacent to Maple, or was it—

JDW: There was a mountain between them, and the distance was about four miles, three or four miles. And we lived on one side of the mountain, and immediately, within three hundred yards of the house, you went up and over the mountain into Brown's Creek. After you got to the other side of the mountain, it was about a mile to Brown's Creek from there. In the very early days, my mother used to get the buggy ready on Saturday afternoon and when we were very small kids, I can remember very well us crossing that mountain in the buggy, and then going to church on Sunday morning. We didn't do that very often.

TS: It took awhile, I imagine.

JDW: It took more than half a day. So, it's a special celebration in church, usually, or there was a church meeting, a revival meeting of some kind or something like that. Brown's Creek was a thriving community to begin with, but of course later on it was absorbed by Maple. Later on, they closed the school down and all the kids went from Brown's Creek to Maple. And a lot of them walked across

that mountain right by our house to go to Maple. And they walked three or four or five miles to get over there to school.

TS: They were essentially taking the shortest line to the school. They couldn't afford to walk around by the road, the long way?

JDW: Right. (laughs) That would have taken them over half a day, so they had to walk right straight across that mountain, and they did.

TS: Well, one of the things that I always talk to people about is because I know in the present day people don't really understand what the roads were like and how you had to travel and how long it took you to get anywhere, and what four or five miles meant—four or five miles of bad roads or school trail or something like that. In general, what were the roads like around there?

JDW: We lived up in Wolf Hollow, the last house up in the hollow. And when we lived up there, if it rained as much as an inch or two there was no getting out for a day or two. You just waited until it dried up a little bit so you could, so you could travel out.

TS: So, you better not have a medical emergency right then.

JDW: On a horse or go in a wagon or buggy. I had—on my mother's side, I had an uncle to die of appendicitis. They couldn't get him to the doctor. When I was a little kid, my Aunt Edith was about twelve or thirteen years old. They got word to us—this was about five miles apart—that Aunt Edith was sick and she had appendicitis. And my dad and mother immediately we got into the buggy and took off over there. And I remember this because we got there and my dad said, "You got to get her to the doctor." Said, "We don't have any way of getting a doctor." My dad said, "You damn sure do!" Said, "Charlie lives down the road and he's got a car." Said, "I'll be back with him in a few minutes." But they had words with Charlie, they were cross with him. So, my dad went over there and said, "Charlie, we need to take that woman, that girl to the doctor, she gonna die." So, they both jumped in the car and came back and got her and took her to Gatesville. Her appendix bursted, but, you know, they pumped that poison out and saved her. She just died several years ago.

TS: They just got to her in time.

JDW: Just barely in time. But there wasn't any of—them people were there to help you, they didn't ask questions, they helped. They didn't have any questions about helping, you know.

TS: Your father wouldn't say, "Are you willing to help?" It was like, "Get your car, we got to save somebody."

JDW: Exactly, exactly. We got to get her to a doctor or she'll die. Or her brother'd die—(unintelligible)

TS: Would, would the doctors come out?

JDW: Yes. Doctors delivered my second brother there in one of the houses in Wolf Valley, and I remember very well the day my brother was born, my youngest brother was born. They sent us down to the uncle's to spend the night. About ten o'clock I came back home to see my new baby brother, and the doctor was still there. He came in sometime late that evening or that night. They sent him word, and he came in, and he spent the night. Dr. Brown from here at Gatesville. Dr. Brown, he had an old Model T with skirts around it, and he wore a round-rim hat, similar to the Amish. And he, when he found out that somebody needed him, here he came. He delivered my brother, and I can remember it just as if it were today, him leaving that morning. Like I said, I got there about ten o'clock, they didn't bring me back until about ten o'clock the next morning, and I remember seeing him get in that old Model T and take off down there. You could see him for a half mile from the house with his skirts

around waving, you know. It was in June, and he didn't have them buckled up. I remember seeing that old Model T going down the road.

TS: Well, they would, they would go on the wagon roads pretty well, right? The Model T?

JDW: The Model T, yeah. See, they were high up, they had a high center, and them little old tires were double the size of a bicycle tire, they weren't really large at all.

TS: What kind of car did your grandfather have?

JDW: He had one with—a '33 Chevrolet is the first one I remember real well. Now, he had one before then, but I don't remember it—a '33 or '34 Chevrolet—(unintelligible) four door? Yes. When you had to have something, well he would take you to town. Nobody—so, how did we get the staples? I think we were lucky to the extent that whole country down there is covered in cedars. And I remember very well my dad would take two or three days and cut a wagonload of cedar posts, and he would take those to the store down there, and he'd sell them. And he'd do enough for a forty-eight-pound sack of flour. He'd do enough for some sugar, salt, and other things my mother needed to cook with. The very, very bare essentials, he'd get enough out of those posts to do it. If he didn't, he'd go back and get a second load. And the best posts, maybe, would bring two, two and a half cents.

TS: Yeah, I was gonna ask that. That isn't much money for cutting and trimming one of those things.

JDW: A good, four-inch-top post would bring two cents. A good three-inch-top post would bring a penny. And a good corner post—well, you could get up to five cents sometimes for a good corner post—one of those six to eight inch at the top, you know. And at that time of course we didn't have creosoted posts or things like that. Cedar posts were used essentially by everybody. And so that's how we got some of the essentials during the worst time of the Depression.

TS: Well, you needed—you were also trying to live as much off your place as you could, right?

JDW: Exactly.

TS: I'd like to get you to talk a little about that. I know you have chickens, a garden. You know, there's a whole side where you're trying to raise as much of what you use in food as you could.

JDW: We had—we had chickens all the time—

With a sheet over it, you know. We did kill hogs every fall. My grandpa and my brother, my dad and brothers, all lived there, and we would get together on hog-killing day and kill three or four hogs. And, you know, that was always in the wintertime. So, they cured ham, they cured pork, pretty well. Pork'd keep pretty good if it's cured and dried, you know, with a smokehouse. We'd smoke it to some extent. But it kept pretty well without refrigeration for quite some time.

TS: Did you have the hogs in a pen and feed them corn? Or, did you have them in a pasture? Did they scavenge for themselves part of the time?

JDW: Well, all of it. (laughs) They scavenged for themselves and had a little pen—

(visitor enters room; interruption in taping)

TS: You were saying all three, because you had a hog pasture, and you also had a hog pen—

JDW: See, that all depended. At that time—

TS: Oh, you were saying they scavenged for themselves part of the time?

JDW: To some extent they did while they were growing and—(unintelligible) but then in the finishing stage we had corn and we would put them up and they were not allowed to run around very much. So, in the final stages of gaining weight—and lard was a very essential part of all of it to cook with—therefore, there was a finishing stage to put the fat on them. So, yeah, you started out with scavenging, but then later on—

TS: Well, you needed to kind of confine them. If you confined them, then they'd put on the most fat. You got more fat—a fatter hog for the amount of corn that you fed them if you kept them somewhat confined.

JDW: Exactly. That's true, that's true. So they couldn't exercise at all. I was involved with all of this, when I went into the service, What have you done? Farmer. Every one of my papers that I filled out in the service when I went in the service in 1944—was the only background I had, was farming.

TS: Well, that's what a lot of people would have put down on that line in 1940.

JDW: So, then, Harry Truman came along and made the, the uh, GI Bill available. And I was stationed in Alaska, and our public service officer, they started putting out deals about the GI Bill and what the benefits were. And I started getting in touch with him, and my one dream in life was to go to A&M, and I saw a chance to do it. So, I went down and talked to a service officer while I was still in Alaska in the service, and he said, "Yes, I think we can get you accepted before you even get discharged." So, you know what, he wrote a letter to the registrar and sent my registration in at Tarleton, helped me with all the papers and everything, and the day I got out of the service I got out—I was discharged from the service on a Friday and entered Tarleton at Stephenville the next Tuesday. And I went through Tarleton, it was a junior college, then, and transferred to A&M. Never had any problems whatsoever. And a dream came true.

TS: Yeah. Well, it's—it wasn't as easy to get into college if you were raised on a farm in the 1930s. Probably seemed a long way away, right?

JDW: Well, it was an impossible situation. How were you going to do it? We didn't have any money. I couldn't afford to go somewhere, and my dad couldn't help me. So uh, so, it cost the government around seven thousand dollars—between seven and eight thousand dollars—to send me through four years of college. That was at their expense. I pay three times that much in income tax, now.

TS: Yeah. Well, let me ask—

JDW: That tells you something about if we can make the best education available to kids that want it, that want it, it's the best investment we can make.

TS: Well, let me take you back a little bit to the gardening. What did y'all raise in the garden, and what sort of food would you try to preserve, put up?

JDW: Uh, in the first place we raised a little bit of everything, a little bit of everything. Green beans. My mother raised English peas—very difficult, English peas are very difficult to grow in our part of the country.

TS: They are.

JDW: Are you a gardener?

TS: I'm a little bit of a gardener.

JDW: Well, we had ear corn, and she canned some corn. She canned green beans, we had one of the little old pressure cookers, over a wood stove. And she put up a good many vegetables like that. And I remember a number of times when we were gonna have company, the broomcorn dealer from Sealy

came by. What's my mother gonna fix? She doesn't—how's she gonna fix a meal for that man? She'd make a dang meal that was fit for a king! Where'd she come up with all that good stuff? (laughs) You know, she had it planned.

But we raised Irish potatoes, we raised onions. And a good supply of those, about a year's supply. We didn't have a storm cellar to put that stuff in, and we couldn't keep it as well as some, but we could keep it a long time. Say, about January the first before we run out of onions. They didn't last year-round, but they lasted a long time. Usually, in canning corn, we'd get together with a neighbor and just put up a whole hell of a lot of corn. And vegetables like that, green beans the same way.

TS: That's sort of—one of the things that's interesting is the occasions where neighbors would work together. And it was partially just being helpful, but it was also probably more efficient to work with a neighbor. You joined with the neighbor and canned. If everybody was canning the corn for both families for the whole year, it was just a better way to do it?

JDW: Right. Uh, my mother had methods of making pickles of different kinds. 'Course, she put them in a crock, and it seemed like to me they rotted. But they were a certain kind of pickle and they come out just wonderful. But how did they smell cooking off in that crock! They didn't smell good at all. But they always turned out good—beautiful pickles with a beautiful taste. And she would make relish of different kinds and can it. Jelly. We had—we were able to get hold of fruit. Uh, I remember my dad and some of the neighbors'd getting together and going over here near Gatesville to where they raised lots of peaches and things. And he'd come back with four or five bushels of peaches. Well, they'd can peaches for a day or two. And—(unintelligible) pretty cheap.

TS: What house? Were you living in a house that was already there before you moved into it?

JDW: Living in a house that was built back when all you did was put up one-by-twelves and stripped it. You had no insulation, no nothing, the wall was that thick, was a one-by-twelve thick, with a strip on the outside. The weather, the water, would get against that strip and after five or six years that strip would crinkle. And they had—every one of those strips had holes behind it. You could see through them, see through the wall. (laughs) And very, very old, goodness, and their old roofs were horrible. Lot of times with buckets all over the place to catch the water running through. And just wasn't anybody to put a new roof on. I remember a time or two we did put new roofs on—finally got somebody to put a new roof on. Cut wood for the fireplace for winter and for the cook stove.

TS: But it wouldn't get as warm with as many cracks in it, you wouldn't get all toasty warm in the winter, right?

JDW: I'll tell you what, sometimes it was four or five o'clock in the afternoon before you got the house warmed up. If you let the fire go off in the night before, then it took a tremendous long time to get that silly thing warmed up again. Yeah, it sure did, it took a long time.

TS: Well, what was, what was—

(visitor enters room; interruption in taping)

TS: Would you describe the house? How many rooms did it have? Was it a two-story?

JDW: Oh, no, we never had a two-story house. We had, uh—we lived in three different houses there on my grandpa's place. One of them was the old house, the first one built on the ranch when my great-uncle settled that country. That house has a porch all the way across the front and a hall down the middle. About an eight-foot hall down the middle and about a ten-foot porch all the way across the front. And then over here was a big room and a fireplace with a kitchen on the back of it. And over here was a big room with a fireplace and a storage on the back of it. And, and you filled this room with two or

three beds and this one with two or three beds, and then in the summertime you moved all those beds out on that big porch. So, we lived in that house quite some time, then we moved to another one down in the pasture, and it was just a little three-room house. Had a lean-to roof—porch—across the front. And very crowded. And then the last one we lived in, the old Marion place, it was a little more roomy. Uncle Buck lived there with eight kids in that family, and that wasn't but four or five of us, so we had a good bit of room. Porches all the way around the silly thing.

TS: So, in the summer people would just—you'd never sleep in one of these rooms if you could sleep out on the porch, right? I mean, that's the only way you—

JDW: Did it. There was no air conditioner or anything. You moved your bed out on that porch so you could get air circulation. And it was too long—about nine o'clock—well, it's pretty cool. And if you didn't have a porch and there wasn't a good location and a big live oak tree out in the front yard, you'd move your bed out under that live oak tree.

TS: Yeah, I mean people—even in the Hyde Park neighborhood, where I live in Austin, in the '20s and '30s a lot of people would have beds set up in the back yards, and they'd go out there to the back yards in the summer. Of course they would.

JDW: Sure, sure, lot to be said for it. Very healthy.

TS: What were the surrounding—okay, Brown's Creek, uh, other communities around Maple—the close, the closest ones in other directions—was there any other that was fairly close?

JDW: Fairly close all the way around. At that time, especially in the '30s, transportation was not developed very well, roads were not developed very well, they were buggy roads. And therefore in bad weather or anything you were isolated pretty quickly. And each community had a little store. And New Hope had a Baptist church, Brookhaven had a store, there at Maple we had a store. And the others, most of them had schools and had schools earlier. A lot of the stores had closed down. Eliga, down on the Cowhouse Creek, had a pretty good-sized store. Furman Curry, just died last year, he ran one. He moved here to Gatesville and died here in Gatesville last year. Yes, there was communities all around here. Some of them had little schools, but in the midthirties those schools started disappearing, because you just flat couldn't afford to keep them up anymore. And besides that, we had automobiles. The first bus we had to run from Brown's Creek community over to Maple was an old kind of an old van, it handled eight or nine kids, and they paid the guy ten dollars a month—I believe it was ten dollars a month—to run that on a contract. And he would, he would pick up the kids and bring them over to Maple School.

TS: So, basically, that walk over the mountain was a fair—that was almost too far for school kids, right? I mean, when the Brown's Creek kids started coming to Maple to go to school, I guess they could walk that far, but it sounds like it was a pretty good—

JDW: They not only could, they did. Uh, it didn't make any difference, some of them walked as far as five or six miles every day to school. But, now, I'm talking about the bus taking over in the latter part of that time. In fact, Maple had already lost its high school at the time the bus was running. Just elementary kids that I'm thinking of. High school kids were bussed into Gatesville. So, things were changing in the '30s fairly fast.

TS: Were the roads improving, or were the cars basically running on the same old roads in the '30s?

JDW: They were improving, they were improving all the time. They were putting a little more gravel, and they were improving all the time. Yes. Uh, the rural mail carrier, he got to where he could pretty well, uh—he didn't get stuck so many times. He was a contract star route carrier, and, and they

accused him of going squirrel hunting before he'd get the mail there, and I think he did every once in a while. (TS laughs)

TS: Well, what would he do? Would he pick up the mail—he would pick up the mail in Gatesville and take the star route? Each star route was a delivery route? How did he deliver, what did he drive?

JDW: A Model T pickup, if you can visualize a Model T pickup. It had kind of a cab up here, and he put a whole bunch of mail by him in the seat, and then he had a back where if there's any packages he put those packages in the back. My mother would send me to the mailbox, I had to walk about a mile and a half or two miles to the box. Well, he's supposed to be there at one o'clock. Well, she'd send me over there and it would be three o'clock before this rascal would show up. (laughs) And if you needed stamps, you got stamps from him, too.

TS: So, everybody had their mailbox. He didn't come up every little side lane. He came down the main road, and you had your mailbox.

JDW: Right, right, he only made the main roads. He only drove the main roads.

TS: So, he must have—what would he do if he had a package of valuable stuff, say something that you were mail ordering?

JDW: Uh, a crate of baby chicks—that was quite common in the spring for them to order three dozen baby chicks, and usually he'd bring it to your house. He'd bring it to your house. They were real accommodating, they wouldn't, they didn't, uh—

TS: So, if he had something that he knew was perishable like the baby chicks—

JDW: Oh, yeah, yeah. Then, later on, we graduated to an ice man, also.

TS: Really.

JDW: Yeah, we had an old icebox that was kind of halfway insulated a little big, and you'd get a twenty-five- or fifty-pound block of ice and put in there. And it'd stay there a day or two.

TS: Well, what did the ice man look like making his rounds?

JDW: Similar to the mail carrier. Similar situation, had these big old tarps over ice in the back of it, you know, and surprisingly it didn't melt that fast. He had those big old tarps over it, and it didn't melt that fast. And you could swap two dozen eggs for a block of ice. And many a time we had a tremendous treat because we made homemade ice cream with that block of ice.

TS: Well, you had lots of cream, if you had—

JDW: Oh, goodness, yes. That ice cream was so rich.

TS: Well, so, you got—when did the—I usually don't ask when. About when did the ice man start running a route out of Gatesville? Just a guess.

JDW: Thirty-six, '36. I believe it was, about '36.

TS: Well, nobody could have been used to big blocks of ice before then.

JDW: It was a full twenty-five-pound block. Later on, they give you a twenty-five-pound, it had eighteen-pound, or something, you know. (laughs) Like a two-by-four is never a two-by-four.

TS: You ever hear of people using it in a hole in the ground, if they didn't have an icebox?

JDW: Yes, yes. It would keep there good. That cellar deal worked pretty good, and we never did have one, and we should have had. My dad, he just didn't do it. One of the two other places we lived on had a storm cellar, but the silly thing stayed full of water all the time, 'cause water seeped up in the doggone thing and filled it with water. We never did have one we could use.

TS: What about—as far as talking about people running the roads about this time, what about peddlers? Did some of them show up?

JDW: We had a Watkins man, I'll guarantee you he came around regularly. The Watkins man, magazine salesmen—yeah, once in a while.

(Andy G. Wolf enters room; interruption in taping)

TS: And your father had the first tractor in the Maple community. And would you describe the tractor—people must have been interested in it?

JDW: Well, it's a little bit misleading, because there had been a steam-operated tractor, because I remember one that was just an old, empty, junked thing. And I don't know whether it didn't work or not, but it never was used to a great extent. My dad had the first one that was actually used, bought brand new. He swapped his teams for it, and, and did custom work for others. And I remember my grandfather, the old patriarch, "Tuck, that damn thing will pack the ground until you won't be able to raise anything by that damn thing." Well, it was either the first summer he'd had it or the second summer, my grandpa got behind. It rained so much, and he got behind, he couldn't get his land put up to plant. So, he had to come for my dad to get him to take that tractor over there and plow that land to get it ready to plant. He never said any more about that, he never said any more about it.

TS: But that was what some of the old mule farmers really thought about them—that they were too heavy, and that they would pack the land too much. You know, it's like defeating the purpose of loosening the soil for your row crops to run around with this great, heavy—that's what they thought.

JDW: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Well, you were saying—describe it, it was a lug-wheeled Farmall—

JDW: F-12, what you call F-12. There was an F-12, an F-20, and the F-12 was the smaller one, and we would—we classified it as a two-row, because we did have two-row cultivating and planting equipment with it. And my dad had to make this—(unintelligible) to pull behind it. We were, at the time, were mainly raising small grain, such as oats and wheat. Mostly oats. And that was what it was used for, more than anything. He did a good bit of custom work for the community around.

TS: And a lot of people wouldn't know what that means, but that means he would go—he would take his tractor over and disk somebody's field for them, something.

JDW: That's right.

TS: What would people pay him, pay him, for doing that? I know it depended, but—would they trade him stuff, or was it a money deal?

JDW: Most of the time it was money, because you had to buy fuel for that thing. It had to be kind of—it had to be some money involved, and if I remember a dollar, a dollar and a quarter, an acre for breaking it. It thinks that what it started out at that time. They go up to twenty dollars, now. But it worked real good, my dad—like I said, my dad was trader, and he didn't sit still for anything. Most of the time he came out pretty good, sometimes didn't turn out so good.

TS: Well, I mean, you gotta—it's a little bit of a risk, if you have to, if you have to trade in your

teams and everything, that whole thing, to get the tractor. You're getting out there on a limb with the tractor.

JDW: (unintelligible; speaking at the same time) And another thing that brings back to mind, the Poston brothers here in Gatesville had a Farmall dealership, and my dad dealt with him. One of the Poston boys came out to finalize the deal and bring the tractor, and I sit there and listened and watched he and my dad talk. He had an Aggie ring on. That was pretty impressed on my mind. He had an Aggie ring.

TS: He's onward and upward and he's got an Aggie ring. I mean, he's a businessman in town, and he's wheeling, and he's got an Aggie—(laughs) well, how often would you come into town when you were growing up, and what would you do when you came into town?

JDW: I don't know whether we averaged coming once a month, or not. My family did, to get supplies of different kinds. In the early '30s we didn't come once a month. Uh, later on, we got to coming a little more often, and a little more often, and a little more often, and a little more often to where it got to was three weeks or a month. You'd come ever' two or three weeks, something like that—(unintelligible) normally, two or three weeks.

TS: But some people, when you go a little bit further back, say 1930, some people wouldn't come to town as often as that, right?

JDW: Oh, not at all, not at all. It might be three or four months. Because we had a little country store, and you could buy flour, sugar, salt, vanilla flavoring, and a few things at that store. About all you could buy, but those very essentials you could get at that little store.

TS: So, it was not—it was just a small—it just was selling those basic things. It wasn't like a big mercantile store in town or anything like that?

JDW: You could put the whole supply in this room here, very easily.

TS: Yeah, this is a coffee room, and it's about five paces by two paces—(JDW laughs) tape recorder.

JDW: Yeah, uh. What was I going to say? They had very limited supplies. A little bit of canned stuff, but nobody had the money to buy canned stuff. It sold tobacco, my dad smoked, and it sold—used Prince Albert and Country Gentleman tobacco. Uh, most of the time they had cold drinks. Sold gasoline, with a hand pump.

TS: So, it had a hand pump outside?

JDW: Yeah. Now, across the road there, in the very early '30s, they had a grinding mill for grinding cornmeal. And at that time, they got together—and this was in the very early days and I don't remember it too well—but they would get together, and they would take wheat to Killeen or to some place that had a mill to grind wheat into flour. But we didn't do that very much. In the first place, we didn't raise very much wheat, and it was quite an operation to take a wagonload twenty miles to get it ground. But we had the corn mills, now. Most of the bigger country stores had a corn mill for grinding.

TS: Well, every community had to have some facility to grind corn. It had to be, there needed to be—and you didn't, you didn't, want to have to drive to Gatesville to get your corn ground.

JDW: No, no, that's very true.

TS: What did the corn grinder look like? What did that thing that was operating across the street—how was it powered?

JDW: Well, you see it now in the mill business, they call it stone ground—stones turned together. Now, they had a horse to pull that, or a mule, to pull it, and it'd turn around and around with a big thing, and as you turned it would turn these stones together and crush that corn.

TS: So, it would have looked something like a syrup mill.

JDW: Exactly, exactly, exactly. It was pulled by a horse.

TS: What about syrup mills?

JDW: We had one in the community, yeah, and my dad, we were involved a number of times, my family was, with making syrup. We had one of the gentlemen in the community was normally the syrup expert, and he pretty well supervised the whole operation. And he did it every summer, and he was a little more familiar with it than anybody. My Uncle Buck was the one that took care of the syrup mill and supervised the cooking and everything about it. And he kept up with the latest techniques.

TS: Well, what was the deal with the syrup? Was it on somebody's place? It wasn't like—was it a commercial operation, or was it—

JDW: Oh, it was one of those deals where that old thing that grounds up, that pull, that squeeze the juice from the cane was just two big old stones turning like that, and they'd feed that corn, that cane, in there between them and squeeze the juice out of them down into a trough. Uh, I don't know, most communities had one, and the people just went over and used it.

TS: So, it was always somewhere, always on somebody's place, but if it was time for you—you could use the facility?

JDW: Yeah, yeah.

TS: But not everybody could make it. I mean, everybody knew how to make it, but it was like a cooking task, and you could be sorry with how your syrup tasted.

If we manage to talk through two of these one-hour tapes, if we don't that's okay. Uh, this is kind of a reminder list to me, and it's okay to jump around like I'm doing, but we're still on food. Did y'all use any wild plant foods like plums?

JDW: Is that going?

TS: Yeah, it's on, I've just got the top up so I can see in better.

JDW: I'm sorry. Yes, we had wild plums, uh, wild peaches. We dried wild peaches. Set them on a tin roof, and they would dry, and my mother dried them all the time. She would make jelly out of the plums, and we had grapes and grape juice and made jelly from it. So, there was some—not a whole lot, now, but it was mostly in the form of fruits and jellies.

TS: What did wild—now, we're far enough west that the wild peaches are starting to show up. I don't know wild peaches.

JDW: Wild peaches, we called them Spanish peaches, and they were very small and so potent, those things were real potent. When you got ahold of some peach preserves made from those, you didn't have to be told it was peach. The strongest peach flavor you ever tasted.

TS: Do you think they were—had people planted peaches that had gone wild, or do you think they were a native wild peach?

JDW: Well, I'm not real sure about that.

TS: Where did they grow?

JDW: Fence lines.

TS: Like persimmons?

JDW: Like persimmons.

TS: Would they get up big?

JDW: Well, pretty good-sized but not very large, and usually if they grew in thick brush you didn't get any peaches. There's too many insects. But usually where they did good was out on the fence line by themselves, with no other brush around. Usually they would make peaches, almost every year. But if they were in a congested area, insects would eat them up.

TS: But they had a lot of taste.

JDW: Oh, boy! And plum jelly—plums—were very tart, very tart. But the women could take them, boil them down and put sugar in them, and make them real good, very good. Very good flavor to it.

TS: I guess the grapes were what they call Mustang grapes, that common grape that was—

JDW: Very common all over this country. Yeah.

TS: If you get a little rain, there's always some.

JDW: Yep, they'd rarely miss. There'd be some place those things would come out every year. And that's just about the extent of them, the extent of them. We had wild persimmons, but they weren't used for anything other than to eat when they were fresh. And had some wild dewberries. In certain years, when we had lots of rain, we would have some dewberries, but not very much.

TS: They don't grow out here as well as they do east.

JDW: Just Waco, east of Waco, you know, they're real common.

TS: What about hunting? What kind of hunting went on?

JDW: At Maple?

TS: Yeah, hunting. What was there to hunt? Now, I know the deer weren't running around everywhere like they are now.

JDW: No, there wasn't any deer. They were all extinct in this part of the country. Uh, squirrels, and during the worst of the Depression squirrels were a delicacy. Many a time we had Sunday dinner of squirrel and dumplings. And rabbits, but you had to be careful about rabbits, very selective of rabbits. They could carry disease. Normally, the rabbits that we ate were very young. They were maybe half or two-thirds grown, they were delicious. But if they got older, you didn't fool with them. They were older, and there was a chance of disease, plus they were tough as they could be.

TS: Are we talking about cottontails or—

JDW: Cottontails and jackrabbits, either one. The best you could get was a very young one. They were usually always good.

TS: How about? Okay, no deer—

JDW: No deer, no wild turkey.

TS: How about—nobody eats them, but how about fox hunting?

JDW: My dad was a fox hunter, and we had fox—I mean dogs. That was his favorite pastime, was fox hunting, and I went with him a many a night, up on the back of a horse behind him, and he and some other guy were chasing their doggone dogs all over the country, listening to them run. And who's out in the lead, and who's lost the trail, and all that. They knew those dogs' voices so well, that they could tell you.

TS: Would they set up in a particular place and just listen, or would they—sounds like you're saying that they would move around to try to keep the dogs in—

JDW: You had to, to keep them in hearing distance. To some degree you'd have to chase the dogs. Like you see them in the movie? No, that one not at all. Uh, down there in Wolf Hollow and that old Brown's Creek there were these canyons and so forth, and through experience they knew where some fox hung out. And they knew that they could likely go up here in Egypt Hollow, and you could probably get the dogs on to a fox's trail. So, they kind of knew these places, you know, that were good locations for finding a fox. So, most of the time they were right, but sometime they weren't.

TS: So, the same foxes were getting run over and over, probably.

JDW: That had to be true.

TS: And the dogs must have usually caught the fox?

JDW: Rarely. And you know, that's one thing, they never killed a fox. They would get that fox up a tree, and they would get the dogs—and when they'd come up on the dogs, the dogs would have the fox in the top of a tree, they took the dogs and went home. It was all over. They never killed a fox.

TS: A lot of people would be surprised to know that there was a kind of fox that would go up a tree like that. But that's the normal thing, you find the grey fox is up a tree, right? That's where it ends.

JDW: Right, yep.

TS: Were there coyotes in this country, then?

JDW: No coyotes. I don't remember coyotes. The only time I ever remember coyotes is in West Texas. As far as I know, there wasn't any coyotes in this country at that time. Now, there was a few wolves, not many but a few wolves. Every once in a while you heard them. And bobcats, there were a few bobcats, not very many, but there were some. Sometimes they would get their foxhounds after a wolf, and they didn't like that. They'd get them off that wolf quick as they could. But the comical thing about it, some of the foxhounds would get in the habit of running jackrabbits. And boy, you talk about a dog getting a beating, if they caught him running a jackrabbit—(laughs)

TS: Trashing on rabbits.

JDW: Yeah, yeah. The first black man that I remember—'course, we had no blacks in our community—the first black that I remember was my dad's friend here in Gatesville that ran fox and had fox dogs. That was the first black man I ever knew of.

TS: Well, there was sort of—fox hunting was the bond.

JDW: A real bond, a strong bond, for those that liked it. Very strong.

TS: What kind of dogs did he have?

JDW: Foxhounds. There's a special breed of dogs that are foxhounds, you know, they call them foxhounds.

I don't really know what the purebred name for them would be. Uh, bloodhounds, similar to a bloodhound, only a bloodhound is made for tracking—you know, they teach them to track. But they're along that line.

TS: Well, he would probably not use his dogs for coon and possum, he wouldn't use them for other things.

JDW: A foxhound man?

TS: Yeah.

JDW: Oh, no, that was horrible.

TS: That was training them to do the worst thing in the world, right?

JDW: It was beneath their dignity to run a dog on an old coon. And it was surprising that there wasn't very many coons in this country at that time either. I don't know why, but we didn't have very many coons. We didn't have very many wild animals at all. A good many jackrabbits, a good many cottontails, and a good many squirrels, but that was just about the extent of it.

TS: In East Texas during the Depression, a lot of those wild animals got eaten. The coons and the possums got down to a very low ebb, and the deer disappeared.

JDW: Yeah, yeah. You know, the deer came back to this country with Fort Hood. They started stocking them. That was the main way that this country got stocked with deer was with the reservation.

TS: Let me get you to talk some about Maple School, 'cause we haven't talked about the school. You went through grade six?

JDW: I started there in the first grade in 1930. The school opened up in 1926. There was a new school, it opened up in 1926, and I started school in 1930. We had four teachers, and we had four rooms, and it taught through high school at that time, when it first started. 'Course, there was only eleven grades in high school at that time. And we had Miss Mollie Montgomery, and she taught the first through the third grade. And the forth, fifth, and sixth was taught by, uh, Mrs. Mattie Temple. Both of them single ladies. And the seventh, eighth, and ninth was taught by someone else, and the tenth, eleventh, the last two grades, was normally taught by the superintendent. Normally, he was the boss. And we had one room that was what was called a stage room, where we had an auditorium, so—but we held classes in that stage room. That was one of the classrooms, normally. Day-to-day, it was a classroom, but then if we had a special occasion, a play of some kind that was being put on, it was used for that purpose at night. We had intramural sports—not organized like it is nowadays, at all. Not anything like that. We'd play softball, we'd play—had a little old tennis court. And played softball, we had a basketball goal, we had a basketball team, we played the other little schools in the community. And everyone—it was pretty well understood that you were gonna participate in outside activities, and everybody did, pretty well. There were a few that didn't participate very much and just were not sports-minded, and they just didn't do it. Uh, but just about everybody did.

TS: Would you go over to—in the athletic competition, when you were in competition with another school, would you go over to the school? Or they might come over to you?

JDW: The parents that had cars would load us in cars and go to that school. And then they would load their students in cars and come over to play us.

TS: Well, this, this was a rural high school. This wasn't the average little two-room school, grades one through eight. You had a rural high school. It was Maple common school district, right?

JDW: Right, Maple independent school district.

TS: It was an independent school district?

JDW: Oh, yes, totally. You had a superintendent and everything.

TS: Okay, so you were not under the county superintendent.

JDW: Oh, you were under the county superintendent. Everybody was under the county superintendent. He was the big boss of the whole county, see. But we had superintendents at that time. Not as we think of a superintendent, now, because he didn't have but three employees. So, he was more of a worker than he was a superintendent.

TS: He taught also.

JDW: He taught. He was just as much a teacher as the rest of them. He didn't draw a very big salary. In fact, the one there at Maple in '37 and '38 lived in an old tabernacle. And they put up sheets and stuff to have private rooms. The whole big old tabernacle was one big old room, and they made a living quarters out of it. It worked pretty good. He had a couple of kids, and they lived in there. Didn't cost them anything.

TS: Was this at the school?

JDW: At the school. Across the road from the school at an old tabernacle, where they had church services in the summertime. Couple or three times every summer, maybe.

TS: So, it wasn't like a regular church, it was a tabernacle, it was a meeting place for the summer, mostly.

JDW: Right. One big old room, probably thirty by forty, pretty big.

TS: Well, that's a little bit of camping out, to live in that with the sheets—

JDW: Oh, they made do. They had kitchen facilities that they built in someway. I was in there a number of times. It was fairly comfortable. It was were just as good or better than the house we lived in. It wasn't any better or any worse than everybody else had.

TS: Well, was he the school disciplinarian, or did the teachers take care of their own discipline? Was he the—

JDW: They took care of their own discipline except, uh, if it got pretty heated, he took over. Yeah, he took over. In normal things, the individual schoolteacher would do it, but—you see, most of them were women. The superintendent was a man, the others were women. That's just pretty well 100 percent the way they were.

TS: Well, am I right in thinking that there would have been a trail system that radiated out from Maple School, where the kids would come in and beeline—cross-country trails just to get there with the shortest distance? And people wouldn't mind about people crossing their lands?

JDW: (laughs) No! In fact, it was a thrill to see someone coming toward your house, it was a thrill to see someone coming toward your house. We had two or three old men—old man Bob Dorsey would come by our house and spend half a day talking. And you'd see him coming, half a mile from the house I knew who he was. Take him a long time to get there, he's pretty old at that time, walked with an old walking stick. And he would visit my daddy and mother for a little while, and he'd go on home. And then we had those guys, two or three of those guys in the community, they'd come by, visit a little while, and go home.

TS: Would they try to get there at the noon meal?

JDW: I don't remember that was—I don't think so, I think he was just—I think most of the time, most of the time, they did get there at mealtime. I remember times they did eat with us, but I remember most of the time they didn't.

TS: But your point is, and I know what you're saying, that it was good news when you saw him coming. Because he had some news, he knew some things you didn't know. He was like entertainment.

JDW: Right, that's all.

TS: And there wasn't a whole lot of entertainment.

JDW: There wasn't a whole lot of entertainment. Then it came time for school to be over, about the first to fifteenth of May, somewhere along there. And it was a routine at all the rural schools that they would have a three-act play at the end of school. And that was to be performed the night of this weekend that was set aside for the school ending. And at the same time, they would have a big barbecue. And somebody would donate a half a beef, and somebody donate a half a hog, and they would put that all in the deal. I mean, there was some tremendous eating, a tremendous barbecue. Again, we had what everybody considered the expert in the community that did the cooking and did the seasoning of that barbecue. And a half a dozen men would gather the day before. They cleaned the pit, they got the meat ready and chopped it up, you know, in small pieces. And then—have you ever seen a syrup pan that they cook syrup off in? They used that, I remember when they used that for two or three years in their school. They used that to cook barbecue off in. Ooh, was it good! You'd smell it all over the place cooking and very strong seasoning, and so forth. Very good.

TS: Yeah, you hear of the pan, and you also hear of the ones that dig a hole in the ground, dig a trench and put something over the trench and cook it over the trench. The idea is to cook a lot of meat at one time, and you have to get out in the open and rig up some sort—

JDW: And we tried to make all of those weekends. After I was twelve or fourteen years old, we tried to go to every school ending that we could. Ewing had theirs, I'd go up to Ewing, just out of Gatesville up here, and ours, and then the Antelope School and the Brown's Creek School. They still had a little school there for a few years, and they had their end-of-school deals. All of them did, which is a big deal. That was one of the big highlights of the year for entertainment. The other one was revival meetings at churches, to where all the communities around ganged up at one revival, whether you were Baptist, Methodist, or whatever. The one that was biggest in our community—now, the most people there were Church of Christ—it was at Eliga down on Cowhouse Creek. And people came from miles around to it. Uh, and I don't know why, they were a small community of Church of Christ people, but they were kind of open. I don't know, I—(unintelligible) my wife and her family did, I was raised as a Baptist, the Church of Christ at that time was kind of the—

TS: Well, what would happen? Could you describe, because I've never asked somebody to tell me, what would happen at the church reunion that was held every summer? I know it's more than one day, right?

JDW: Right.

TS: How would they set it up and what would go on, is what I'm asking.

JDW: Okay. Usually, usually, and I'll use Brown's Creek as an example, they would, uh—Brown's Creek would have, or Maple, on Saturday, on Friday, they would get things ready, and on Saturday, they would hold a church service and a singing, and a tremendous lot of music. If you want to know, the main activity at the church revival was visiting. (laughs) But they did have church service. And they had conversions, and the preacher preached fire and brimstone. The more, the better they liked it. And

that's not critical, I don't want to be critical. But back then at that time, you see, like almost everyone was fire and brimstone, you know.

TS: Well, it was supposed to be. It was part of what people expected that there would be a good, strong sermon with just like your saying.

JDW: Uh, then the Sunday at noon was a time that they all spread their lunch, and they ate a tremendous meal, really tremendous. Then, an afternoon service and it'd all be over.

TS: So, people would stay over Saturday?

JDW: Oh, goodness, yes—(unintelligible; speaking at the same time) that's why Eliga, one of the reasons, that Eliga was so well liked by everyone, because it would meet right in the bend of the river. Big live oak trees, the river came around, the kids could slip off up here and go swimming, and I did a number of times, and a big iron bridge across the river, and a country store on the other side. And it was kind of—just pretty well in the summertime, when it was hot, it was, it was real nice. Live oak trees, I mean pecan trees, everywhere, and you could just camp under the pecan trees, you know, and come down there and just stay there two or three days, and a tremendous lot of people did. And they would come—for example, I had uncles that lived in Waco that worked at the cement plant that you see on the road into Waco from here, and, and had a couple of them in Houston, and they tried to come back, they tried to make it back up there for those revivals. For the church service, but mainly the visiting, 'cause everybody else came also.

TS: Well, you didn't get to see—there were people that you maybe saw twice a year at the school closing, or two, or at the church revival, and then you might not—say, a community or two away, too far away.

JDW: Right. Wouldn't see them very often, you know.

TS: One thing that I've always wanted to ask, that I've never really understood, is how would a teacher—say, one of your elementary teachers at Maple—deal with having three or four grades in the same room? How do they deal with it? You know, they're not using the same reader or the same math book for the kids in different grades. How do they do it?

JDW: Well, we were segregated in the room, of course by the class. And she would assign these over here to do something, and then she'd go talk to the others and assign something for them to do. And she'd pass assignments around, and she would discuss, here, and while these over here were reading or doing something, and then she just—she rotated around the room to the different classes. Not a very good system, not a very good system at all, by today's standards.

TS: So, you're always in one of the grades in a teacher's classroom, you're not getting that much attention, much time, before she has to move on to another?

JDW: Exactly right. In fact, if you were real studious, you could get all three grades from what you—(laughs) I didn't accomplish that.

TS: (interrupts) Just by listening.

JDW: And then in 1942—in 1939—I moved into Gatesville to high school—first bussed into Gatesville. The first year I went to high school in Gatesville I didn't pass a course all year. Didn't pass a one!

TS: Just because they didn't have you up to speed for—

JDW: No! It took me—it was almost the end of the year before I even learned how to study what they were trying to present to us. American history and civics and those classes, (groans) I was so far all the

time it's pathetic, I didn't know how do it. I never flunked another course after that year. I went to high school, the rest of high school, and all the way through college, and I never flunked another course. I can't brag on my grades, but I never flunked another course.

TS: But that's interesting. Was it that you were behind in those courses in what you knew, or was it the different way of doing things they had in the high school? Or, both of them together?

JDW: (sighs) The main thing, the main difference, was, we had individual teachers here in Gatesville, that only taught you geometry or taught you algebra or taught you English. You didn't—they concentrated for an hour on one subject. And out in the country school they didn't do that. Like I said, they had two or three classes in one room. So, uh, it was altogether different.

TS: It was real loosey-goosey and flexible in the country, they were always shifting through—

JDW: Yes. For example, to show you how it works, my strongest course when I got to high school was algebra, one of the hardest courses for most kids. I liked the teacher, I concentrated on algebra in high school, and I never had any trouble with algebra. I went on to Gatesville. I didn't take algebra the first year, took it the second year and made a good grade in college. But it was one of those things—that I had the opportunity, even at the rural school, to pick up algebra, basic algebra, pretty good. Nothing else.

TS: But, you know, the whole mode of operating changes between the country school and the town school, even if the country school is a school as big as Maple. And the ones that come from the little two rooms things, it must be even more so.

Let's see, what about when Fort Hood came in? Were there rumors that it might happen? How long did the rumors show up before it started to get serious? Just what do you recall about that?

JDW: Uh, in early 1941—Pearl Harbor was December 7, 1941—in early 1941 there were rumors going around, and there was a, there was a, some kind of an army vehicle that came down the road in our community. Or, survey teams of different kinds, people strange in the community, were coming everywhere. And people said, What in the world are they gonna do? What are they here for? And nobody could seem to find the answer for a while. Then the rumors got to spreading that they were going to take over the whole thing and make a training camp out of it for army, and everybody was gonna have to move out. Well, that was so far-fetched that most of us didn't believe it for three or four months. And actually we didn't believe until we got Department of army notice that it is happening! And then, boy, hidey, you're going to move. (laughs) It came around December the seventh, we were just pretty well—everybody was convinced, then, that our whole community was gone, that it was gonna be sucked up by the army. And then in early '42, right on up until spring of '42—see, everybody had to be out of here by April '42, I believe. I'm not exactly sure, but I believe it was April '42. Well, I didn't graduate from high school until May of '42, here in Gatesville—

So fast they couldn't get money. These people just didn't have any money. We were just coming out of the Depression. Maybe they had a little savings, but they didn't have very much. My parents didn't have anything to amount to anything, just that darned old pickup that ran about half of the time. And my dad, they took his land, well, he protested what the value they put on it, and therefore they didn't pay him anything! (laughs) So, we moved out of here without one dime. We moved to Evant, he bought that place up there without a dime. I say not a dime, maybe he had a little down payment to guarantee the deal and bought the place in Evant.

TS: So, what you're saying is, because he protested the price, that strung it off down in time—you know, the bureaucracy—so he didn't get anything for a much longer period?

JDW: Oh, yes. The only thing about it, he had a good connection with the banks, and he had a good connection with the people that he'd been dealing with, and they trusted him. And therefore they stood by him until they got it all worked out. How in the world he managed it I don't know, but he managed to get through. And at that time went up there and even improved that place in Evant. Well, I was at the age that I should have gone in the army in 1943. The banker at Evant was on the draft board here in Gatesville. I didn't get my draft notice. I was classified 1A, but I didn't get a notice to report. And I didn't get a notice for almost a year. Well, I was working twelve hours a day digging post holes on that place up there. And my dad, I heard this later, went down and told the banker, said, "Ah, dammit, they took my farm and everything else, and now they gonna take the only helper I've got." The other boy was a little bit younger, you know. He said, "I've got to have that boy to help me up there." So, the banker helped him get a deferment for me. I didn't know it came up! That lasted almost a year, and I found about it when I came up for renewal of it. (TS laughs) And I told my dad, I said, "What in the world's wrong? For some reason I haven't gotten a draft notice." "Aw," he said, "they worked it out at Evant so you got a deferment." I said, "Daddy, I don't want you to do that anymore." I said, "People in the community and everybody is asking me why I haven't gone to the service, and I don't want you to do that anymore." He said, "Well, if you feel that way about it, all right." We had most of the fencing—

TS: You had most of the fence holes dug! This isn't the easiest country to dig fences. (laughs)

JDW: So then, in three or four months they had me in the service. I got my draft notice, and I was reclassified, and I was sent to the draft here and inducted in very short order.

TS: Well, the first job over there—one of the first jobs—is to get a perimeter fence, get the property fenced, right?

JDW: Exactly. We had some sheep, and we had six miles of fence on that place where we moved—six miles.

TS: Six miles. That is easy to say and that is so hard—

JDW: That old rock, boy, we had to dig that hard rock. Well, my dad hired three other guys and me and him, and we dug that six miles of fence posts. We didn't have any doggone machine to do it, either, we dug it by hand, dug all of those post holes by hand. And we finally got it done. And he did all that on the credit, 'cause we didn't have any money. I say on credit, mostly on the credit.

TS: Well, what sort of operation did he set up over there, sheep and goats? What was the land—was the land as good as what y'all had?

JDW: Oh, actually a little better, it was a little better. We got good, he got good—it was between five and six dollars an acre for the land, here. Now, he got the improvements—he got fences paid for, and some of the buildings he got a little money for, so it's a little more than five or six dollars an acre. Maybe went up to seven or eight dollars, if you considered everything. Improvements, well, the improvements wasn't much, but whatever. Windmills and stuff like that, they even put a value on them—the army did and the defense department. And he got paid for all that, and then they gave him the fences and the houses. They paid him for them, but then gave them back to him. 'Cause they wanted them off the land, they wanted the land completely free. So, we took up fence line out here when Fort Hood moved us, the whole silly thing out there.

TS: Wow.

JDW: And, uh, that was a big operation.

TS: That's almost as hard as putting it in.

JDW: It is, it is, it is. But I don't know, we couldn't have afforded it, otherwise.

TS: What about the house? I bet you left the house, right?

JDW: The house—we used the old lumber that we moved out of Fort Hood to build a barn, okay, and remodeled the house. The house we moved in up there was poorly made, but we remodeled it. And my dad was delivering broomcorn at that time—still working the broomcorn.

TS: Well, he must have made a better—he must have had better resources and better—it sounds like he made a better adjustment, readjustment, than a lot of people.

JDW: Yeah, yeah. I think part of it was—(unintelligible) if you're eighteen years old, you don't know what you can do, you don't know what you want to do with your life, best thing in the world that can happen to you is a year or two of service. I still say that, right today, I think. A lot of kids could be straightened out, give them a year or two in the service, by golly! Where they have a boss, where they can be regimented and so forth, and you'll make better citizens out of them. And I think my dad benefited from World War I, having that.

TS: So, he was one—he had been out there in the wider world and gone overseas, probably, or at least had gone a long way from home, and he just—

JDW: In the worst of the Depression, one of the things that I remember that has stuck with me through the years is, when times are the hardest, if you'll put a little money out there in circulation, I'll earn my part of it. But there's no way in the world, I can't—didn't have enough money circulating, I can't do anything. No way you could earn any money, because nobody had any!

TS: I mean—sounds like that your father had more work to give people from the community occasionally than most people.

JDW: He did, he did.

TS: How much land did he own?

JDW: Seven hundred and something, when we moved out of Fort Hood. The two places together was about seven hundred acres. We had a relative with us in the midthirties, uh, we had some young boy working, my dad had working for us, ten dollars a month. Room and board and ten dollars a month.

TS: Well, one of the things I didn't ask Andy and I ought to ask you is, you had two brothers, how did y'all divvy up the work? Okay, you're the oldest, right? And then comes—

JDW: Andy, then my brother, Peck.

TS: Peck, okay. Did you do different things on your father's operation? Did you have different jobs? Just anything about that. We're talking about before Fort Hood.

JDW: Before Fort Hood, we all pretty well did the same things. My youngest brother was young enough that he never participated much. Andy and I—seemed like I always milked the cows. That was one of my duties all the time. And Andy would be required to go get the cows and bring them to the pen. And, and my little brother would bring in the wood, stuff like that. He would do the little things like that, and Andy and I would do the things a little more complicated, that required a little more energy.

TS: But y'all were a little shorthanded, sometimes, you didn't have a big family like a lot of families.

JDW: We were not shorthanded so far as home duties were concerned. The household duties were—no. We didn't have any sister, and my dad said, "Get in an' help your mother with the dishes," you know, and things like that. But, now, my dad had all these projects going on all the time, and then's when needed

someone to be there. And besides that, he and my mother were gone so much, needed someone to stay with us. So, so, we had someone stay with us.

TS: She would go with him on these trips a good bit, right?

JDW: My mother was a tremendously jealous person. She didn't have any business, but we all have our difficulties.

TS: We all have our little—so, that's why she would go—

JDW: Oh, goodness, yes.

TS: On the broomcorn sales and such as that, right? Or the cedar post sales?

JDW: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Where did he sell his cedar? Would the store buy cedar posts? I believe you said—

JDW: They would take them in trade, the little community store. Practically—you know, I don't know of a community store that didn't buy posts. 'Cause it was, it was, one of the things that was just absolutely essential. A lot of them, they all bought eggs, most of them by crate because they didn't have facilities for storing and so forth. But they did buy eggs, most all of them, and they bought posts. Through our part of the community there, it was very essential, that they do.

TS: So, you could go—posts were a way to get biscuits.

JDW: Exactly. The very essentials, you didn't go without the essentials if you can get some posts.

TS: And the posts were not—they were like a free item on the farm—that you improved the farm if you cut down some of it. So, they cost you the labor of getting them and taking them.

JDW: That's right, that's right. Yeah. Best resource we had, for bad times.

TS: Did anybody do syrup like that and sell it or trade it?

JDW: And sell it? Sure, and honey. Yes, yes. A little bit of that, not a tremendous amount of it, but some. Yeah, you could buy sorghum syrup. Yeah, yeah, and people made it and sold it, that's very true. And they had honey that they made and sold like that.

TS: Did the sheriff show up much? Was the sheriff—

JDW: Law enforcement?

TS: Yes, law enforcement. I know the deputies wouldn't come out unless they had a call, or something. But did the communities kind of police themselves?

JDW: Policed themselves, I never knew that. And to be perfectly frank with you, we had fights all the time. At those end-of-school deals, I remember some bad, bad fights at those. But, you know, as far as I know, there wasn't anybody thought about taking a gun and shooting somebody, or cutting them with a knife. Two old boys eighteen or twenty years old would get crossways with a girl or something, and they'd just fight until they got bloody and everything else, but that didn't hurt each other, you know.

TS: When they fought like that, at a country dance or a school closing, was it—well, just tell me what happened. I bet it wasn't a formal boxing match.

JDW: I'll tell you what—

(visitor enters room; interruption in taping)

TS: Was it a—they'd just go at each other knock-down, fall-down, grab, you know, catch-as-catch-can, right?

JDW: Well, now, you been around enough that, you know, that some guys, by instinct, they fight. And some guys are never in a fight. It's just not part of their nature to fight. And that usually dictated it. Some of them had boxing gloves on and had a little experience. I remember one that was pathetic, because he had a little boxing experience, and the other guy didn't have any, and he just beat the fool out of him, you know. A lot of times they were about evenly matched, a lot of times they were about evenly matched. And then two brothers—two guys get into it and then their brothers get into it. I remember that happening two or three times. The whole family, sometimes.

TS: Yes, that's—I haven't asked you about the Saturday night dances at people's houses, or country dances. That's another kind of an occasion when people might fight. It was almost like some people liked to fight.

JDW: Very true, very true—like to cause trouble, I never could understand that. But—that happened every once in a while, but most of them were very peaceful. Most of them were very peaceful. And, you know, the guys that played for it, we got them in the community, and you would donate a dime or a quarter or something, and they'd play all night. Leave off at one or two, you know. And most of the time very cordial, very cordial. Uh, there would be some arguments and they wouldn't wind up in any fights or anything like that.

TS: What about whiskey makers, bootleggers—I bet it was a dry county?

JDW: Ooh, you're not kidding!

TS: It was dry, okay, but there's always people, there's always bootleggers. I know we're past Prohibition now, but—

JDW: (speaking at the same time; unintelligible) In this part of the country, other than making home-brew beer, the whiskey wasn't the thing, but the home-brew was. Home-brew was made quite regularly by some people. Not very common, not very common, not something that was widespread everywhere, naw, not at all.

TS: Like, made for personal use, right?

JDW: Right, right. Yeah. I don't know anybody that sold it. They give it away, but they didn't sell it.

TS: But basically the sheriff is not somebody that would go patrolling, through. If you needed the sheriff, you went to Gatesville to see the sheriff, right?

JDW: Right, right. In routine life in the community, you'd never see the sheriff. If a major something, a killing or something like that, then you heard from the sheriff. Otherwise, you hardly knew who the sheriff was.

TS: Well, you know, now—later after cars—they had to show themselves at every little crossroads, but not then.

JDW: Naw, the sheriff wasn't a viable person—(unintelligible) maybe I was lucky it didn't happen around me, the only one that happened, one of our schoolteachers at Maple, her husband beat the devil out of her. She came—(unintelligible) one side of her face all black and blue. And the old man lived here in Gatesville, old man Hearne lived here in Gatesville, and he rode the school bus from Gatesville out here. I was on the bus when he came out, and he stopped down there at his daughter's, and he told his son-in-law, he said, "You don't beat my daughter anymore." He said, "I'm gonna take care of you," said, "you leave her alone. And if you can't, if you have to beat, then

you leave." And she was a schoolteacher, and he—well, he just lived off of her, really. And so, he beat her up again, and the old man saw him here on the next block [courthouse square, Gatesville] and walks over to the car. Told him, "I think you beat my daughter again," and he said, "none of your damn business," and he started cursing. That old man emptied a gun in him, he just shot him full of holes—(unintelligible) then he walked around, walked back toward the courthouse to the sheriff, and somebody got the sheriff immediately, you know, and he was arrested. Never did arrest the old man, never put the old man in jail. They had the old man's trial and everything in Gatesville, he was eighty years old at that time, and—

TS: That's because the sheriff knew the whole situation.

JDW: The old man, he was seventy years old and had never broke a law in his life.

TS: Yeah—knew he would show up on the day, knew he wasn't going to leave Coryell County for anywhere.

JDW: Oh, gosh, no. No.

TS: Well—oh, we're almost off. Well, we have a little. Y'all didn't have a telephone, right? What time is it? Okay, we'll quit—

JDW: No, we didn't have a telephone, we didn't have electricity in Coryell County. All the time we were in Fort Hood there was no electricity out in our community, no telephones in our community out there at all.

TS: That's kind of unusual about the telephone, because a lot of places got telephone systems fairly early, long before they got electricity, you know. Like, uh, that Antelope community down there. I was talking to Haedge, the lady was Florence Haedge. They had a telephone system that came out of Coppers Cove. So, Gatesville probably had a telephone system, right?

JDW: Yeah, and they may have had one between Copperas Cove and Gatesville. But now, the rural communities in here, that settled out here by themself, had no telephone. The only way we ever got telephone and electricity was through REA. We had no connection whatsoever. REA was the first, REA was the first.

TS: So, most of them didn't get that—did they get that in the '30s?

JDW: Oh, no, it was the '40s.

TS: So, basically, all those communities were disbanded before they got electricity?

JDW: Right, right. That's true.

(interruption in taping)

TS: Now, you were just saying—did anybody in these communities, here, or your community—the communities that you know about—make a success of raising cotton? Or, was it too dry, too many boll weevils?

JDW: Uh, there was some places along the creeks where they had some cotton and they raised a little cotton, but cotton was going out very fast. It was going out very fast. One year in the early '30s, about '33 or '34, my dad had an old pickup that he had hauled wood to a steam-operated gin up here halfway to Gatesville. But we didn't raise any cotton down there at all, we raised it up here on the open country around Ewing. They had some cotton.

TS: Yeah, he was selling wood to the—the steam gins used just tons of wood.

JDW: Right, right. And he made a good little money.

TS: Just one of those things to make a little—

JDW: (interrupts) Cotton was going out, cotton was bad! Bad! 'Course, now, the blacklands—see, we're over the edge of the blacklands, the blacklands are back this way. We're just out of the blacklands in a bad area for boll weevils and every kind of insect under the sun.

TS: It was just much more marginal cotton country to begin with and besides that it wasn't worth anything, right?

JDW: Right. And then corn, corn or milo, or oats, uh, were just for feed purposes for livestock. Feed purchases for livestock.

TS: It was just like gasoline, I mean, you had to raise enough, you had to raise enough grain, if you still had work stock, or still had work stock for transport.

JDW: Yeah, yeah.

Archie Spivy Wright

Date of birth: 8 October 1909
Communities affiliated with: Antelope, Pidcoke
Interviewed by William S. Pugsley III

WSP: This is Bill Pugsley. I am in the home of Archie Wright on Route 116, just north of Pidcoke. It is a little after ten o'clock on October 22, 2001. I will be interviewing Mr. Wright regarding his memories and recollections of his life on Fort Hood lands. [This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood Oral History Project sponsored by the U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.] My name is Bill Pugsley and I'll be interviewing Mr. Wright this morning.

To begin with, can you give me the names of your parents?

ASW: George Wright and Lizzie Wright.

WSP: Lizzie Wright?

ASW: Lizzie Wright, yeah.

WSP: And your brothers and sisters?

ASW: My brothers, my oldest brother is Dewey Wright, and my oldest sister was Ocie Wright, and Gertie Lee Wright, Alice Wright, and Juanita Wright. And then C. B.'s my brother, too. He's younger, too.

WSP: And C. B.?

ASW: C. B. Wright, yes.

WSP: Did your sister Juanita marry Mr. Trantham?

ASW: Juanita did, yeah.

WSP: I've interviewed her already.

ASW: Oh, you have?

WSP: Yes!

ASW: Oh? This side of Gatesville?

WSP: Yes, exactly, right.

ASW: Yeah.

WSP: Well, we can get your perspective on events. You were a little older than she was, am I right?

ASW: Oh, yeah, yes. She's the youngest.

WSP: She's the youngest?

ASW: Um-hm.

WSP: Well, I recognize the family name, and it occurred to me that might be an association.

ASW: Um-hm.

WSP: Why don't you give me a description of your family home, the home you were raised in?

ASW: The one I was borned in was a pretty old house down on the Cowhouse, right close to a mile south of the Cowhouse, the hills by the Cowhouse. And then we lived there until I was three or four—well, my daddy, he rented another place—back west of it, towards Antelope—from some people. We moved up there then and lived up there from then on, until the army come. It was an old like house and five hundred—about five hundred acres he got on up there. Then he sold the place down there on the creek to his neighbor, Jim Manning—and, the Cowhouse run right through his place down there.

WSP: Can you describe the house you were born in? What the rooms were like and how they were located with each other?

ASW: I don't remember much about that old house. Daddy built a new house after I was born a good while. It was—well, I think it was a three bedrooms and a kitchen, and that's about it, I guess, and living room.

WSP: Is this the one on Cowhouse?

ASW: Yes, uh-huh. Then when we moved out from there on up to that other place, it was an old house there that we lived in always, until the army come along in 1942 and taken it.

WSP: You're describing three houses—one very old house where you were born and a new one that was three bedrooms and a living room—and then one later, a third house. Where was that third house located?

ASW: Yeah. That was on the place where we had to move out of Fort Hood on, the five hundred acres.

WSP: Oh, this is after you moved off the Fort Hood lands?

ASW: Oh, no! That was in Fort Hood.

WSP: In Fort Hood?

ASW: Oh, yes! It was all pretty close together there.

WSP: I see. Well, can you describe the rooms in that second house?

ASW: Well, our beds was about all then, and we had an old sort of Victrola, I guess you'd call it, player outfit. That was about it. We didn't have no radios then at all. That was about all we had—just, of course, you know, just things like you have in the house, kitchen stuff and like that, bedrooms. That's about all. Yeah.

WSP: What was common household furnishings back then may not be common these days. Could you describe what was in the individual bedrooms, if you can remember them?

ASW: Well, I don't remember very much about that. There wasn't nothing much in the bedrooms but the beds—I guess maybe a dresser or something like that. I don't remember much about that. We lived down there, and we moved out up to that other place. I started to Antelope School in the fourth grade.

WSP: Where were you going before?

ASW: The first school I went to was a little school called Salem, just a one-room, a one-room school was all it was. Just, oh, I don't know, twenty-five or thirty kids, I guess went there—maybe not that many.

WSP: How many grades were in the Salem School?

ASW: Just seventh grade, I believe, down there—

WSP: Up to seventh grade?

ASW: At the Salem School, I believe that's what it was, yes.

WSP: Do you remember your teacher's name?

ASW: Well, one of them—one that beat me up—me and another boy—what was his name? Uh, Charlie Robinson. But me and another boy was spelling. He got us scared, he kept us in a lot, and he got us scared, and we couldn't spell three words. And he went outside there and cut himself some live oak bushes with knots on them and brought in there and kept us in and give us a beating—stretched out over a chair like this one here, get us by the collars and give us a beating, beat the blood out of both of us. The other boy messed in his britches.

(laughs) And my oldest brother, Dewey, and Melvin Cox was another friend—boy there of my brother's—they went up the next morning, they were going to get him. But he'd done left out. He left that evening. We saw him going down, and he walked from down the lane towards the Cowhouse going to Gatesville. He walked back, and he left. We didn't see him no more. (laughs)

WSP: He beat you because you couldn't spell?

ASW: Couldn't spell them three words. He had us scared to death. (laughs) That's the way—we was little old kids. I guess we were in third grade. One word was cherub, but I don't remember what the others was.

WSP: He didn't last long, did he?

ASW: (laughs) Nah, he didn't! (laughs) No. I've forgot what his name was. I ought to know, but I can't think of it. He lived here at Gatesville.

WSP: Had he been rough on you before in school?

ASW: Well, no, that was the first time, that was the first school he'd taught there. See, they'd been having women teachers. One of them was Ms. Adair Whitmeyer. Let's see—I guess—I guess she was the only one, I guess ahead of him, that I remember of—I believe—that's when I started school, just a little old boy, I guess seven years old, or six when I started, maybe, I don't know.

WSP: Did you like her?

ASW: She was all right, the woman was, yeah. Yeah, we liked her—a good teacher. We'd—you know, the bigger boys, they played baseball, and us little kids, we just played Stealing Sticks and Running Base, Mumbly Pegs, and things like that, that's what we done at recess and dinner.

WSP: What was Stealing Sticks? What kind of game was that?

ASW: Well, there'd just be so many on one side and some on the other side, and they'd run try to get through to get to them sticks. (laughs) There's not many people know what that is, I don't guess. (laughs) Yes, we played that a lot—(laughs) just little old kids. Mumbly Peg, we played that a lot with a knife. I guess you know what that is?

WSP: Mumbly Peg?

ASW: Yeah.

WSP: Yes, I played that myself.

ASW: Oh, you did?

WSP: Oh, yes. What courses did you take in your early education?

ASW: Just reading and arithmetic.

WSP: Did your school have a blackboard?

ASW: Yes, I believe they had a blackboard, yes, um-hm—write on there with chalk, you know?

WSP: Can you describe what an average day in school back then was like, what you did each different period, oh, from the time you got there, then on through the day?

ASW: Well, of course we'd just play out there until they'd take up books in the morning at nine o'clock. And then we'd have—and turn out for recess just like they do now, and for dinner. Of course, we'd play at recess and dinner all the time. Turn out of school at four o'clock, I believe.

And while we was doing all that, going to school there, well, me and my oldest sister and—I believe that's right—and then several others, I don't know, about eight or nine of us decided one day we wouldn't go to school, we'd just play hooky. So a fellow had a pasture back over west of there apiece, and we was over there on that old creek, stayed all day and played hooky. (laughs)

WSP: What did you do when you played hooky?

ASW: Well, just stayed over there and played like we did at school. (laughs) And we met—that evening as we was coming in we met Dewey. Mama and Daddy had sent Dewey out a-hunting us. He taken us on in, and of course we got home, and Mama had some switches ready for us. (laughs) And she gave them to us! (laughs) That was about the way it was. But we had a big time, though. (laughs)

WSP: Was there a particular school book that she taught from, or did she present her lessons without a book?

ASW: We had a little arithmetic—we had arithmetic and things, a reading book, and I guess that was about all. That was all we had then, I believe.

WSP: Everybody is in the same room, correct?

ASW: All in the same room, that's right.

WSP: How did a teacher operate a class in which there are so many different grades?

ASW: Well, just take one at a time, have a class for one grade at a time.

WSP: Were kids for one particular class located in one part of the room, altogether?

ASW: Well, I think the younger kids stayed over on one side, and the older ones on the other side, I believe.

WSP: Basically, she divided the class into younger and older, not in specific grades by age?

ASW: Well, yes, by grades, of course, by age and the grades, yeah.

WSP: When she taught a specific grade, how did that operate, specifically? I'm very unclear, and I think most people are. This is a very foreign experience for most folks. Very few one-room schools exist

today, so the more detail you can provide us, the better.

ASW: (laughs) I don't know much to tell you. That's about all I know about that.

WSP: All right. How long did it take you to get to school?

ASW: Oh, we had to walk. It was close to a mile, I guess—twenty or thirty minutes, something like that. There was one neighbor boy there lived close to us, he went to school barefooted—his folks never did buy him no shoes to wear.

WSP: He'd walk the entire mile barefooted?

ASW: He was about the same distance we was. We lived close together down there. Joe Gault was who it was. Jim Gault was our neighbor, his daddy.

WSP: Gault?

ASW: Gault, I believe. You want to know his kids' names?

WSP: No. That's all right.

ASW: No? Okay.

WSP: Let's go back to the house for a moment.

ASW: The first house we lived in?

WSP: The first house you lived in. As a young child, did you have any particular chores to do around the house?

ASW: Me and my sister milked the cows all the time, every night and every morning. Me and Ocie, my oldest sister. We'd milk three or four cows, then, and we done it ourselves.

WSP: What was that process? I mean, what would you do, specifically?

ASW: Well, see, the cows were out for the day, and we kept the calves in the pen. At night we'd let the cows in and milk the cows. Of course, we'd tie them calves off, had a rope we tied the calves off with, to milk the cows, then turn the calves loose and let them suck. Of course, they'd suck a little at the start, and then we'd take them off and tie them until we got through milking, and then turn them loose.

WSP: Was it important to have calves suck at the beginning to help the milking process, or could you milk a cow without the calf being around?

ASW: Oh, we could, but most of the cows then wouldn't let you milk them without a calf—the calves would suck, and they wouldn't let you milk them—without that calf sucking some—hardly.

WSP: You milked four or five cows—

ASW: About three or four most of the time.

WSP: How much milk would you get?

ASW: Oh, I don't remember—I guess, I imagine a couple of gallons, maybe, altogether. In a bucket—two buckets, one apiece.

WSP: What time in the day would this be?

ASW: Early in the morning, before we went to school. And in the evening after we got in from school, along before night, about night.

WSP: Were there any other chores that you had besides milking the cows?

ASW: Well, I guess I might have helped a little about feeding hogs—we always had hogs then, horses and mules and stuff. I guess I might have helped, but I think my older brother might have done most of that, then.

WSP: Dewey?

ASW: Dewey, yes.

WSP: What did you feed the hogs?

ASW: Feed them corn, and they'd have slop for them usually, too, from the kitchen, and water—of course they had to have water. Had to water them.

WSP: What other animals did your parents raise on the farm?

ASW: Well, they had some goats. Down there on the farm where I first was just a kid, he had goats and cows was all, I believe. When we got moved onto that other place up there, he had cows and sheep and goats, all. And he farmed about, I think about a hundred acres of land he farmed.

WSP: On the second farm?

ASW: Uh-huh.

WSP: Did he cultivate any acreage on the first farm?

ASW: About sixty acres, I believe, yeah. Well, a little more than that—he had some across the creek, too, about six or eight acres across the creek. Yeah, he always planted it in cane. We'd cut that cane with a mower and rake it up with a rake, a team with a rake, and then we'd take pitchforks—and rode it on the wagon, haul it up to the place where he lived up there on the prairie,. And then we'd get up there—had a big barn and a big loft up in it. We'd drive through that, with doors open on both sides—we'd drive through that and unload that hay with a pitchforks up into that loft, off them wagons. (laughs)

WSP: This was your parents' barn?

ASW: Yes sir, yes. After we moved up to the other place, that's where it was.

WSP: On the second farm.

ASW: Yes sir.

WSP: I see. So the first farm was rather small?

ASW: About sixty acres, I think—just raised corn and cotton down there, about all he raised.

WSP: Did your father own the first farm?

ASW: Yeah.

WSP: Do you know how he acquired that farm?

ASW: No sir, I don't know about that. He bought that before I was ever born, I guess. I don't remember. But it didn't cost him much, I know, but I don't know how much. The last segment he got didn't cost

much, twelve dollar an acre.

The people that lived on that second farm—how come him to get it—there was an old man, and this old man was a bachelor, had a sister there that had two boys. They decided to go to Mexico, so they hooked up three mules to a wagon and drove through to Mexico. Moved out there and rented that place to my daddy. All that land and everything, just rented it—didn't have to pay no lease on it—there for a long time. And finally they decided to sell it, and Papa bought it then. He still had it when the army come.

WSP: What were these gentlemen doing in Mexico?

ASW: Well, I don't know. (laughs) Not much, I don't guess. I don't know what they done. I never did see them boys, they never—well, they come back a time or two, but I never did see them. But they all died out there, I guess.

WSP: And this is old Mexico or New Mexico?

ASW: New Mexico. Roswell. I believe it was Roswell, New Mexico. I think that's where it was. Gene Mohney was his name—

WSP: Mohney?

ASW: Mohney, yeah, and Mrs. Shoemaker, her name was Mrs. Shoemaker, his sister. Their daddy, I guess the boys' daddy was dead. Their name was—one of them was Teddy, I believe, and I've forgot now what—Marlin maybe might have been the other one, I guess.

WSP: Your father owned the first farm and rented the second one—

ASW: For a few years, yes—until they decided to sell it, yeah.

WSP: Who did he sell his first ranch to, do you remember?

ASW: Jim Manning. Jim Manning, our neighbor that lived right east of us. His place joined Papa's place.

WSP: Would this have put it near Manning Mountain?

ASW: Well, no, it was off back down the other way from Manning Mountain, oh, I guess a couple of miles—maybe three miles back south across the creek. He had some land on the north side of the creek, too, but the house was on the—the south side of the creek. Manning's house was on the south side of the creek over there.

WSP: Are we talking about the Cowhouse Creek?

ASW: Um-hm, that's right. (pause)

Manning run lots of cattle. He was a big cattleman, and then he had a farm, too, he farmed. But he had four boys, and they growed up, and of course they farmed that land a lot for him. He finally—Jim Manning, he finally put up a gin down at Eliga, Texas, and run the cotton gin down there.

His wife died. When just me and the youngest boy of his was just little old kids, their mother died. And it was raining, just raining right on down, and Arnold and me was just little old kids, I don't know, two or three, four year old, maybe. And my daddy had a hack, a covered hack with two seats in it, worked two mules to it. And he hauled their mother, his mother, over to the Graham graveyard, about, oh, I guess about six or seven miles over there to bury her.

WSP: Simms' graveyard?

ASW: No, it was the Graham graveyard—that's what it was, I believe. Hauled her over there—it was

pouring down rain—with two mules. Me and Arnold stayed up there, two little kids up there by ourselves until they got back.

WSP: Do you remember much about the first house, the smaller house? The one you were born in?

ASW: No, I don't remember hardly anything about that. I just remember him building the new house. The other one, though, was pretty old. I don't remember anything at all. I was a little old kid.

WSP: Did he build the second house on that same property?

ASW: Yeah, yes.

WSP: Were you around when he built the second house?

ASW: Yeah, oh, yes.

WSP: How did one build a house in those days? Did he hire a construction crew and all?

ASW: Well, he had a fellow that was a carpenter. I've forgot what his name was, but he helped him build it all the time. He helped him, but Papa done the most of it, him and my daddy and him. Of course, Daddy wasn't too old, then.

WSP: Did they work from a set of plans for the house?

ASW: I don't know about that. He just knew how he wanted it, I reckon, and put up a house there—I guess a three bedroom and the kitchen. No bathroom. The outside's your bathroom.

WSP: But these days people go to a great effort to dig a foundation and pour concrete—

ASW: He didn't do none of that. He just built it, set it on rocks on the ground, yeah.

WSP: Where did he get the lumber?

ASW: Hauled in from Killeen, I think, on the wagon, I guess. I know he did, yeah.

WSP: Did you watch them build it?

ASW: Oh, I watched some, part of the time, yeah.

WSP: What time of year was this?

ASW: What time of year? I think it was in through the summertime part of the year, and the fall, maybe.

WSP: Did he have a conflict with his farm chores or his ranching duties to put the house up, or did he build it during his off time?

ASW: No, I think when they started on it they just went ahead, went ahead and built it.

WSP: Straight on through?

ASW: Yeah, I don't think it was very long to build it. I don't remember how long. My oldest brother, he was old enough then, he done the farming himself. And my daddy, he sort of done the carpenter work.

WSP: Were there any special items brought in from out of town?

ASW: Well, I don't know. Not that I know of.

WSP: Windows?

ASW: I guess bought the windows—I guess, I don't remember them but I'm sure they did, yeah.

WSP: But all of the materials, as you said, came from Killeen?

ASW: Yes, I'm sure it did, yeah, um-hm. It was about twelve or fifteen miles from there to Killeen—I think it was fifteen.

WSP: Was this a one-story or two-story house?

ASW: That he built?

WSP: Yes.

ASW: It's a one-story. Yes, um-hm, one-story.

WSP: What was the advantage of building a new house? It doesn't sound like the second house was that much bigger.

ASW: Well, it just got—I guess it just got so old and wasn't very good. Maybe he decided he wanted a new house. So he just built one. Of course, it didn't cost him much then. I don't have any idea how much, but everything was cheap then.

And we was picking cotton there along after I got older, and Juanita and he went to town. Daddy went to town. And I saw him coming back in a T Model Ford. He had a T Model Ford car. (laughs) Brand new! (laughs) That's the first one we ever had.

WSP: Do you know what year that was?

ASW: No, I don't. It was way back there.

I know we had oats down there. We cut oats with a reaper and team, then, and we had to shock them. And me and my sister was shocking—with Ocie—and she got mad at me about something and went down the road to the bull nettles. You know what bull nettles is?

WSP: No, I don't.

ASW: They grow up pretty good-sized, and they'll sting you real bad. (laughs) And there's a lot of them, too, that growed on them creeks. They don't grow on the prairie, but they do on the creeks.

WSP: You said you were shocking. What does that mean?

ASW: We had to get them bundles together and set them up, shock them up. Let them stay there until they dried out.

WSP: I see.

ASW: Then we'd haul them in or we might—I don't believe we ever did thresh them down there, that I remember of. I don't believe ever a thresher come down there. We'd just leave them in a bundle, I think.

WSP: Which crop was that again?

ASW: Oats. And then down there on that place he had a syrup mill—do you know what a syrup mill is—set up to grind, raise cane, and run through it to make syrup out of it? He had a mill up there he worked a horse to, went around and around turning it to make it run—take them cane stalks and stick them through there, and they'd go right on through it and mash it up.

And the juice he had fixed where it—he had a vat down under the hill, like, where he had it piped down, and that juice run down into that vat, and he'd cook it off down there, make syrup out of it in that vat. (laughs)

WSP: But why would there be a great distance between the place where they would grind it up and the vat?

ASW: Well, it was under the hill. You had to have a hill for it to run under. See, the grinder was kind of up on the hill and had the vat down under the hill, like.

WSP: How far away would you say they were?

ASW: Oh, it was, I guess, twenty foot or better. Maybe more than that. It was good sorghum syrup is what it was. It was good, too.

WSP: How big was this vat?

ASW: Oh, I don't know. It was as long as this table and a square deal, about as long as this table, I guess.

WSP: So we're looking at six or eight feet square?

ASW: I imagine so, yeah. Yes, that's right. He'd put that syrup in there and just cook it, boil it until it made syrup, and then he'd put it—dip it up and put it into barrels.

WSP: That sounds like an awful lot of syrup he was making?

ASW: It was a lot of syrup! Yeah, he made a lot of syrup! We used it and he sold some of it. He would raise a patch of cane every year, to make syrup out of. He'd have to go down there and take a stick and strip them blades off them stalks of cane, cut the heads off. And he had to go back and cut that with a hand knife and haul it in there and grind it through that machine.

WSP: How many wagonloads of cane would it take?

ASW: Well, now, I couldn't say about that—not many though. He didn't cook up a lot of it, but—I don't remember how many barrels he made. He put some of it in gallon buckets, and he'd sell a little of it maybe, to somebody, in that gallon bucket. It was sure good.

WSP: Are you suggesting there was a large fire under the entire surface of this vat?

ASW: All the way under it—they had a vat up on rocks, you know, and then under there was where he had fire to cook it—out of wood. Yeah, that's the way he done it.

WSP: How high were the sides on the vat?

ASW: Not very high. I don't guess it was more than about that high.

WSP: You're indicating about six or eight inches.

ASW: Something like that, yeah.

WSP: This was a very low, flat vat.

ASW: It was—a low flat vat, just like this table, only square.

WSP: I was imagining something quite a bit deeper and was trying to figure out how much cane it took to fill up a vat that deep.

ASW: (laughs) No, it didn't go through there too fast. When you'd get it, your vat full, I believe he had to stop the grinding until he got that taken up. And then he'd put in more.

WSP: Would the fire leave a residue on the bottom of this vat?

ASW: Um-hm, yes. You see, it'd make a blaze under there, and it get that hot to make that syrup boil, boil

all that—I guess you'd call it boil the juice out of it, but the juice is already out. They'd boil it or something, I don't know why, but—

WSP: Would this syrup come out one color from the grinder and end up another color afterward it was cooked?

ASW: I think it was all dark whenever he got through cooking it.

WSP: Did it come out dark after it was squeezed?

ASW: Well, when it was squeezed it was kind of—kind of light colored, I think, then, I believe it was. But when you cooked it out it was dark colored.

WSP: How would you get it out of the vat?

ASW: I don't remember. He had something I guess he dipped it out with, I reckon. I don't remember, though. My job was to carry them piles off. The cane would run through that mill and get on the other side and, well, it would pile up over there. You'd have to pack that off and get it out of the way. That was my job.

WSP: How old were you then?

ASW: Oh, I guess six or seven years old.

WSP: Where did you end up taking this stuff?

ASW: Oh, just down under the hill a little piece, not very far, just out of the way of where that horse went around.

WSP: Would you burn it or just leave it out?

ASW: Just left it out, I think.

WSP: Now, you suggested at some point that you would stop the grinding process and dip out the contents from the vat into barrels and then start up again?

ASW: I think so. Yeah, uh-huh.

WSP: Did he clean the vat at that point, wipe it out or wash it down?

Would this sugar cane syrup leave some kind of residue along the sides and bottom of the vat?

ASW: Oh, yeah, it'd be sticky, sure.

WSP: Really?

ASW: Yeah, yeah. Now I don't believe he washed it, though—but he might, now. I don't remember.

WSP: Basically, between batches he'd scoop out the liquid part, and the cooked syrup would just stay there.

ASW: Yeah, uh-huh. That's right, yeah. He had a thing that skimmed it, sort of skimmed the syrup off from under that other with, pour it in buckets with, in that barrel.

WSP: Do you know about how many barrels he got from one vat of syrup?

ASW: No sir, no I don't. I don't know. He'd have—I don't think he made very many barrels. Maybe two or three barrels was all he made at a time, maybe not that much. I don't remember. He put some of it in gallon buckets, I think, and sell a little of it to different people thataway that'd want it.

WSP: How big was a barrel, generally?

ASW: Oh, I guess they was fifty—fifty-gallon barrels—I guess that's what they were.

WSP: That's a good-sized barrel.

ASW: Yeah, it is. Sure is. It might not have been that big, I don't remember.

WSP: Cooking syrup sounds like an interesting project. What time of the year did that usually take place?

ASW: Well, it was all in the summer, like, I guess it was—late summer, getting along towards fall. You see, cane's got to have time to grow up and make. They planted that along in the spring, and it'd be along in the summertime then before it would be ready to cut.

WSP: That sequence of grinding and cooking the sugar cane, did that occur before the cotton picking? Well, did you even raise cotton on your farm?

ASW: Oh, yeah, oh, we raised cotton. I believe that was before the cotton got ready. I think it was, yeah.

WSP: Did you have any chores related to raising cotton?

ASW: Just pick it, that was all. (laughs)

WSP: Did you do any hoeing?

ASW: Oh, yeah, of course, we had to hoe it. Yeah, you bet! Yeah, we had to hoe that cotton, keep it clean, keep them bull nettles cut out. (laughs) Oh, they was bad on that creek, lots of them.

WSP: Did you father allocate certain parts of his farm for the same type of crop, year in and year out?

ASW: Yeah. Part of it was corn over here, and over here would be cotton, and that cane stuff would be up close to the house, usually. He had some wheat sowed down there one year, and it got a real wet year, and the river come down and got that all washed away, washed away all his wheat. The river got out in the fields and everything, come plumb to the house up on the hill. The field fence was right down under the hill down there, and the river'd got out way back over there and come plumb to that bank under the hill there, to that fence. The Cowhouse. So nearly all that field, except a little way over next to the creek was higher than the rest of it. It didn't quite cover all of that.

Over there on the creek was a tall bank. I guess it might have been a thirty-foot bank or maybe more—deep. And he had a mare with a colt running out there in the field, and that colt ran off on that bluff. And my daddy and my brother Dewy went down there and got the colt out of the water—didn't hurt him. Brought him back with his mama. (laughs) Little old colts, they like to run and play, you know? And that's what he done.

WSP: Do you remember what year this flood occurred?

ASW: No sir, I don't—well, 1919 was one, yeah, sure was.

WSP: You said he tended to put his crops, the same crop in generally the same area of his farm, year after year?

ASW: Yeah, he'd change the ground for corn and cotton and such as that. Put the cotton over where the corn was and corn where the cotton was, yeah.

He didn't have too much wheat, a few acres of it, but he got it down there and that river, the creek got it.

WSP: What was his reason for raising wheat?

ASW: Well, I guess—I don't remember—it might have been a thresher come through down there. I don't remember. I guess there was. I don't remember no thresher.

WSP: Was this primarily for animal feed?

ASW: Now wheat, that was to make—he'd sell that to make bread out of. That's was what that was for.

WSP: Did you raise crops specifically for animal feed?

ASW: Yeah, corn, and oats, some oats, yeah, and hay, too. He had a little field across the creek in a river bottom over there, and he'd put it in cane [hay] every year. That's what I was telling you about we'd cut that cane with a team and mower and haul it out, loose. We didn't know what baling was then.

WSP: You hauled the cane out loose—

ASW: Loose, on the wagon, yeah.

WSP: And then take it up to the grinder?

ASW: No. Well, no, the cane to make syrup out of—no, it'd come up in stalks, had it planted in rows. We'd just go in there with cane knives and cut it down—had to knock them leaves off of it first, then head it, then cut—just cut off of the stub with a knife.

WSP: Is this a different cane than you were raising for cattle feed?

ASW: Well, that's sugar cane, yeah.

WSP: Oh, one is sugar cane, and the other was a feed cane?

ASW: The other is just Red Top cane. Yeah.

WSP: The cattle ate the Red Top cane, but you would use the sugar cane to make syrup?

ASW: Oh, yeah! Really—to make syrup, yes, that's right, yeah. That was real good hay, too, that sugar hay crop was, the Red Top cane. It'd make a lot to the acre, get up pretty, taller than your head.

WSP: Did you plant the Red Top cane during a certain time of the year?

ASW: It'd come up in the summer, like, sow it early in the spring, and it'd come up along in the summer.

WSP: When would the corn come up?

ASW: It'd be along towards fall.

WSP: So the animals would first have cane for their feed, and then after the cane, you'd feed the cattle—

ASW: Corn, yeah.

WSP: And what was the grain that followed corn? What carried them through the winter? Oats?

ASW: Well, he didn't raise many oats. I guess he raised some oats, I don't remember, but he didn't have nothing much to cut them with. Them oats needed a reaper to cut them with, to bundle it up like I was telling you we shocked them oats. He raised some oats, but not a lot of them.

And he had a field across the creek, too, over on—I called it on the prairie, way back over on the hills from the creek, north. And he, he'd plant some stuff over there every year. I don't think it made too good over there—and had to go way around that bad hill, go way around to get over there to it.

WSP: A bad hill?

ASW: Yes sir, had to go way around to where the hill wasn't so bad to get up to it.

WSP: What made a bad hill?

ASW: Well, just a big bluff, like the mountain here, but it wasn't a mountain. It was a big hill sort of like that, north of the Cowhouse.

WSP: Not good to farm on?

ASW: No. Well, he had some land back in there he did farm a little but not very much. I don't think he ever made much off of it. He run stock over there, some horses and cows. And he kept mares then, raised colts all the time. Raised mule colts and horse colts both, had three or four different mares. I had an uncle lived down close to Eliga, Texas, that kept two jacks and two stud horses a lot of times. And I'd take—he'd take them mares down there, and when I got old enough, well, I'd take them down there and breed them. Then he'd raise them colts. Yeah, if it was a jack you bred to, a mule. And of course he had horses, and they'd get horse colts. He raised a good many mule colts and sold them.

WSP: You raised corn and Red Top cane and cotton. Were there any other major crops your father raised, besides wheat?

ASW: That was about it, I believe, yeah.

WSP: I'm assuming these were crops he raised on the second farm with the hundred acres? Am I right?

ASW: The second farm? Yes, it was, he put in some more ground up there on it. I guess he put in two different fields—I guess around forty acres on both them other fields he put in.

WSP: Two sets of forty acres?

ASW: Yeah. No! No, one—each one twenty, about twenty acres. And of course he had to fence it and everything, plow it up and got it ready, new ground, and it made good stuff.

WSP: So he was farming forty acres out of the hundred that he owned?

ASW: No, this was up on the prairie. See, he had about a hundred acres up there besides his pastureland, where he moved to, rented to at the last place. Then he put in this other forty, two different fields, about twenty acres to a field.

WSP: Let me see if I understand this. He rented a hundred acres from the guys that moved to New Mexico?

ASW: Yeah, but it was five hundred. See, he got the whole five hundred, just rented, pasture and all—just rented it from them, paid him rent.

WSP: Oh, five hundred acres!

ASW: He run cows and sheep and goats on that.

WSP: On the five hundred acres?

ASW: Yes, well, besides the field part. That left about 100, or—let's see, about 100 acres off the farm, that'd leave 400, and then about 40—so I guess he had about 140 acres of farm there at the last, after he put in them other two. The rest of it was grassland.

WSP: Out of the 500 acres, he started with 100 acres of farmland. He added two more fields, 20 acres in each field, for a total of 140 acres of farmland.

ASW: Yeah, that's right.

WSP: The remaining four hundred acres he kept as grassland for raising sheep and goats?

ASW: The grassland, yeah. And cows, yeah.

WSP: Was there a particular reason why he would pick some part of it for grazing and another part for farming?

ASW: Well, see—you see, that was open ground up there where he put in farming, no brush on it. It was open country. It had some rock in it all right, prairie rock, but it just—no brush on it at all—just had to put a fence around it and plow it up. It growed good stuff.

WSP: Did the four hundred acres have brush and trees on it?

ASW: Oh, yes, it was live oaks on all of it, and Spanish oaks, sumac, lots of stuff, lots of trees on that. He got his own wood off of it and everything, cut wood.

WSP: He cut the wood?

ASW: Well, he would, as long as he was able, yeah. And he had a cousin, his name was Elly Hugh Curry. He come and stayed with us there through the wintertime, a lot of times, and he'd help some about cutting the wood.

WSP: Was chopping trees something that took place during the winter?

ASW: The wintertime, yeah, cut that wood in the winter, yeah.

WSP: How much wood would you cut in preparation for a winter?

ASW: Well, we didn't cut it all at one time, just cut along sort of as we needed it, just a pretty good load at a time. He'd haul it in, and it'd burn up, and we'd get more.

WSP: Would you chop wood in the deep of winter?

ASW: Oh, yeah, um-hm. Of course, we didn't go out in the worst weather. The weather wasn't so bad when we'd cut it, not when we had rain or snow or nothing—some of that cold weather, but no rain or snow.

WSP: You didn't chop all the wood you needed for the winter in one fell swoop—

ASW: No, no. No—

WSP: Instead you would chop it piecemeal, as you needed it, throughout the winter.

ASW: No, we didn't do that. I do that now, but we didn't then, just cut it through the winter.

WSP: Was there a reason for not doing it all at one time?

ASW: Well, I guess it was too hot, I don't know. And we had other farm work to do then. In the winter, we didn't have much farming to do.

WSP: How many months would winters usually last? From what month to when—

ASW: Well, I guess it'd start in November and last until about March.

WSP: Hard winter?

ASW: Some of them was pretty hard, yeah, sure was, most of them. It really got cold weather back then. Snow, too.

WSP: What were the typical snow months?

ASW: Well, I don't really remember—I guess January or February, I don't remember which.

WSP: Do you remember any particularly rough winter, when it was more colder, or snowed more than usual?

ASW: Ah, no, I couldn't tell you what year it was. I don't remember. It was cold nearly every winter then, down there. It's got to where the weather is not so bad anymore.

WSP: Can you remember a particular experience related to a hard winter, a story about doing something during a very cold winter?

ASW: Well, just feeding them stock is about all. (laughs) Of course, he done his plowing, had to do his plowing in the fall, after he got the crops off, before wintertime got there.

WSP: Was this in preparation for spring?

ASW: Yeah, he'd get that plowed around and have it ready to plant in the spring out there.

WSP: Did you walk to school during the winter?

ASW: Well, from that last place, now, we rode horseback a lot of the time, and part of the time we walked. We was about two miles then from school, on that last five-hundred-acre place.

WSP: On the second place.

ASW: Uh-huh, we'd go horseback a lot, and walked a right smart in pretty weather.

WSP: Were you ever caught outside when the weather shifted from being seasonable to very cold?

ASW: Oh, yeah, you bet! Yeah, that happened once in a while. You had to take it until you'd get to the house. (laughs) Yeah. (laughs)

WSP: Starting with that first farm, what other buildings did your parents have on the first farm beside the house—

ASW: That he had?

WSP: Yes. What other buildings besides the house did he have on that place?

ASW: He just had an old crib, he called it, off down there, a barn where he put his feed up in.

WSP: This is a smaller barn than the one on the second place.

ASW: Yeah, oh, yes, a lot smaller. Yeah.

WSP: What was it like?

ASW: Well, I don't remember too much about it. It wasn't very big, though. It was big enough to hold a right smart of corn. And the hay—I don't know, I believe he stacked that hay outside then, down on that first place, I think he did. He put it in stacks, big piles of it.

WSP: Would he have it fenced off so the cows couldn't get into it?

ASW: Oh, yes. Yeah, he had a pasture to put it in, yeah.

WSP: Besides the barn was there any other outbuildings on that first farm?

ASW: I don't believe there was. I sure don't believe there was.

WSP: Chicken coop?

ASW: Well, they had chickens all right. Yeah, he had plenty of chickens. I guess they had a chicken house—I believe, I guess, I reckon they did. I don't remember. I know they did, though. We had eggs, and had turkeys too, most of the time. You had to watch them turkeys, where they nest, find their nest, gather up the eggs. And then when they were setting—had to set them, let them set, them eggs hatch with them little turkeys. Yeah, we raised turkeys then, too, they did.

WSP: Were they free-ranging turkeys?

ASW: Oh, yeah—just go out in the pasture in the day.

WSP: Was it like an Easter egg hunt trying to find out where they had laid their eggs?

ASW: (laughs) Yeah, that's right, too. Yeah, you had to—we usually tried to follow them. You'd have to stay out of sight of them. You'd have to follow them, kind of follow where they went.

WSP: How did you know when to watch the turkeys?

ASW: Well, we just knew it was time for them to be laying, and we'd just watch them of a morning if one would take off to theirself, we'd try to watch her to where she went to.

WSP: How many turkeys are we talking about?

ASW: Oh, not many. I don't know, four or five hens and a gobbler, I guess.

WSP: What time of the year would they start laying their eggs?

ASW: Along in the spring.

WSP: Did you have chickens?

ASW: Yes sir.

WSP: Did you have a house or a place where you would gather the eggs to help them incubate?

ASW: No, no. No, the eggs, then, we'd usually eat them.

WSP: Even turkey eggs?

ASW: No, no, not turkey eggs. She had a place to keep them, but I don't remember what in. She had a place she had to keep them, you know. But chicken eggs, now, we'd eat them when we got them, most of them—well, sell some of them along. Go to town and take eggs along.

WSP: How many chickens did you have on that first place?

ASW: (laughs) Oh, I just don't remember. A good many, but I don't know how many. I imagine fifty or sixty hens, maybe, I don't know.

WSP: That's a good number, all right. Did you have a chore related to the chickens?

ASW: One of what?

WSP: Did you have a chore related to the chickens?

ASW: Well, not really, just have to feed them a little every night, I guess. And gather, pick up the eggs of an evening.

WSP: What about the water on your property, on that first ranch?

ASW: We had a little flowing well. On that first place, we had a little flowing well. It didn't run a big stream of water, but it run all the time—called a flowing well. And my neighbor we was talking about, east over there, Jim Manning, he had a good flowing well—about, oh, it was five or six hundred yards from Papa's, I guess was how far it was. And his flowed real good and strong all the time. It kept it up until after the army camp take that water, take that land. It run for several years after they taken it. I reckon they finally taken the pipe up or something. It don't run anymore.

WSP: What is a flowing well?

ASW: Well, water just keeps—you got to put that pipe down in there and pack it, to force the water up through the pipe. I never did see it done, but I know that's the way they had to do it—had to pack around it so no water could get by that pipe—it had to come up through it—it made it flow, to keep it flowing. If the water was strong—

WSP: Compare a flowing well with a draw well?

ASW: Oh, you mean draw water out with a bucket? (laughs) Well, it's just one pipe, a two-inch pipe, I guess, went down into the ground so deep. Now I don't know how deep it was, I don't know about that. But you had to put stuff around that pipe to pack it, where water couldn't come by it, made water come up through that pipe.

WSP: Where did the water go when it came out of the top of the pipe?

ASW: A trough put there for it to go into, a concrete trough, a rock trough. That Jim Manning down there, he had a big rock trough and that thing run a good stream as big as your finger all the time. And it still did way after the army taken it. They finally, I guess, taken the pipe out or something—it quit.

WSP: How much water was considered a good flow?

ASW: Well, that at Papa's run a little short, small stream, slow. It run slow. But that Jim Manning's, now it ran a lot faster—I don't know why—a lot stronger. And Jim Gault had one that ran the same way, and Grover Fleming had one the same way. And Sam Cox up above that had one that did for a while, but Mr. Cox's quit. Fleming was still a-going, I think, when the camp come. And Jim Gault's, I believe it quit a ways back. But Papa's was still running a little whenever they left the place down there.

WSP: If you were to put a cup of water, a regular dinner cup underneath the well, how long would it take to fill up?

ASW: Well, it probably wouldn't take long, just, oh, I don't know, a minute or so. Now, down at Jim Manning's, it'd fill it up right quick because it run a good stream of water, artesian water. Sure good drinking water, too. I liked it.

WSP: The main source of water on that first farm was this flowing well. Did you have any other water source?

ASW: We had a cistern. He built a cistern in the back, at the back of the house, and had pipe, gutters around the house to catch that water that run into that cistern—and draw it out of there with a bucket—had a pulley up over it and a rope on it, and draw it out of there with a bucket.

WSP: What would you use the cistern water for?

ASW: Well, they used it cooking or drinking, if they wanted a drink. Now some people couldn't drink that flowing well water. I think Mama had to have that water all the time, out of that cistern.

WSP: What was wrong with the flowing well water?

ASW: It had salt in it. My water here used to be thataway here, too, until my well quit. The water was pretty

salty, and some of these girls they couldn't drink it at all—it'd make them swell, they said. But my well here finally quit doing that.

WSP: Was that typical of Manning's well, the fast flowing well? Was it salty as well?

ASW: Oh, yeah, yeah, good drinking water. You bet, it was sure good. The stock liked it, too.

WSP: Would having so much salt in the water replace a salt lick?

ASW: Oh, no. We'd keep salt out, too. Oh, yeah, they had to have salt.

WSP: Was there any other source of water, something further away from the house?

ASW: Well, we had a branch running down through the pasture up there that had water in it at times, in the wet part of the year. But in dry weather it wasn't but just that well. Of course, we had the Cowhouse down there that the stock across the creek could drink out of.

WSP: Did your property have a fence along the Cowhouse, or was it open to the Cowhouse?

ASW: It was open. Now on the field side, where the house was, there wasn't no fence because that bluff taken care of that. But on the other side, there wasn't no bluff over there, and they'd go off in there and drink whenever they wanted to. There wasn't no fence.

He had a lot of pecan trees down there on the creek on that. My daddy used to thrash them pecans, get up in them trees and thrash them pecans. I'd go in down there and have to pick them up every day. (laughs)

WSP: How do you thrash pecans?

ASW: With a long pole. You never seen no pecans thrashed? They had long poles. They'd grow some, they didn't buy them, they were these long poles, long slim sticks, you know—so long, about twelve or fourteen feet long if you could find one. You'd get up there and whack them pecans out of the trees with them. I couldn't do it. I'd get up there, I'd have to hold. But Papa thrashed them big old pecan trees and all, thrashed them all.

WSP: You'd knock a branch and cause the pecans to drop?

ASW: That's right. They had to be hulling good, and you'd hit them limbs, and the pecans would fall.

WSP: Then you followed behind and pick them up and put them in a barrel?

ASW: Yeah, it was an all-day job. No, put them in a sack. Take them home in a sack, yeah.

WSP: This was down on—

ASW: On the first place.

WSP: Opposite the bluff?

ASW: Yes, where I was borned at, yes. Yeah.

WSP: Did you have any fruit trees on that first farm?

ASW: I don't believe we did. I don't remember none. Well, now, I believe he did have some, too, back up there, a little orchard. But I don't remember much about that. I don't think we ever got much fruit off of it. I think he had it fenced off and some trees on it. But I don't think it made very much fruit, don't seem like—I don't remember. It might have. I just don't remember.

WSP: The wheat that got washed out, was that north, was that on land north of the bluff, on the other side of the Cowhouse?

ASW: South of the bluff. South of the bluff, yeah. On the south side of the creek.

WSP: Where it was low?

ASW: Um-hm. And hogs, we kept hogs all the time, too.

WSP: How many was that?

ASW: Well, we'd always have a bunch, three or four meat hogs, good meat hogs we'd kill through the winter. We usually kept sows and raised pigs, used some of them pigs for meat hogs the next winter, grow them up.

WSP: How many times a year would you butcher a hog?

ASW: Just through the wintertime, just butcher one or maybe two at a time.

WSP: One or two during the winter? Or all at one time?

ASW: No! One or two—well, now, usually about one at a time was what we killed and wait awhile to kill another one.

WSP: Would you share the responsibility of harvesting a hog with your neighbors? Did they trade?

ASW: No. Well, give the neighbors a fresh mess—a fresh mess of meat, but we didn't do no trading on it.

WSP: Well, by trading I mean, sometime later you'd trade and go over to your neighbor's and help them butcher a hog?

ASW: Oh, yeah, help one another, yes, sure did.

WSP: Counting all the hogs being butchered during the winter, yours and your neighbors' hogs that you helped butcher, about how often would you butcher a hog?

ASW: Well, you mean me here now, or back then?

WSP: Back then.

ASW: I just don't remember too much about it then. I think we'd probably kill, I think, maybe three, maybe four every winter, around two or three hundred pounds.

WSP: You and your neighbors together?

ASW: Well, see, the neighbors had hogs, too. We all had hogs to kill, yeah, and we'd help one another.

WSP: Would you have fresh hog meat every month? Or was it every couple of weeks?

ASW: Yeah, that's right, about every couple of weeks, or three weeks, something like that.

WSP: How long would it take you to harvest a hog?

ASW: About a day—start early that morning, and then we got him scraped and cleaned and everything, and got up and everything, cooked the lard out and everything—take nearly all day.

WSP: How many people would it take to do that?

ASW: Oh, not many, just two or three.

WSP: Did you help your dad with that process?

ASW: Well, I was little—I was most too little then, but I guess I did a little.

WSP: This was on the first farm?

ASW: On that first farm, now, no, I didn't help then—I don't even remember. I know him and my uncle—I had an uncle, John Graham—Johnny Graham—I was telling you about. They went somewhere off—I don't remember where—and went and bought some spotted hogs, black and white spotted hogs, registered hogs, and raised pigs from them. We'd eat them, kill them, too, and sell some of the pigs.

WSP: What kind of hogs did you say they were?

ASW: Spotted Poland China.

WSP: Did you say threshing hogs?

ASW: Do what?

WSP: Maybe I misunderstood.

ASW: No, they was Spotted Poland China, what they was—they went off somewhere else and bought. That's what he raised pigs out of, a sow and a boar, and then he'd keep the pigs, so many pigs, two or three to butcher through the winter.

WSP: Were Spotted [Poland China] hogs better than the other types of hogs in the area?

ASW: Well, I just doubt if people had them, I think—thought they might be. I think they sold a little higher, maybe about all.

WSP: Was there any other meat besides hogs that you would eat through the winter?

ASW: Oh, yeah, we'd—well, I never did kill very many calves or cows, I don't believe.

But now after we moved out where we are now—after where we was down there in the camp—well, Antelope School over there would have a big picnic every year at the end of school. They'd have a big barbecue and cook a cow. My daddy would go up there and cook a cow, barbecue a cow for them, work all night cooking her—a cow, and I believe put a goat in with her most of the time. Then on the holiday, the day of the picnic, well, a whole lot of people'd come and eat, just long tables to put that on it. Boy, it was good!

WSP: This was when you attended the Antelope School from fourth grade on?

ASW: That's right. Yes sir, yeah.

WSP: Your family had moved onto the second, larger ranch?

ASW: Yeah, yeah, oh, yes.

WSP: Well, tell me about Antelope School? What was that like?

ASW: Well, it was a three-room school. It had a principal and two women teachers. The principal was a man most of the time—I believe all the time, and two women teachers. It was all right. I don't know how many kids, I guess—I just don't know. It went to the ninth grade there, I believe. I don't know how many there was, a good many.

WSP: If you had just three rooms and nine grades, how were the grades divided between the rooms?

ASW: Well, my room was from fourth grade—that was all fourth grade—

WSP: In the school?

ASW: Well, now, the first grade, the little kids, they was back there in a room back on the west, south end. And I guess they taught through the third grade in that first room, because I started in the next room in the fourth grade. I believe we went to seventh, I guess, in that room. And the last room went to the ninth.

WSP: That last room would be for the eighth *and* ninth grades?

ASW: Yeah, that's right. Or maybe—I don't know if it went to the sixth or seventh room in that room. Let's see, four, five, six—I guess it went through the sixth. And the seventh, eighth and ninth, I believe, was in the last room. I think that's the way it was.

WSP: Do you remember your teacher's name?

ASW: One of them, the principal, was Sam Sertliff. I never did like him. (laughs)

WSP: Why not?

ASW: Well, I don't know. (laughs) I never did like him. And Miss Grace Thompson taught up there for a few years. Miss Elizabeth—I don't remember her last name, but she taught little kids, I believe. And that's all the names I remember, I believe.

WSP: Did Miss Thompson teach you in the fourth grade?

ASW: I believe so, yes, I believe she was, yeah.

WSP: How did the teaching of three grades in one room differ from teaching the six or seven grades in the Salem School? Was it about the same, or was there some particular difference?

ASW: Well, on the Salem School, there wasn't much to it, just wasn't three or four to a grade in there, four or five, maybe. But Antelope had a whole bunch of them.

WSP: But you still had three grades in the same classroom?

ASW: In Salem, yes, that's right.

WSP: But also in Antelope, the way your were describing it, you had fourth, fifth, sixth grades in one classroom, if I understand correctly?

ASW: I think that's right, fourth, fifth and sixth, and then seventh, eighth, and ninth.

WSP: Did the teacher change the way she taught? Did she teach fourth graders one subject and then teach fifth graders another subject and then teach sixth graders another subject? Or did she teach all three grades the same material at the same time?

ASW: I don't remember. I guess each one was separate, I believe. I don't know. I think it was.

WSP: Did you have any particular books that you can recall from your school days during Antelope years?

ASW: Well, I had history and arithmetic and geography, language.

WSP: Which course did you like the best?

ASW: Arithmetic. (laughs) I liked that arithmetic. Sam Sertliff taught me how to learn them multiplication tables. (laughs) He sure did. I learned them.

WSP: What class did you like the *least*?

ASW: Well, I guess it was all about the same.

WSP: Was your school day at Antelope generally the same as it was at Salem?

ASW: Was it what, now?

WSP: Was your school day about the same?

ASW: Hours, you mean? It's the same thing, yeah. Nine to four, yeah.

WSP: Did you play different games at Antelope?

ASW: Basketball, and some of them got to playing football a little bit. I never did, I wasn't old enough. And they'd play baseball, basketball. That's about it, I guess.

WSP: What sport did you play?

ASW: Basketball.

WSP: Did they have an indoor court?

ASW: No sir, there wasn't. It was all outside. Uh-huh.

WSP: What kind of surface were you playing on?

ASW: On the ground!

WSP: On dirt?

ASW: On dirt, yeah, you bet! That's all there was. (laughs)

WSP: How did you keep the ball from bouncing all over the place?

ASW: (laughs) Well, it'd bounce! That's all we had to play on, just dirt.

WSP: Did they have two backstops, or one. Some smaller courts just have just one.

ASW: Backstops?

WSP: For basketball?

ASW: Oh, no! One on each end, at each end of the court, yeah. Yeah.

WSP: Did you play team sports? Was that the team?

ASW: Yes, we'd have certain ones that played that.

WSP: Did you play on the Antelope School team?

ASW: Yeah, on the kids' team, not on the grown boys'. A bunch of them in the eighth and ninth grade, they was grown men, you might say. I didn't play with them. See, we played with—well, with boys on up to my age, sixth through the seventh grade.

WSP: Did the younger kids play tournaments against other schools, or just within the school?

ASW: I don't know. They didn't down under seventh. I don't think it did under seventh grade, I don't believe. I don't believe they did. I know me and my team, we went other places and played a few times.

WSP: Was this after you got older?

ASW: It was in the seventh, no, seventh grade, *sixth* grade, yeah.

WSP: In the sixth or seventh grade, your basketball team would play other schools?

ASW: Some, yeah.

WSP: Did you continue to play basketball through ninth grade?

ASW: No. No, I quit school in the eighth grade. I didn't know very much then and never learned much on that arithmetic.

WSP: What caused you to quit school in eighth grade?

ASW: I didn't like Sertliff, the principal. I quit going there and went to a place called Harmony, back over across the Cowhouse. I went over there for two or three years, horseback. I liked the teachers a lot better over there, and we played basketball over there, too.

WSP: You actually attended three schools in your school years?

ASW: That's right, yeah.

WSP: Tell me about the Harmony School.

ASW: Well, it was just a small school. It—I believe it was a two-room school. I think it was, now—I don't remember for sure. I believe it was. It only had one teacher, just one teacher was all there was, yeah, sure was. Mrs.—I can't call her name, now, but she lived up here close to Hamilton, I believe is where she came from.

WSP: Close to where?

ASW: Hamilton, I believe. Hamilton I think is where she come from. I don't remember her name. She was a good teacher.

WSP: What grade did you finish in the Harmony School?

ASW: Well, I guess I went to—I got in the eighth grade. I went back to Antelope. But I didn't want to go to school there. I couldn't make it, so I just quit.

WSP: Oh, okay. What grades did you attend at Harmony?

ASW: Well, there was, I guess—the fifth and sixth, I guess.

WSP: You started the school in the fourth grade at Antelope.

ASW: Antelope, yes.

WSP: And after the fourth grade you said, "I'm going to Harmony."

ASW: I guess—well, no, I guess it was the sixth grade when I went over there, I believe.

WSP: Did your parents have anything to do with this decision?

ASW: Well, they didn't really like it, but they let me go on. (laughs)

WSP: Really? How did you tell them that you—

ASW: I said I didn't like the teacher, and I couldn't go anymore.

WSP: Did Mr. Sertliff teach you in the sixth grade?

ASW: I guess so, yeah.

WSP: The teacher you did not like?

ASW: Yes, uh-huh. No. No, he taught in the seventh grade. He didn't teach the sixth. I was in the seventh grade, I guess. That's when I went to Harmony, I guess—

WSP: The seventh grade?

ASW: Yeah, I guess it was.

WSP: Okay. So you liked the teacher that handled the class in fourth, fifth, and sixth—

ASW: Yeah, that was all right. Yes.

WSP: So you stayed there in Antelope, but then when you advanced to the older class, seventh, eighth and ninth, you said, "I don't like this."

ASW: (laughs) I didn't like that at all, no.

WSP: Basically you did an unofficial transfer to Harmony, right?

ASW: Yes. That's right. (laughs)

WSP: And so how long were you at Harmony?

ASW: I went over there two years, I believe.

WSP: Besides the teacher, was there anything else you liked about the Harmony School? Anything in particular?

ASW: Well, no, not much, just about the same thing. I knew nearly all the kids at Harmony.

WSP: Oh, you knew all the kids at Harmony?

ASW: Just about all of them, yes, I did—I got to where I knew them.

WSP: Why didn't you attend Harmony School to begin with?

ASW: Well, Antelope was the Antelope community. Harmony is way off over there, you see, across the creek—a lot further.

WSP: I see.

ASW: My daddy had a young horse there we was breaking, and I'd ride him over there to school. Every morning when I'd get on him there at the house to go, well, when I'd first get on him he'd go to pitching with me and bucked until we got nearly to the barn. And I rode him every morning, and he never throwed me off. And I rode him to school over there then, every day and back. He never pitched no more that day. (laughs)

WSP: You attended Harmony for a year, or maybe two?

ASW: I think two years, yeah.

WSP: Then you returned to Antelope—

ASW: On the eighth grade and I didn't like it, so I quit.

WSP: Why didn't you return to Harmony for ninth grade?

ASW: Well, they didn't teach that high. I don't remember—I don't think they taught that high over there in Harmony—seventh, I think. It might have went to ninth, but I don't believe they did.

WSP: If you had continued on with your education, where would you have ended up for high school?

ASW: Antelope, I guess.

WSP: Antelope had a high school?

ASW: Went to the ninth grade.

WSP: Most of high schools now go to twelfth grade.

ASW: Well, I never would have went to that.

WSP: Did Antelope have a twelfth grade?

ASW: No, just ninth grade.

WSP: For the kids that wanted to continue to twelfth grade, where did they go for high school?

ASW: Well, they went on somewhere else. There was the Thompson girls up there. The Thompson girls, they all went to San Marcos, I believe.

WSP: Really!

ASW: But now the others, I don't know where they went.

WSP: Did anyone go to Gatesville?

ASW: No, I don't believe so. I think they went farther off than that. I don't remember. But I know his girls—he had three girls, and they all—I believe all made schoolteachers. But they went to San Marcos.

WSP: You've described the crops and some of the animals that your father raised. What were the main differences, or advantages, or the second farm. Was there more outbuildings?

ASW: Oh, yeah. They had a well up there, but it had—he put a gasoline pump on it to pump water out of the well.

WSP: *Not* a flowing well.

ASW: No, no it wasn't flowing well. It was salty water, too, like this other artesian water. He built him a big old concrete rock water trough out there for it. He had another reservoir sitting up there on some more rock, and that other house was built up high as this table, and the tank set on that—that tank held, I don't know, two or three hundred gallons, and he tried to keep that full as long as he could. We'd have trouble with that gasoline pump a lot. We had a neighbor down there named Mr. Cox. He was pretty good at such as that, and he'd come up there and work on the motor for him, get it running.

And they had a spring, too, back out from the house, right down on the branch. And when we had a season in the ground, my mother drank that water, she like that. She couldn't drink that well water.

And another dug well up on the—on the place up towards the field. The field up there was close to a mile from the house. We had a dug well up there and would draw water out of it. It was good water. That's where—if she couldn't get it out of the spring, well, we had to take her water from up there down to the house to drink, for her to drink.

WSP: And how far was that?

ASW: Close to a mile. That's where the field was up there, and we'd get water when we went to the house from the field to take home.

WSP: But you'd have to haul water almost a mile for your mother to drink if she couldn't get it from the well.

ASW: Yeah, but we didn't—we didn't take no big lot. Just five gallons or something like that at a time.

WSP: Was it less salty?

ASW: Oh, yeah! It didn't have no salt in it—no, it was a dug well.

It had a big top on it, about that big around, draw water out of it.

WSP: You're indicating about two feet in diameter.

ASW: Yeah, and draw water out of it with a bucket and rope.

WSP: Do you know why water in a dug well was less salty than a flowing well?

ASW: Well, it wasn't near as deep. See, them deep wells, they go down in the ground *deep*.

WSP: You're referring now to the flowing wells?

ASW: The flowing wells—I don't know I ever saw the pipe put out for it—I imagine it's 100 foot deep. I got mine here 440. But it quit on me last—back this year. It just quit pumping. We had a submersible pump down in there—it got where it wouldn't furnish no water. So we got this other community water—or what you call it—we just decided to use it.

WSP: Tap into the city's water main?

ASW: Yeah. Yeah, um-hm. And then I've got two dirt tanks, too, one down yonder and one back up here that hold the water good.

WSP: That's for rainwater, right?

ASW: Yeah, that's for stock water, where it rains into it. Yeah. That's right, and they're both plumb full.

WSP: What other outbuildings did you have on the second farm.

ASW: Well, there was a little house there where his well was, the pump, and a place to put all his tools in and everything. And his barn up there—he had a big barn. And another old smokehouse out at the back of the house. And that was it.

WSP: Did you have a chicken house there?

ASW: Yeah, there was. I don't remember now how big it was. It wasn't very big, though, I don't think. Had chickens all right, and turkeys—goats, sheep, cows, hogs—had a bunch of hogs all the time.

WSP: More hogs than at the first place?

ASW: Oh, yeah.

WSP: How many?

ASW: Well, he'd have, oh, maybe four or five, maybe eight or ten in the pen a lot of times. Feed them up and get them ready to sell some of them, and then butcher so many of them. He'd always keep sows to raise pigs. Sometimes he'd raise them pigs to weaning time, and sometimes he'd keep them up and grow them on up, get them big enough to sell when they'd weigh something.

WSP: On the first ranch he raised just what he needed to eat, but when he moved to the second ranch, which was larger, he was able to raise more hogs, some of them he sold.

ASW: Yeah, he'd sell some of them along, yeah.

WSP: How much would a hog get?

ASW: How much did it bring, do you mean?

WSP: Yes.

ASW: I don't remember. I guess—I don't know what hogs bring now, even—I guess they'd bring thirty or forty dollars, I imagine, when you'd sell them like that—maybe more—I don't remember.

WSP: Did you have any particular animals that you raised yourself on the farm?

ASW: On that farm or after I married?

WSP: On that farm, as a young kid.

ASW: With Papa?

WSP: With Papa on the second farm.

ASW: No. No, I didn't. No.

WSP: Some kids had a particular animal their parents allowed them to raise themselves for farm clubs or 4-H.

ASW: No. No, I didn't have nothing like that. No, I never did. I had a horse all right, that I rode, but I didn't even have a cow I don't believe, then.

WSP: A horse you rode most of the time?

ASW: Right.

WSP: Your own horse?

ASW: Yes sir.

WSP: How many horses did your father have, altogether?

ASW: Oh, he kept a bunch of them. Work horses all the time, then, farming with horses—had four head or five, maybe six head to work in the field with. And he'd have a mare to raise colts with.

WSP: Was a horse that worked in the field different from the horse you rode to school?

ASW: Oh, yeah.

WSP: What was the difference?

ASW: Well, I don't know, it was just—the difference in them is a field horse, they was more of a work type than a riding type.

WSP: For somebody who was raised in the city, how would you make the distinction?

ASW: (laughs) Well, I had one big bay horse that I rode all the time. He was a saddle horse, but he was a good work horse, too. He worked in the field a lot, and I rode him a lot. But the rest of them, he'd keep mostly mules to work.

WSP: Mules?

ASW: Mules, mostly, yeah.

WSP: If you've worked mules in the fields, what jobs would you leave to the horses?

ASW: Oh, just riding or whatever. Well, we worked some horses in the field but not—not like mules, though. We kept mostly mules to work in the fields. Oh, plowing and wagon, and everything else. Yeah.

WSP: Then what kind of jobs would you give a *working* horse, if not plowing?

ASW: Just riding him.

WSP: Riding him?

ASW: Yeah. Now my daddy, he got too old, and he didn't ride a horse anymore, after he was up on his last place. But I kept a horse. We kept two or three horses around there we could ride—ride to school, such as that.

WSP: Did your horse have a name?

ASW: Well, now, I don't—(laughs) one of them was Old Casey. I believe that's the one we worked and rode both. He was a saddle horse, and boy, he was a good work horse, a big horse.

WSP: What was the name of the horse that bucked you every morning when you went to school?

ASW: I don't believe we'd ever named him. (laughs) We raised him, but boy, he wanted to buck every morning. And he did do it!

WSP: Did you have any pets?

ASW: Just dogs is all. We'd just have just one or two dogs.

WSP: Did you have dogs on the original place? The old farm?

ASW: Yeah, I guess we had a dog or two there, too. I don't remember them, but I know there was. We always kept a dog or two.

WSP: Did your other neighbors keep dogs?

ASW: Most of them, yeah.

WSP: Were they considered pets, or did they have a particular function?

ASW: Some people would hunt opossums, skunks, and stuff with them at night thataway. Opossum hunting. We went opossum hunting a lot then.

WSP: Did you go opossum hunting?

ASW: Oh, yeah, a lot.

WSP: How would that go?

ASW: (laughs) Well, you just go out there, take a lantern with you, maybe, or a flashlight—lantern mostly. Just go afoot with your dogs, go out in the pasture and brush, mostly on creeks is the best place. That's where you find them opossums, raccoons, polecats.

WSP: What would your dog do, once he found one?

ASW: He'd tree them. He'd find them, and then he'd tree them up them trees.

WSP: Then what would you do?

ASW: Well, we'd chunk them out with rocks. Yeah, and kill them. Catch them when they come on the ground. The dogs usually would catch them when they come out.

WSP: You didn't shoot them once they were treed?

ASW: No, no, we weren't shooting them with no gun. Unh-uh, no.

WSP: Was there a reason for that?

ASW: I just never did shoot a gun thataway. I never did try it.

WSP: Did you ever hunt with a gun?

ASW: Well, I finally got a .410 after I got up pretty good-sized. I went hunting—I went rabbit hunting once in the snow, but I didn't get no rabbit. I seen the rabbits, but I never could hit one with it. A .410, I believe.

WSP: A .410 shotgun?

ASW: Yeah. I don't believe I ever owned a .22 target then. We didn't—we didn't have much thataway to hunt with or anything to hunt. We didn't have no use for a gun much then, only just to kill something with. Of course, we'd kill a hog, shoot him, hog with a gun, but that was about all.

WSP: What kind of gun would you shoot a hog with?

ASW: A .22 target.

WSP: Is a .22 target a pistol or a rifle?

ASW: No. I've got two of them over there. One's an automatic, and the other one is a single. You want to see one of them?

WSP: A long-barrel gun?

ASW: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

WSP: Okay. So you'd shoot a hog with a long-barrel gun?

ASW: Yeah, hit it right above, right between the eyes. And quick as he'd fall, we'd go and cut his throat, stick him, let him bleed. I've killed a-many a-one of them. I used to help my neighbor over here all the time, just a man—an old fellow and his grown son, had one boy with him, grown. I'd help them kill hogs, and they'd help me. And Pauly that lived back over here. I'd help them, and they'd help me. They killed two or three every year, and we would here, and Mr. Bateson Barnes would.

WSP: You referring now to the larger ranch, the one with five hundred acres?

ASW: Yeah, uh-huh. But now, when I was talking about killing hogs, when I was tell you about that—I was talking about here, killing them hogs.

WSP: I understand. Did you kill hogs when you were on the second ranch, on the second farm?

ASW: You mean before I was married?

WSP: Yes sir.

ASW: Well, my daddy did. Yeah, um-hm.

WSP: Can you describe the house on that second farm?

ASW: Well, it was just an old house with a tin roof. And it had another house built on—right east of it. It was a whole lot nearer than the old house. It had a walk from the kitchen back to it, over there at that other house, and a porch on that one over there, too. And bedrooms, two bedrooms back there. An old house, it was a tin roof. It was an old, *old* house. But we lived in it, or they did until the army came along and run them out. Didn't leak. It had a fireplace—that's what we used that wood on—that fireplace. (laughs)

WSP: Did your mother plant a vegetable garden?

ASW: Oh, yeah, a good garden every year! You bet!

WSP: What was in it?

ASW: Oh, tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, beans. and taters—whatever you needed or wanted. She raised a good garden every year, she did. Then, it was, oh, it was four or five, maybe five hundred yards from the house—have to walk up there and back to it.

WSP: Why was that?

ASW: Well, it was just off from the house, just a good patch up there already fenced when we went there, and that's what she used. Well, it was an old orchard, and she made a garden out of part of it.

WSP: She planted where the ground was good? But not necessarily close to the house?

ASW: Yeah, good ground. No, it was off—I know it was four hundred yards from the house, west of the house.

WSP: Was the ground around the house not as good?

ASW: Well, it was brushy around the house, rocky, yeah.

WSP: Did they grow anything around the house?

ASW: No. No, wouldn't nothing grow around the house. They did have a bunch of asparagus, back off down there off close to the branch, that she made soup out of. I don't know if you know what asparagus is, but it was a vine that'd grow up and have several prongs on it, you know, and you'd get that before it got tough and cut it up and make soup out of it—was good.

WSP: Did she grow any flowers?

ASW: Well, she had a few flowers, not very many. A few roses, I believe. And the house had a bunch of running flowers—what do you call them—I've forgotten now what you call them—these run on the front porch, run up plumb over it, just had it covered—a big lot of them right there on the right as you went in. Honeysuckle vine? That might have been what it was, I guess.

And it had a big fireplace to it. And it had two bedrooms.

WSP: Did you have any chores inside the house?

ASW: No, no.

WSP: Were those chores mostly what the girls did, inside the house?

ASW: Well, yeah, the oldest girls helped with it some—Ocie and Gertie, my oldest daughters, oldest sisters. But Mama did nearly all the housework.

WSP: Mainly you'd help your dad with outdoor chores.

ASW: Yeah, whatever it was to do. Well, we still milked cows then. I'd do the milking there. My sister—my sister was—I guess she helped me awhile there until she got married, and then I had it to myself.

WSP: Did your dad give you any kind of training for your chores?

ASW: No.

WSP: How did you learn what to do, like, for instance, milking a cow?

ASW: Well, of course, well, he'd tell me how to do it, of course, and all that, to learn how to milk. But that was about it.

WSP: You learned by example?

ASW: Yeah. Well, I'd know how he fed the hogs and everything, and he'd tell me how to do that—and the horses. Of course, he'd tell me how much to give them and everything. That was all.

WSP: Was there an specific work related to the horses that you would do, for instance tending to the horseshoeing, or the hoofs?

ASW: We didn't shoe no horses then.

WSP: Why not?

ASW: Well, they didn't need it. (laughs) No, see, you worked most of them then, and mules, too. We worked mostly mules, then, and they didn't ever need no shoeing. Now when I got up grown and had a horse of my own, why I'd get him shod.

WSP: Why was that?

ASW: Well, I'd ride him a lot more than I used to. I just got to where I thought I had to have him shod. We used to go to First Monday up at Gatesville a lot, in a wagon or a hack. And I had a little brown horse. Papa had bought the old mare from people over close to Killeen, an old cripple mare, a Western mare, and he'd raised this little horse from that mare. And I broke him. He threw me off once riding over there in the pasture one day. I was riding along there with the reins loose—just walking to beat the band—and the first thing I know he's down with his head and throwed me off! (laughs) Tore the seat of my britches out on the saddle horn. (laughs)

WSP: (laughs)

ASW: And I decided that he needed to be shod. We always went to First Monday a lot up here, on First Monday, the first of the month. It's a horse-trading deal—and I'd taken him up there. My oldest brother and me, Dewey, went up there—and I taken him along and had him shod and had corks, corks put on all four feet. I didn't know the difference. And after I got back home, then me and three more boys, two more boys, left one Sunday morning from home there going towards Antelope, and going through a pasture up there we decided to run a race. Well, I was going right on. I started down a pretty good slope there and somehow my horse fell. And it cut the saddle girth in two with the cork on them shoes, one of them shoes. It sure did, cut it plumb in two, and cut his belly just a little under there.

WSP: Because his foot got caught behind?

ASW: That cork, that sharp cork sticking up on that shoe caught that girth and cut it in two. That's what throwed him, I guess.

WSP: And you said a sharp cork.

ASW: Cork, the cork on his shoe. See, some of them had a cork turned up on them shoes—to hold them up off the ground a little on the back.

WSP: And you call it a cork?

ASW: Cork. Cork shoes, yeah.

WSP: I didn't realize that little thing had a name.

ASW: Oh, yeah, it's got a name, cork shoes. But finally I learned, after that, to ride him with slick shoes, no cork.

After we moved here, well, I got to running cattle on Fort Hood. Run cattle out there for thirty-something years. And I got—I ran cows out there, my own cows and some steers, and other people's—I had a two or three other fellows that had big steers they'd put out there. I'd buy them and let them stay out there two years, and hire somebody to gather them. And I got a job doing that from a fellow that I worked for, for two different years.

WSP: After the army came?

ASW: Oh, yeah, after we moved here. Oh, yeah.

WSP: When you moved from the first ranch to the second ranch, which was a fairly substantial move, from what I can understand, did you have to haul the animals or herd the animals yourself?

ASW: No, he didn't have to do nothing with them.

WSP: How did you get them from the old farm to the new farm?

ASW: Well, I guess, whenever we moved, the cows and everything, we drove them, horseback. But the rest of it, we'd just haul in a wagon and stuff. No—

WSP: What kind of containers did you haul the turkeys and chickens to the new farm?

ASW: Well, I don't remember—a crate, I guess, of some kind—a wire crate, I guess. I don't remember.

WSP: Was it a difficult job?

ASW: No, I don't think it'd be very bad. You'd just catch them and put them in there, and shut them up, put them in your wagon and go on.

WSP: Was it a bigger move in 1942 moving off the second farm, off the reservation and into the place here?

ASW: Well, now when I moved off the reservation, I moved in 1941. I was renting from a guy there at Antelope, a German man. I'd been renting there eleven years and he told me—I had my land all plowed and ready to plant in the spring. He come and told me, said, could see the army is going to take it—I'd got my land all ready, ready to plant—and for me to go ahead and find a place if I wanted to and move because they were going to take it anyway, and I'd get paid for my plowing whenever the army settled with us.

Well, I went on and found a place to lease up east of Gatesville—had sixty acres of oats on it, pretty oats. So we moved up there, me and my wife and kids, along in March, and then the darned green bugs came and killed all my oats. So I didn't make nothing there.

And the landlord I was renting from in Antelope, he bought him another farm up at Purmela, Texas. He had a hundred—well, he had over a hundred acres—he had a hundred-acre field there that I could work—he wanted me to go up there and work it, wanted to know if I would. It had an old

house we'd live in. So I told him, Yeah, we'd go up there, and we did. We went up there and stayed three years. Then we made good crops while I was up there, fourteen bales of cotton two different years, and corn, too, and stuff. Didn't have much of a pasture there, just a few stock was all. It wasn't a very big pasture.

And he told me there once that if I was tired of renting, why not find a place I wanted to buy and him and his brother—if I could pay a thousand dollars down on it, him and his brother would loan me the rest of it. So I got busy and went to hunting and found this place here. We liked it, me and my wife both liked it. And I had a few cows, sold enough cows to get me a thousand dollars, and I went ahead and bought this. Him and his brother loaned me the rest of it, 5 percent interest, fifty years to pay for it. (laughs)

WSP: That's a nice landlord!

ASW: He sure was! A German man. He was a good man, too, he sure was.

WSP: He gave you fields to work and then helped you buy a place of your own?

ASW: Yeah. They furnished money here—like when I built this house, I built this house in 1957. We had that old house down yonder when we came here and built this in 1957. And I went then and borrowed money from—I don't know whether it was the Federal Land Bank or what it was, to build this house, and I paid him—I owed him a thousand dollars, and I paid him off a thousand dollars and built this house. Since that I've been going on my own.

WSP: Now when did you leave your father's farm, the second one? What year was that, when you went off on your own?

ASW: Well, I'd been eleven years over there where we was renting. That was 1941 when we left there. Been there eleven years. How far back would that be?

WSP: Eleven years from the time you moved there?

ASW: I'd lived there eleven years, and I rented one year, and lived one year, the first year I was married, on further down on that other place. So that would be ten years I'd been away from Papa, I guess. When I got married I moved down there.

WSP: Sometime in the early 1930s?

ASW: Yeah, that's when it would have been.

WSP: Almost as soon as you moved off your parents farm, the Depression hit.

ASW: Yeah.

WSP: How was that?

ASW: Wasn't good.

WSP: What do you remember of those times?

ASW: Well, I really don't know—just—wasn't any good, I know that.

WSP: Were you raising cotton at that time?

ASW: Cotton and corn, yeah, that's what I raised. And some broomcorn, I raised broomcorn. Now you talk about some hot work, that was *hot*.

WSP: Broomcorn was?

ASW: Working in it. It grew up taller than your head, higher than your head, and in July and August when you gather it—you had to go out there and pull it by hand—go down through there and take a row and jerked that leaf down and pull the head down. Oh, it was hot work, but we pretty good money out of it.

WSP: Was broomcorn a cash crop then?

ASW: Yeah, sure was.

WSP: Cotton, too?

ASW: Yeah, uh-huh.

WSP: Now this is why you were renting from the German guy?

ASW: Yeah. Well, I didn't ever raise broomcorn on his place.

WSP: Oh, I see.

ASW: I had corn and cotton down there. That's what I raised.

WSP: I'm still a little unclear. When you left your dad's place, which was the second farm we've been describing, where did you go first?

ASW: Well, that's when I got married. And my brother, my older brother, he rented a place over on House Creek. It was more than he wanted, a two-story house, and so he let me have part of it.

Me and my wife got married. It was upstairs. Me and her moved upstairs in that house. And that fall, I don't know, somehow he didn't stay on it no longer, and I didn't stay no longer.

Well, Mr. Kindler, he came along and wanted to know if I wanted to move up there on this fifty acres he had bought. He had an old house for me to live in. So I told him, "Yeah, I'd take it." So I moved up there on it, and that fall—whatever year it was—now I've forgot—but we was up there eleven years, and down there a year—that'd be twelve years. That's twelve years since I'd left from Papa's.

WSP: One year on your brother's place, and then eleven years on the German guy's place?

ASW: Yeah. On the German place, yeah, that's right.

WSP: And what was the guy's name?

ASW: Albert Kindler. He was a good German man, and his wife was good. He come over there when the corn got ready to gather, and he come over there and bring his wagon and team and helped me gather a load of corn. And I'd help him gather a load of corn, and we'd haul rent over to his place—about, oh, I guess it was three or four miles over there from where my field was.

WSP: He'd help you harvest your corn?

ASW: Corn, he sure would! Yeah—*his* part of it, he didn't help me out with mine, but he helped me to pay, to haul the rent over there—to give him rent. I was renting on thirds and fourths—thirds and fourths of corn, yeah.

WSP: What was the total acreage he owned?

ASW: Well, he had a place over there where he lived. I don't know, he might have had 200 acres. I don't know whether he did or not—close, 150, maybe. I don't know. It wasn't no big place—he run a few

cows and farmed some.

WSP: And he rented a place to you for fifty acres?

ASW: He rented it to me, yeah.

WSP: Rented it to you?

ASW: He bought fifty acres up there on the prairie—at the Edmund Thompson's—it joined the Edmund Thompson place. Ed Thompson had been running it in oats. And so he bought that, and the old house went with it, down under the hill on the road. We lived in the old house and went and farmed that field up there. The field was, oh, nearly half a mile from the house—had to go up a private road to get to it.

WSP: In addition to his own farm, Mr. Kindler bought the old Edmund Thompson place and gave you thirds and fourths on the Thompson place—

ASW: No, he didn't buy the Edmund Thompson place, it joined the Edmund Thompson place—west of Edmund Thompson.

WSP: His place joined the Edmund Thompson place.

ASW: No, Ed Thompson didn't own it, no. I don't know—I remember who he bought that off of—I don't know whether I knew him or not—it was fifty acres—I guess it was Whitmeyer's. Whitmeyer used to have a hundred acres in that whole field, and he's got half of it, and the north half of it is what I got, the fifty acres. And the other people, my brother-in-law, they worked the other—

(telephone rings; interruption in taping)

WSP: Before the phone rang, we were trying to figure out—the property that Mr. Kindler bought from the Whitmeyers. Was it a hundred acres total—fifty on top and fifty below.

ASW: No. He bought fifty up there—well, it's more—there's a little pasture, a patch of farm—I don't imagine it was over—it wasn't fifty acres, I don't think—it might have been fifty acres—no—I guess it might have been fifty acres. I got the house and a little pasture, and one little patch of farm down there. But up on the prairie was where I done most of my farming, on that fifty acres.

WSP: On the fifty acres on the prairie.

ASW: Good land, yeah.

WSP: Now this was the land that the German guy had—

ASW: That's right—he had bought it from—from Whitmeyers, I guess. Yeah.

WSP: And he bought—it sounds like, if I understand correctly, he bought a hundred acres, fifty on that field, and your brother-in-law farmed the other fifty?

ASW: Yeah, but it belonged—it belonged—well, it belonged to my brother-in-law's daddy-in-law, I believe—my brother-in-law's uncle, that's the way it was—Whitmeyer. Yeah. That lower part—now I don't know [how] come he was getting that—we were talking about that house and pasture going with it—but he got it with it, the old house. And that's where we lived and farmed that fifty acres up there.

WSP: You lived on a small plot, but then you would travel some distance and farm the fifty acres on the prairie.

ASW: Close to half a mile up there to the field, yeah.

WSP: Did Mr. Kindler own both places, where your house was and the field?

ASW: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah.

WSP: I see.

ASW: It was right on the Old Georgetown Road. The farm was east of it, and the house was west of it.

WSP: Once you established yourself on this place, you were doing thirds and fourths for the entire eleven years?

ASW: Yes sir.

WSP: How did that go?

ASW: That went pretty good.

WSP: Were most years good years?

ASW: I done pretty well. We got by on it and made a little, had a few cows. I run a few cows in my daddy's pasture over there. He had a big pasture. I put a few cows over there. We raised cotton and corn on that place, had our own meat hogs and everything—eggs and chickens and everything through the winter—and a milk cow.

WSP: Your father's place was pretty large. It was five hundred acres.

ASW: Yeah, it was.

WSP: And he *owned* it?

ASW: Yeah, he did.

WSP: Which member of your family got the five-hundred-acre farm?

ASW: Well, see, now when the army come he still had it. The army taken it from him.

WSP: I see. But for the eleven years before that, you moved off, somebody else is running it?

ASW: No, it was just him. Yeah! He was still able to work then. Yeah.

WSP: When the army came, they moved your father off the five-hundred-acre ranch?

ASW: Yeah, they taken it from him. Twelve hundred—I believe he got eighteen dollars an acre for it, the army gave him. He give twelve when he bought it, I think, from those old people that went to New Mexico.

WSP: You left in early 1930 because you wanted a place of your own.

ASW: Yeah, that's right.

WSP: Was that the same for your brother, Dewey?

ASW: Yes—but he never—well, he bought a place once, but he never could make the payments on it, and he lost it. He never did own a place. He raised six boys. He never did happen to come into anything. He got to where he just couldn't get a good place at all. I don't know why, but he couldn't.

WSP: Was he trying to get thirds and fourths as well?

ASW: Yeah, he had to, everywhere he went, but he didn't ever have no—never made no crop any good,

never could get no land any good much, somehow. I don't know why.

WSP: But in that regard you were lucky.

ASW: Yeah, in a way I did.

WSP: Going in with Mr. Kindler?

ASW: That's right. If it hadn't been for him, I wouldn't have had nothing either, I don't guess.

WSP: You gained a good house and good property. Mr. Kindler had picked good farmland.

ASW: Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

WSP: Do you remember the mood of the community during the 1942 taking?

ASW: What do you mean?

WSP: When the army came in 1942, it surprised a lot of people.

ASW: Oh, yeah. See, I had some more land rented, too, where I was living down there. I had some more rented back over thataway—about, I think, fifty acres rented over there that I'd been working for two or three years for Mrs. Mathis. And I had that put up, but I didn't get no money out of having it put up—I just lost all of that. But I had it—I had it in cotton and corn, too.

WSP: What did Mr. Kindler do when he lost his land?

ASW: He bought that—he bought a house—well, he bought a farm up at Camilla. He had two houses on it. He had the good house, and the old house down there where we moved in. He and his wife lived in the good house, and we lived into the old house down there on the north end.

WSP: He took care of you even after the army came.

ASW: Oh, yeah! He sure did, you bet. Yeah, we stayed up there for three or four years, done pretty good.

WSP: That's when he put together the deal to help you buy a place of your own?

ASW: Yeah, that's right. He let me have the rest of it at 5 percent interest for fifty years—for twenty-five—what did I say? Fifty years?

WSP: Fifty years?

ASW: Fifty years is the way I believe it was, yeah.

WSP: You own a ranch today that's on the east side of Highway 116, the place where we're talking now.

ASW: That's right.

WSP: Most people would consider your place part of the army reservation, figuring that Highway 116 was the western boundary of Fort Hood.

ASW: It is, from down here a short ways. Now the place next to me right here, I think the army—well, Copperas Cove bought it. Copperas Cove city bought it. The army has had a spot over there somewhere in Copperas Cove that they wanted, that they bought, their own place, and Copperas Cove wanted it. So Copperas Cove—so we heard—bought this Porter place and were going to trade it to the army for that over there. Now I don't know whether the army—whether they ever got that traded through, got the army to do anything yet.

And they've got another place back east of me—it was a Mexican's place—and two fellows come around a while back, looking, checking out the fence row on that and putting up ribbons. They wanted to buy it. But I don't know if they got it or not, but if they do, I'll be army camp on both sides.

WSP: Both sides of your place now?

ASW: If they get both of them, yeah.

WSP: From what you're describing, there was a narrow strip of property east of [Highway] 116 that the army never did acquire, around Pidcoke?

ASW: The Lockharts had some down in there the army never did take.

WSP: Oh, really?

ASW: The Lockharts at Pidcoke, yeah. The Lockharts.

WSP: The Lockhart Ranch?

ASW: Yeah. The Lockharts—Virgil and Guy Lockhart, yeah. Of course, they're both dead and have been for a long time.

WSP: Well, it's remarkable that you got a place on this side of [Highway] 116.

ASW: Yep. I did have that across the road, over there, too—forty-eight acres. My grandson, he came along, he's wanting to get married, and he wanted a place to build him a house to live. So I sold him that forty-eight acres across the road. He's got that trailer house and has been living there now for several years. He pays me so much on it every month.

WSP: Were you ever concerned that the army would expand completely to the edge of [Highway] 116.

ASW: They come might near doing it a few years ago. We thought they was going to. Everybody thought they was, plumb on up to—oh, well, I don't know, way on up there close to—I guess up to as far as that store up yonder. On this side over here, it'd be all that in there—they were going to take all of that. But somehow—they had a big meeting about it—some went, I believe, to Washington about it, to see about it. They finally got it stopped, and they didn't take it.

I bought another house, a little place up there close to Gatesville, back east of Gatesville, a little sand farm. I think it was maybe twenty acres and a house on it. I was going to—if they taken me here, I was going to move my house up there on it. But as it happened, they didn't take it. So after I found they weren't going to take it, I sold that up there to another fellow. So this here is all I've got.

WSP: So you bought that twenty acres near Gatesville to hedge your bet, in case the army came?

ASW: Yeah, that's what I done.

WSP: What year was that?

ASW: Well, it was several years ago. I don't remember how long, now. I just don't know. I don't know—oh, it was—

WSP: What would you guess?

ASW: Ten, twelve years ago, I guess—bound to have been.

WSP: In the mid-1980s?

ASW: I imagine it was, it must have been about then. It happened that they stopped. They didn't take it.

WSP: When you moved off your father's place and you're on your own ranch, doing thirds and fourths, who would determine what crops you would raise? How did you decide what crops you to raise?

ASW: Well, I knew what crops I was going to have to raise, cotton and corn, and that's what Mr. Kindler wanted me to raise.

WSP: Mr. Kindler told you what to raise?

ASW: Well, yeah, but I knew it's what I had to raise to try to make a living out of it.

WSP: Cotton and corn.

ASW: Uh-huh.

WSP: You also said you raised broomcorn, too?

ASW: Now we didn't raise no broomcorn down there. That was after we got here. I don't believe—wait a minute, we *did* raise broomcorn down there one year, too—because I remember now, me and my brother, C. B., he had a little, and we pooled that stuff. We drove an old car tire full of nails and put it on the back of an old car, raked and jacked it up and sat under there and threshed that stuff on that old tire wheel full of nails, and then hauled it to Waco. And didn't get very much for it. But after we come here, we raised more than we did over there, a lot.

WSP: Did you raise any more cane?

ASW: Well, yeah, I sowed some cane up here on this Kindler place.

Oh, yeah. One year there was a patch that never had been plowed up. I plowed that up and sowed it in cane. And—I think I got a hundred bales an acre off of it. It really made the hay. I had it baled—my wife's brother ran a hay baler then, and they come and baled it—in little bales, baled it up for me.

WSP: Oh, we're talking about feed cane—

ASW: Red Top cane.

WSP: Red Top cane, not sugar cane?

ASW: No, not sugar cane.

WSP: Did you raise any more sugar cane?

ASW: (laughs) No, no, I didn't raise no more sugar cane, no.

WSP: Did you run any animals up there on Kindler's place?

ASW: I had a few, not very many. Well, what cows—I had a milk cow or two there at home—but what other cows I had, I had them over at my daddy's place over there. He was about a mile from me.

WSP: Were you raising your cattle on the little place where you lived and—or did you have cattle on the fifty acres up on the prairie?

ASW: No, no, I didn't run none on that at all. Couldn't run any up there—no fence on it. And not on the other, either.

WSP: Oh, really? No fence on the fifty acres?

ASW: Unh-uh, no. Not on the south side there wasn't, no, unh-uh. See, there was another fifty acres in the same fence with it, but he didn't get that fifty.

WSP: Oh! A hundred acres was enclosed by a fence, but Kindler only bought the fifty acres on the north side of that lot.

ASW: He only bought fifty acres of it, yeah, that's right. The other fifty acres belonged to Whitmeyers, I think, and they kept it a good long while. And I guess—I don't know whoever owned that—well, the army finally taken it, that's the way it was. The army taken it, yeah.

WSP: Did you do much traveling when you were a kid?

ASW: (laughs) No. Do much traveling? No, sure didn't. We used to have—when we was kids growing up at home, well, I had an uncle that lived over on the other side of Killeen, at Reese's Creek School. Do you know where it was? I had an uncle that lived over there. My daddy had a hack I was telling you about, with a top on it. We'd hook two mules to that and go over there on Saturday night and stay all night, come home Sunday evening. (laughs)

WSP: For a party?

ASW: No, just to go over there and visit with them—family, two families.

WSP: Did you have any parties?

ASW: No, no parties then, no. After I got up grown, about grown, we went to lots of parties around then, but when we was little kids down there, we didn't go to no parties.

WSP: How old were you when you left your dad's place?

ASW: Twenty. Twenty years old when I got married.

WSP: How did you meet your wife?

ASW: I went to school with her.

WSP: Antelope School?

ASW: Yeah, um-hm.

WSP: What grade was she in?

ASW: Same.

WSP: You dated for several years?

ASW: (laughs) Yeah, we did. Yeah, we didn't think nothing about getting married for a long time but finally did decide we would. Yeah.

WSP: Where was her place?

ASW: They lived down on Table Rock Creek with her folks.

WSP: During the five years or so that you were dating her, what would you do for entertainment? I mean, what was courting like?

ASW: We'd go to parties at other places. We'd go to parties on horseback.

WSP: When you got up to high school age, you did attend parties.

ASW: Yeah, some, yeah.

WSP: What were those parties like?

ASW: Oh, just play parties. No dancing, no drinking, no nothing thataway. Just play parties—ring games they called them.

WSP: Ring games? What was a ring game?

ASW: (laughs) Well, somebody would play a French harp or sing, and people, boys and girls would get partners, just get up there and just play ring games around. (laughs)

WSP: Was there any other games you'd play?

ASW: No, I don't believe so, not then.

WSP: How often would these parties be held?

ASW: Every Saturday night. McDonald and them—Nancy McDonald and them, they lived way out on the prairie from Antelope, and the Whitmeyers, they lived over here on—right close to that place where we lived, and one of them would give a party every Saturday night, just about. We'd go horseback to it.

WSP: Did the Whitmeyers have kids?

ASW: Yeah, but they'd done gone. They left and went to West Texas way on back, but—well, yeah—no, they were still here then, no, they were still here then, they hadn't went. They went to West Texas before I moved to where I was at over there, after I got married. But they were still here. They moved about the time I married, I guess, and went to West Texas.

WSP: As long as the kids were at home, the Whitmeyers were giving parties? But the kids moved to West Texas about the time you married, right?

ASW: Yeah. Well, see—well, yeah, about that same time, yeah.

WSP: Would there be any snacks, cookies or anything like that served at these parties?

ASW: No. Hardly ever, no. No, just play and sing, ring games they called it.

WSP: How long would a party last? When would it end?

ASW: Oh, around eleven o'clock.

WSP: It ended at eleven o'clock?

ASW: Somewhere around there, yeah.

WSP: About what time would the party get started?

ASW: Oh, it was about dark, a little after dark.

WSP: Whenever dark was for that time of year.

ASW: Yeah, seven or eight o'clock, about eight I imagine.

WSP: Would these parties take place year-round?

ASW: Oh, yeah. Yeah! If people wanted to go it would, yeah. Yeah, they give them parties.

WSP: Would they get more lively during harvest season, or some other time of the year?

ASW: No, I don't think so—all about the same, I think. They never did no dances around here. No back down in yonder, on Brown's Creek over in there, they had lots of dances. That was bad people over

there, fighting and killing one another a lot.

WSP: Really!

ASW: Oh, yeah, several killed.

WSP: Around the Brown's Creek parties?

ASW: Yeah, that's right, parties and dancing and things like that.

WSP: How would the fights get going?

ASW: Well, I'd never go to them, but they was playing—they'd dance there, that's what that was supposed to be. Some of them people get it in for one another and just fight and kill one another.

WSP: With what?

ASW: Well, I think some of them killed one with a knife, and then they'd shoot them—just any way they could cut it. Oh, it was bad. There were two or three families over there that just couldn't get along at all.

WSP: Did you have any problems like that up this way?

ASW: No! No, there wasn't, sure wasn't.

WSP: Other than incident you had with your teacher, you know, where the teacher beat you, and your brothers took out after him—

ASW: Oh, yeah.

WSP: Was there anything similar to that around here?

ASW: No, oh, no. No, there wasn't, no, unh-uh. When I went to Antelope there wasn't nothing like that no more. I don't think I ever got a whipping or anything at Antelope.

WSP: Your brothers essentially ran the teacher out of town. Was there anyone else run out of town for some reason?

ASW: No, no, I don't think so. Not that I know of, no.

WSP: Did you have a general feeling around that Antelope community was safer than the folks down at Brown's Creek?

ASW: Oh, yeah. Yeah. All this community's people back in here was all all right. That bunch over in there was two, three different families that didn't like one other. I mean, they was a-fighting, and a-shooting, doing something all the time.

WSP: Who was that?

ASW: Some of them was Wolfs, they called them—Jack Wolf, he killed—I believe it was Willis Hopson he killed one night at a dance. And I don't know, there was several of them. I've forgotten who all of them was. I never did go to them.

WSP: Besides the Brown's Creek, was there any other area around Fort Hood, or between here and Lampasas that had an equally bad reputation?

ASW: Not that I know of. No there wasn't.

WSP: That was just a generally bad area?

ASW: That was just a bad area there with that bunch of people, it sure was, you bet.

WSP: What about Brookhaven, or up north to Eliga, or up near Gatesville?

ASW: It was all right there, as far as I know. Yeah.

WSP: How would you hear these rumors?

ASW: Well, just different ones would know about it. I don't know.

WSP: Would this come through the grapevine, just neighbors talking?

ASW: (laughs) I guess so. I guess—I don't know. But we never did go. None of us would ever go around that.

WSP: Did you have a community newspaper, or anything like that?

ASW: I guess we got a paper then, I guess.

WSP: Where did that come out of?

ASW: I think we used to get a Killeen paper, I believe, way back—I believe it was—but I never was much for a paper.

WSP: Did you listen to the radio?

ASW: Oh, I listened to the radio a lot, yeah. I don't take no paper now.

WSP: What radio shows did you listen to as a kid?

ASW: Well, as a kid, just music is all, yeah.

WSP: What other things did you do for entertainment?

ASW: (laughs) That's about it.

WSP: Did you go to church socials?

ASW: Part of the time on Sunday, yeah.

WSP: What was that like?

ASW: Oh, it was all right. I really never did care much about it, but I went some. My wife and kids went a-right smart.

WSP: What church did you attend?

ASW: Here at Pidcoke.

WSP: What denomination?

ASW: Baptist. There was a Methodist down there, too, but we went to the Baptist all the time. You might—you come through Copperas Cove, didn't you? Well, the Methodist is on your left, the first one on your left, and the Baptist is on your right after you get on down there apiece.

WSP: I think we attended a Fort Hood reunion in Pidcoke at the church on the left-hand side of [Highway] 116.

ASW: That's the Methodist.

WSP: The Methodist church, that's right.

ASW: When was that?

WSP: Oh, earlier this summer.

ASW: Oh yeah? I didn't—we used to go there once in a while, but I haven't been there in a long time, to the Methodist.

WSP: Yeah, that's—after that reunion is when we went up to the gin.

ASW: Oh, yeah? Um-hm.

WSP: Did you ever go to that gin when you were a kid?

ASW: No. No, I didn't.

WSP: No cause to?

Let's try that question again from the top.

ASW: Well, Killeen?

WSP: No, the one about the swimming holes.

ASW: Oh, it was just that swimming hole down there, that swimming hole there at Bee House, right behind the gin there. They said it was a really good one. Linda and Jerry, and used to be a Lane girl lived over here close to the neighbors. They'd all go down there together. And I think some of the Patterson kids would go up there with them sometimes. Patterson used to live up here against the mountain. They sure liked to go—take their horses down—I believe that was somewhere else, though, take your horses down there on Table Rock [Creek] and swim them some. (laughs)

WSP: And you were going to describe how Killeen was in the early days?

ASW: Well, way back there they had two cotton gins—and they might have had three, but I believe two was what—two cotton gins. And they had a place off down there close to the railroad they called Wendland, I believe—you bought chickens, eggs and stuff like that. Will Sutton used to be over there. He had sort of a variety store, I guess you'd call it. He had everything. That's where we went on Christmas to buy stuff.

Will Sutton—went over there in a hack when we was kids—he had anything nearly you wanted. And Norman—the Normans, they had a grocery store. And Woods had a drugstore—Dr. Woods had a drugstore. And Marvin Gray used to be down there with a hardware store. He's been dead a long time. And that's about all I know. No, there used to be, right over here on the south side of the square—I've forgot their name now, they run a hardware store there. I forgot what their name was. That's about all I know about it, I guess.

WSP: Would you ever go down to Copperas Cove to shop?

ASW: Well, some, not much. Copperas Cove, before the army come, wasn't nothing. (laughs) Go there on a Saturday evening and you wouldn't see a dozen people.

Wasn't nobody there, wasn't nothing over there. They had two gins all right, and two blacksmiths' shops, and a bank part of the time—part of the time the bank would be closed. And the grocery store, two grocery stores for a while, I believe. And that was just about it—well, there was one fellow up there was a hardware man. I've forgot now what they called him. He furnished, uh, boxes

for people's funeral.

WSP: Coffins?

ASW: Yeah. I've forgotten what his name was now, but that was a long time ago.

WSP: But they had a train run through there?

ASW: Yeah, a train goes through there. It still does. Yeah.

WSP: Was that a passenger train?

ASW: I guess both, passenger and hardware both, I think.

WSP: Did you ever ride on it?

ASW: No, I never did ride a train nowhere—well, I did. Me and the girls and a black woman that used to take care of my wife here once for a long time. We caught that train once—I've forgot what they call that train now[Amtrak]—at McGregor and went to San Anton' in it—stayed all night—I guess, stayed all night and come back the next day. We might have stayed two nights—I don't remember. Anyway, it was a good trip. What do they call that train? Do you remember?

WSP: Nope.

ASW: I don't think it costs anything. Or if it did it was very little.

WSP: An express or something?

ASW: I've forgot what they did call it now. They had a name for it. I know we all went and rode it to San Anton'. That was the only train I was ever on.

WSP: How about the town of Pidcoke?

ASW: (laughs) Well, it used to better than it is now. It used to have a good grocery store down there, way back. Yeah, a fellow by the name of—I don't—oh, let's see—Cecil Lee Newton, he run it last, I believe. Him and his wife—Cecil Lee Newton—they're in Copperas Cove.

Before that was—Lawton McBeth, he run it there for a long time—had a good grocery store there. And they had a gin, but that gin had done gone before we ever moved here. And I don't know how much ginning they done or anything about it.

WSP: Did the Newtons run the gin?

ASW: I don't know who run it. I just don't know. I really sure don't.

WSP: So Pidcoke was not a town where you did a lot of shopping.

ASW: No, no. They was just a little place. They had a school there, but they quit the school, though.

That was just about—well, the Lockharts used to live there, right on this end—you're coming through there—you notice that barn? That's Lockharts' barn. They had a good house back there by it where they lived. The daddy, the old man Lockhart—that's where he lived and raised his boys. And he died way on back, had two boys, and I guess that's all there was of them. One of them was Virgil and the other was Guy. Virgil, I don't believe, ever did marry. Guy did, but he died here, too, several years ago. Well, wait, they had another brother up there, too, Herman Lockhart. He lived on up toward Harman settlement. And he had a boy, and his boy now owns the last house on your right, after you get out of Pidcoke up there—a house on your right—they put one of them tower outfits on it here

lately. And that's about all there was to Pidcoke that I know of. I went to Pidcoke one time—we lived at Antelope—went to a ball game. It was the only time I ever went there.

WSP: The road that's out here, Highway 116, is a nice road now.

ASW: It sure is. Yeah, yeah. They lined that outside out, that gravel, they run drive out on that now. But boy, I'll tell you, they need something. Them things they run through there—a lot of them and fast. Oh, man they drive! So many people work at the prison up here, and boy they do drive, and bunches of them!

WSP: How was the road when you came here?

ASW: When I come here? They were just building that road when we moved on this place.

WSP: Really!

ASW: That's right. The road—the old public road come—I guess it come from Copperas Cove and went on up through there. It went around—it didn't come up this way, it went around over there in front of the old Wood house, by the other side of Hollis's here—and on up through yonder and went on up there around the Bates house, and then turned back and went on around the Patterson house and up the mountain way up there. It was a *rough* road going up that mountain!

WSP: What's the name of that mountain?

ASW: Hard Bargain.

WSP: Hard Bargain?

ASW: Um-hm, yeah.

WSP: It looked like a pretty tough drive even now!

ASW: Well, it's all right now, but you go around that—off of the pavement and go around thataway to that house and go up there—I ain't been there in a long time, but that was a steep rough outfit. But it's not bad to go up.

WSP: Did you go up it when you were younger? In cars?

ASW: Well, just since I've come here.

WSP: Oh, okay.

ASW: We didn't come this way going to Gatesville then, when we lived down in camp. We come down the Old Georgetown Road.

WSP: Was that better road?

ASW: Well, it was closer, see. It was right there by us there.

WSP: But in terms of the quality of the road? I mean, some roads were taken care of better than others?

ASW: Well, then there wasn't no roads to have taken care of—up at my home up there at Georgetown Road—it had a steep mountain to climb down there going up it. And my daddy had a T Model Ford car—and another steep hill down there before you actually left the Cowhouse to go up—real steep there. Then you go on over the mountain—get up on the mountain and go on up there and get on the other side of the mountain—black dirt over there and have mud holes though there in wet weather. I got stuck no telling how many times over there in them mud holes. (laughs)

WSP: That's going north of Cowhouse?

ASW: Oh yeah, going towards Gatesville on that Georgetown Road, yeah. It was a bad road. We pushed that thing up that old mountain over there I don't know how many times! And Gannaway Hill, too! (laughs)

WSP: Gannaway Hill, I've heard about that.

ASW: Yeah, by the Cowhouse, yeah.

WSP: Well, you've experienced the changes United States went through after Pearl Harbor. What are your thoughts about the current situation, since September eleventh?

ASW: Well, I don't, I don't know anything about that at all. I don't know. I haven't kept up with it. I just don't know.

WSP: Have you heard anybody talking about September eleventh?

ASW: Oh, I heard some talk about it. They talked like it was awful bad. but I don't know anything about it.

WSP: What was the talk like after Pearl Harbor?

ASW: Well, I don't know about that either, I don't guess. I don't believe I do.

WSP: Was there patriotic fervor in 1941, the same as now? For example, when you went into town, was there a lot of discussion about what needed to be done in response to Pearl Harbor?

ASW: I never did hear much about it, no. I never did go to town—I go to town, I just go get what I want and go home—I don't fool around.

WSP: Then and now?

ASW: Then and now, too, yeah.

WSP: Well, I certainly appreciate your taking the time to talk to me.

ASW: (laughs) Well, that's okay. I don't know. I hoped I helped you, but I don't know what good it would be.

WSP: Oh, no, it's quite good! Do you any particular memories that I've missed, that I should have asked you questions about, something that you remember distinctly from that time period?

ASW: No, I guess not.

WSP: What is your favorite memory from the early days?

ASW: (laughs) I really don't know. (pause)

I lost my wife back, oh, six years ago. She was down here for nine years—had, got a black woman up here at Gatesville to come stay with her for six years and a half. Then she got to getting old, and she liked to dropped her in there one day. Linda and me decided maybe we ought to get a younger woman. So she called in Copperas Cove, had something over there, what was it they called it over there, a woman that helped people find a job—I've forgotten now what they call it—but anyway, Linda called and talked to her, and she told her there was a black woman at Killeen that done that kind of work.

And so—I don't know if Linda called her—I believe Linda called her, and we went down, me and her went down there to see her and talk to her. Yes, she needed a job, and she wanted to work. So she got a black woman to bring her up here the next day, I believe. And I told her what all there was to do and everything, how everything was going. So she taken the job. She worked here them two years and a

half, as long as she lived, lasted. Had to go to Killeen to get her and take her back, go on Monday morning and get her and take her back on Friday evening.

WSP: She'd stay out here for the week?

ASW: Uh-huh, she'd stay all week. I went through camp most of the time, back and forth, going. Had to go to Copperas Cove a time or two, but the rest of the time I went through camp. Sometimes they close them gates through camp, close them roads. But it didn't happen—I was lucky, didn't have them closed but one time while she was here when I had to go get her.

WSP: Well, thank you very much for taking the time. I appreciate it.

ASW: Well, that's all right, you're welcome.

James W. Yancy

Date of Birth: 13 January 1924
Community affiliated with: Clear Creek
Interviewed by Martha Doty Freeman

MDF: This is Martha Doty Freeman. The date is November 25, 2000. I am interviewing Dr. James Yancy for the first time. The interview is taking place at Dr. Yancy's home at 126 Oak Glen, San Antonio, Texas, 78209. This interview is part of Prewitt and Associates' Fort Hood oral history project sponsored by U.S. Army Fort Hood and conducted in conjunction with the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

So tell me about your James Richard Yancy, who would be what relation to you?

JWY: Well, let's start with John Yancy. John Yancy was the father of James Richard Yancy. And John Yancy was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, or Virginia. We aren't sure, because at that time, the boundaries between the two states weren't surveyed accurately. They may follow a stream, or they may go from point A to point B, from mountain to mountain on from the end of the mountain to the top of the mountain, or something like that. And John Yancy's parents were Archie and Mary Yancy. And there is no record where Archie was born. In one area, it had 1793 in Virginia. John Yancy came to Texas in 1833, according to the headright certificate issued to him by the Board of Land Commissioners of Nacogdoches County. He was married June 12, 1837, to Elizabeth McAnulty. He was issued a bounty certificate 3,074 for 320 acres of land for having served in the army from March 6 to June 6, 1836.

MDF: Now what, tell me what you know about that. Was this his service at San Jacinto?

JWY: Yes. He got so many acres of land for serving in the army, I think for one year, and so many acres—I believe it was 640 acres—for the Battle of San Jacinto. And he was present when they brought in Santa Anna, and they didn't know whom they had until some of the Mexican soldiers yelled out, "Santa Anna." Santa Anna was in a private's uniform, or a corporal's uniform, I'm not sure, and they didn't realize whom they had. Sam Houston gave him his life, although I understand some of the soldiers wanted to finish the job!

MDF: The job.

JWY: The job. And that's about all I know about him. And the battle started, what, about four o'clock in the evening? Was it not? And the sun was setting, and the Mexican soldiers were still taking their fiesta, and supposedly Santa Anna was being entertained by a lady friend in the tent, according to the story. Whether it's true or not, I have no verification.

MDF: But it makes a good story.

JWY: It makes a good story. Okay, what else would you like to know? John Yancy was a member of the Captain Haden Arnold Nacogdoches Company at San Jacinto. He fought at the Battle of San Jacinto, was there when Santa Anna surrendered. On November 23, 1849, he was issued a certificate number 181 for 640 acres for having participated in the Battle of San Jacinto. And, let's see, what else—

MDF: It looks as if, from your records, that most of the land he received was up in East Texas.

JWY: Yes.

MDF: Near Nacogdoches, and I think, you had Upshur County.

JWY: Yes.

MDF: Have you heard anybody say at all that he was in that area?

JWY: No.

MDF: Okay. So, do you have any track for him after the Battle of San Jacinto and until Bell County?

JWY: No.

MDF: Okay.

JWY: And even before, we aren't sure where he was before he migrated to Texas. And when he first arrived in Texas, we aren't sure where he was located. According to some of the records he may have been a squatter.

MDF: Now, when did he, about when did he go to Bell County?

JWY: Ah.

MDF: Did he die in Bell County?

JWY: Yes, he died and was buried in Bell County.

MDF: Okay. Well, maybe that's what—

JWY: I'm not sure, I have to go back and check my records on that.

MDF: Okay. And when did he die there?

JWY: Let's see. We have that here. John Yancy died in 1863. He was born in 1815.

MDF: I think this says 1868.

JWY: Yes, that's 1868, I'm sorry.

MDF: He was in Belton then.

JWY: When he died he was in Belton. What they called Keys Valley, that is west of Belton. Now Lake Belton has covered the land. And from Keys Valley, they moved to Killeen, Texas, which is six miles west of the little town of Killeen.

MDF: Now how many children did John and Elizabeth have?

JWY: They had four children. James Richard—J. R.—Yancy was the only son and was born October 31, 1859, and died in 1930. That was my grandpa. Mary Yancy was born June 18, 1855, died June 27, 1903. And Sarah Yancy was born August 20, 1852, and died June 4, 1870. Margaret M. Yancy was born March 30, 1847, married J. L. Patterson, and there were no children, and died February 18, 1909.

MDF: Okay. Now, did Elizabeth and the children stay in Belton after John died?

JWY: I think they were there for some time. How long, I don't know. Then I gather from the record in

this book, that she came with Grandpa and her daughters to Killeen, because she came with ten thousand dollars to buy eight parcels of land. I think she's buried in Belton, but I'm not sure. She may be buried in the Killeen Cemetery. Now, J. R.—James Richard—and of his immediate family have been buried in this Killeen [Cemetery], but John Yancy, I know definitely was buried in the Belton Cemetery, and I'm assuming Elizabeth was, but I could be wrong. She might be buried in Killeen Cemetery.

MDF: Now, she bought this great parcel of land out there in the 1890s?

JWY: I assume so, because my father, John William Yancy, was born in 1884, and he was born in Keys Valley.

MDF: Now, tell me again where Keys Valley was.

JWY: Keys Valley is west of Belton. Now it's covered by Lake Belton.

MDF: So maybe they were settled out there first.

JWY: Yes, I assume so. I think they had farms there, and my grandfather didn't like to farm too well, so he went into the ranching business, which is why they moved to Killeen.

MDF: Did you ever hear why he didn't like the farming and was attracted to the ranching?

JWY: No, I never heard. Because he died when I was six years old. I remember my grandfather very well, because he used to come by the house and pick me up—when I was in diapers, according to my mother—and put me on the front of the saddle. And I would ride with my grandfather for three or four hours. My diapers would get wet, and then dry, and we'd keep going. This is the story I was told.

MDF: Now what do you remember about him?

JWY: Well, I remember he was a very gentle and kind man, and was really a pretty good businessman for a gentleman without very much education. I gather he probably went through the seventh grade or something like that, but I'm not sure about his education. I can't answer that. But he was involved in the community. He gave money to the First Baptist Church in Killeen. I remember one of the, what do you call those windows with the colored glass? He gave a window there at the church. He was active in different things in the community.

MDF: Tell me what you remember of the ranch. Where was it located relative to Killeen?

JWY: Six miles west of Killeen.

MDF: And, was there a ranch headquarters there?

JWY: Yes, my grandfather's house was headquarters.

MDF: And can you describe that for me?

JWY: Well, when they first came there, I'm not sure if a house was there or not. They dug a well, hand-dug well, and that's where the water came from. And according to what I was told, the lumber to build Grandpa's house and the barn came from Indianola by wagon and oxen, and was put together by square nails. It had three bedrooms. A long kitchen, and two living rooms, with two fireplaces and a dining room. And he had a patio. The patio was built of huge rocks about two feet across and a foot thick, and they were pulled in there by oxen. They drilled a well, had a windmill, and he had water inside the house. And I can remember on Sunday, usually Sunday evenings, when the weather was nice, we'd go to Grandpa's and have ice cream on the back porch.

MDF: What was the configuration of the house? Was it a square, or a rectangle, or an L?

JWY: It was a rectangle. It was a long rectangular house.

MDF: And where were the chimneys located on that rectangle?

JWY: Well, there was a double chimney, a double fireplace, shall we say. On one side it was a living room, and on the other side, there was a living room.

MDF: So was the double chimney in the middle of the house?

JWY: No, it was on the west end where the two living rooms were.

MDF: And was there a front porch?

JWY: Yes, a long front porch. And they'd sleep out on the porch in the summer.

MDF: Was it screened? Or was it—

JWY: No, no, it wasn't screened. They had a back porch that was screened, but they didn't use it for sleeping. It was on the east side of the house.

MDF: Was it a raised house? Did you go up steps to get to the front porch?

JWY: Yes, yes.

MDF: And was there a kitchen in the house?

JWY: Yes, a kitchen in the house. There was a big old stove, and it had a container in the back of it that always had hot water in it.

MDF: Were there any outbuildings around it? What do you remember about what was around the house?

JWY: Yes. Well, right in the back there was the windmill with the big tower where we got the water for the house, and for the barns where they kept all the mules and horses. They had a blacksmith shop there where they kept buggies and wagons, and they did all their own shoeing for the horses they had, and repair to all the equipment. And they had an outhouse, one for the ladies and one for the men. I remember that.

MDF: Did he ever have indoor plumbing when you were around?

JWY: No.

MDF: But there was water piped into the house?

JWY: Yes.

MDF: And where were the outhouses relative to the main house?

JWY: Well, the outhouses were, I guess, a hundred yards northwest of the house, and the one that the men used was kind of north of the house, as I remember it.

MDF: How did you approach the house? Which direction would you be going to go to the front of it?

JWY: Well, the house was facing south. And in front they had a place where you could tie the horses and the buggies. I remember those little metal things out in the front. There was a decorated, heavy wire fence around the front of the house, and in one corner of the yard, Grandma Yancy had flowers. That was her department.

MDF: What did she like to grow there? Do you remember anything?

JWY: I can't identify the flowers.

MDF: Did she have a garden, too?

JWY: Oh, yes, they had a big garden in the back.

MDF: On the north side?

JWY: Yes, it'd be on the north side.

MDF: And can you estimate how big it was?

JWY: I'm guessing probably an acre. Be my guess. And they had a storm cellar.

MDF: Where was that?

JWY: Well, it was to the north. A concrete storm cellar. Of course, there was no electricity there, none whatsoever. In fact, we didn't get electricity in the country until after World War II. So, they would keep their vegetables, their eggs, and their milk, and whatever they might have, in the storm cellar. And there was a bed down there because when a really bad storm would approach, everybody would have to go down in the storm cellar. Now, I remember going down a couple of times as a boy with a lantern. Because that was the light!

MDF: What kind of light did you use in the house?

JWY: Oh, he had—what was the first form of electricity?

MDF: Carbide?

JWY: Carbide. He had that in a room or two. But it never did work very well, so basically they used just kerosene lamps, different kerosene lamps.

MDF: Did he have a carbide plant?

JWY: He had something in the ground, where they put the chemicals in. How it worked, I'm not sure, but the hole in the ground would give off gas, supposedly, and it would go through this pipe to [produce] light. But they never did work very well. And on that east side, he had a big cistern also. That's where they got all their drinking water from.

MDF: Was it an above ground or below ground?

JWY: Below ground.

MDF: Was it lined with anything?

JWY: Concrete. I don't know whether it had brick down there or not, but it was a concrete. And the water would come off the roof and go into the cistern.

MDF: Did he have a blacksmith who worked for him?

JWY: No, they did all their own blacksmith work. Maybe, the man who worked for him full-time, I'm sure he—in those days, you know, the people in the country do just about any type of repair. They had to. They couldn't take a wagon that was broken and go to town, five or six miles.

MDF: What kind of barns were there, and other outbuildings?

JWY: Well, there was a barn for the mules and horses. Mules were what they used to pull the double disk, a lot of double disk, wagons and plowing. But when they first came there, it's my understanding that they had to put in a lot of the farmland, and they used these moldboard plows that you walked behind. Horses were used for working livestock and pulling buggies.

MDF: What was it called?

JWY: A moldboard plow. It turns the ground over upside down. And they'd have a mule or two, and they'd have to walk behind that mule. They usually used mules to pull all the farming equipment.

MDF: Did he always use animals? Or was there any point at which he went to mechanized?

JWY: Yes, he always used animals. He never used mechanized equipment. The horsepower was mule power. And all the horses they had would never be used for plowing because it would make them stiff, and they used them to round up the cattle. They wanted agile horses that wouldn't fall with them and could carry them from sunup to sundown.

MDF: I gathered from what you're saying that he grew crops as well as had livestock.

JWY: Yes. Well, I don't think during my lifetime he grew cotton. But at one time I think they grew some cotton. During my lifetime, when I was there, they grew oats for grazing for their sheep and cattle in the winter, and hay for feeding their livestock. They harvested oats and they had corn and milo and things of that nature for livestock.

MDF: So did he gradually go pretty much to just a livestock operation?

JWY: I think so yes.

MDF: What was his preference in terms of livestock?

JWY: I understand when he purchased some of the land, some of the sheep came with it. And his son had to shear those sheep by hand. They used the hand shearers. It was a backbreaking situation. When the sheep got to be very valuable at one time in history—I can't remember exactly when—the sons talked Grandpa into selling all of his sheep. And I think he got ten dollars a head for those sheep, and he probably paid fifty cents or a dollar for them. So he sold them. They were very happy when he got out of the sheep and cotton business. They didn't like to pick cotton either. And they didn't like to shear those sheep. So I think they concentrated more on cattle after that.

MDF: What breeds did he raise?

JWY: The sheep were Rambouillet. And the cattle at that time were longhorns. They weren't the hybrid breeds that we have today. They were just skinny. Well, I'll show you some pictures in a little bit.

MDF: Good. Did he do any crossbreeding at all with cattle?

JWY: They, I remember Daddy saying at one time that they got a fancy bull that was part shorthorn and something else. I can't remember. It wasn't a longhorn. They thought they'd reached the top of the line at that time.

MDF: And did it work out?

JWY: I guess. I don't know. I'm not sure about that.

MDF: Where were the markets around there for the wool and the cattle?

JWY: When they'd get ready to sell their cattle, they would usually let the buyers know. When they rounded

up the cattle, they put the cattle in different corrals. Then the buyers would come out and bid on them. However, on occasions, we'd have to drive them to the nearest railhead. And I can remember as a very young boy, I went on one cattle drive to Copperas Cove. That was one of the shorter distances from our western part of the ranch to Copperas Cove than to Killeen. Now, I think at one time, they drove some cattle to Killeen, but I'm not sure about that. I was very very small, and they didn't want me to go because it was an all-day affair, and they said I was too young and I couldn't handle it. I had my little horse! So, anyway, after crying and carrying on, Dad said, "Okay, come on." And I can remember this very well. I made it to Copperas Cove, but coming home that night in the dark, I pooped out, and Daddy put me on the front of his saddle, and he led my horse home. I got a silver dollar for that trip.

MDF: How wonderful.

JWY: I know they did quite a bit of trading in Copperas Cove.

MDF: How far was it from the ranch headquarters to Copperas Cove?

JWY: Well, at that time you cut across three or four ranches, and it was, I'm guessing, probably six or seven miles, something like that. I'm not sure. I was awfully small then.

MDF: What year were you born?

JWY: Nineteen twenty-four.

MDF: I'm getting the impression from what you're saying that your area was largely ranch land.

JWY: Yes, yes.

MDF: Can you tell me who some of your neighboring ranches were?

JWY: Well, the largest ranch adjacent to us was the Pace Ranch on the east side. And let's see, on the south side we had the Leonard Landrum, on the, let's see, on the west side we had Beverly, on the northwest side we had Thomas. And I can't remember who we had on the other side. We had House Creek, Clear Creek, and went nearly to Cowhouse on the north side. And I can't remember who our neighbors were across House Creek and Clear Creek. The Thomas was one. Darnells, I think, was another one. And on the other west side, I think, I'm not sure. I want to say Lamb, or something like that, but I'm not sure about that.

MDF: Did the families get together much? In other words, did those of you who lived in the same area get together much?

JWY: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Grandpa's house was always the meeting place for all holidays and occasions and et cetera.

MDF: You mentioned that he built a house for, he built houses for his children.

JWY: Yes, the ones that stayed on the ranch.

MDF: And who would have been?

JWY: Well, Ardeen, one of Grandpa's sons who died in World War I did not have a home there. Uncle Mack and my father, John, John William, and Uncle Frank, and Uncle Percy was the youngest one. Uncle Perry never married, so he stayed in Grandpa's house until Fort Hood came along and took it.

MDF: So how many children did your grandfather have?

JWY: Ten.

MDF: Ten children.

JWY: Ten. Ten children.

MDF: Now, you can almost see here when they moved, I guess. There's one born in Keys Valley.

JWY: A couple of them died, I think, at about two years of age.

MDF: So, must have moved in the midnineties, just when they bought that land.

JWY: Well, I think probably they moved before. Well, let's see. Maybe '93. I'm not sure. Eighteen ninety-three. Now. Ardeen served in World War I, and he died from the flu on board the ship. And I think one place says he died on ship before they landed in France, and the other reports that he died on the ship before landing in New York. So I'm not sure.

They'd fill the concreted [dipping] vat that was five to six feet deep in the ground and three to four feet wide with solution and water. The cattle and sheep would go into the vat over their heads so that the solution would cover them, and they would swim the length of the vat. A lot of [the solution] would run back into the vat so they wouldn't have to replenish it, the solution, so often because they had to haul the water. This was to kill fever ticks and other diseases.

MDF: Where did they haul the water from?

JWY: They'd haul it from the windmill.

MDF: At the house?

JWY: Yes.

MDF: Was that the only windmill on the ranch?

JWY: No, no. There were several windmills: one at our house, one at Uncle Frank's house, one at Uncle Mack's house and Grandpa's house. Then we had permanent water. We had House Creek, Clear Creek, next to Cowhouse. We had plenty of water.

MDF: Tell me about the house you grew up in.

JWY: Well, I grew up in a small four-room house. We had a living room, we had a kitchen and dining room, and a bedroom. It was near some oak trees.

MDF: Was it square-shaped?

JWY: Yes, square.

MDF: And had a pyramidal roof on it?

JWY: Yes. It had a porch across the front.

MDF: Were all the houses your grandfather built like that?

JWY: Yes, the ones he built for my father and Uncle Frank. The one he built for his sisters, that Uncle Mack lived in, it was different house. It was more of a colonial type, with the pillars and huge tall ceilings, and big wide boards.

MDF: Now, where, where was your house relative to your grandfather's house?

JWY: Our house was west and up on the hill. Grandpa's was kind of down in a lower area.

MDF: Do you have any sense of how far away it was?

JWY: I'm guessing it was probably three or four hundred yards.

MDF: Oh, quite close then. Were all of them just right in there together?

JWY: About the same distance. I would guess, probably, the house that Uncle Mack lived in was farther than Uncle Frank's house and our house. I think our house was probably a little bit closer than Uncle Frank's.

MDF: Did you see your grandfather, your grandparents, every day, then?

JWY: I remember my grandfather much better than I remember my grandmother. She died before Grandpa did. No, I wouldn't see him every day. But I'd probably see him three or four times a week. And I remember my grandmother sitting in front of the fireplace with a shawl over her shoulders in her rocking chair, rocking, listening to the radio. The radio we had had a battery and a wind charger on the roof, and that's where we kept the battery charged for the radio. And I can see her there, rocking in front of the fireplace.

MDF: What would she like to listen to?

JWY: Well, I don't know. She was always a very jolly person. And always upbeat. I remember that. Never in a bad mood as far as I can—

MDF: What, do you remember what she enjoyed listening to on the radio?

JWY: I can't remember.

MDF: Did you all have a radio, also, or was it just the grandparents?

JWY: No, we had a radio also, and a wind charger. And Grandpa, I remember, had a Victrola and had these round disks that he would slip on, and you'd wind it up by hand, and it would play. And he finally got one of these round, with a big round flat disk, like the pancake. And it was a tall one, and I can remember that one quite well. But I remember that little one where you had the cylinder and you'd slide it on the machine, and what was the little dog? What was the name of that machine? Victoria? Not Victoria.

MDF: Victrola.

JWY: Victrola, yeah. A little dog with the spot on his eye, or something. Is that right?

MDF: Uh-huh.

JWY: Okay.

MDF: Listening to the voice of his master.

JWY: Yes, right, right.

MDF: Now, where did your radio stations come from? Who was the broadcaster, I wonder.

JWY: I have no idea. I remember Saturday night was a big night, listening to the Barn Dance out of Chicago, and that was before the one in Memphis. And I can—Uncle Dave somebody and his son, Doris, and I couldn't understand why anybody would name his son Doris. That was the old boy's name out of Chicago. I remember we had to do our chores, and in the winter we had plenty of wood

for the fireplace. So we'd just listen to the old Barn Dance from Chicago.

MDF: Now, how many of you were there in your house?

JWY: Three—my mother, my father, and myself.

MDF: And where did you sleep?

JWY: Actually, I slept in the bedroom, and my parents slept in the living room. In the summer we all slept out on the porch.

When Mother was working on a quilt, she would have it attached to the ceiling until the quilting ladies came in about once a week to work on it, and then they would let it down—and pull it back up when finished for the day—a quilting bee.

MDF: Now, who were those women?

JWY: They were neighbors.

MDF: Do you remember any of their names?

JWY: Yes. Hoover was one, and I think Aunt Dessie came over some, and Aunt Nettie. And Mrs. Landrum. Those are the ones that kind of ring a bell.

MDF: And did your mother keep a garden around your house?

JWY: Yes.

MDF: So did each of the houses have a garden attached to it or associated with it?

JWY: Yes.

MDF: Now, did your father and his brothers work for your grandfather?

JWY: I'm not sure what arrangement they had. I gather they divided all the income while Grandpa was alive. I guess that's the way it worked.

MDF: Now, where did you go to school?

JWY: I went to a little two-teacher school called Clear Creek and went through the seventh grade there. And a lot of the times I rode my horse, and it was about two-plus miles to walk. From Clear Creek, I went to Killeen High School. Claude Thomas had bought a old Model T. They lived west of us, and the country road came right in front of our house, and he would pick me up, then he'd pick up my two cousins, and I think Doris Alman, and we would go to Killeen High School. For one or two years, this was our method of getting to school. Then, a bus came out there. And of course the roads weren't paved, and we didn't have a bridge across House Creek, so when it rained, nobody would cross House Creek, and if you could cross House Creek, you'd get stuck some place in the mud. If it rained, the bus would not run, so we missed a lot of school.

MDF: Tell me what it was like going to school at Clear Creek.

JWY: Well, for me, it was a lot of fun because I didn't have to study very hard. We had two teachers, and we played a lot of sports. We played baseball, softball, basketball. We ran a lot of track. One year we went to the county seat which was Gatesville, to participate in their activities. This was our first time to go, and we had a oratorical or declamation team. I was on that, and I won third in the county. My friends who were such excellent runners would run to school. They were the Edwards boys. They were really very very fast. We didn't know we had to stay in this chalk line when we

took off and were all lined up. One Edwards boy took off, and he was ten or twelve feet ahead of everybody else, as it wound up, but he stepped over the line, so he was disqualified. I can remember that going to the meet.

MDF: Did you all play quite a bit of baseball?

JWY: A lot of baseball, softball.

MDF: What position did you play?

JWY: I played all positions because we didn't have enough people. We had to rotate, so you'd play pitcher, catcher, first base, third base, wherever we were needed.

MDF: How many were in your class, on the average?

JWY: You know, I think I may have a picture. Would you like to see that picture?

MDF: Yeah.

JWY: We don't look too hot. You want to turn that off until I get the picture? Eight were in my class at Clear Creek.

MDF: Now, what were you saying about the community, or the—

JWY: Well, the school was used as a community gathering place. They would hold church services there and different functions, as well as being a school facility.

MDF: Did you and your parents attend a church?

JWY: Yes. We went to Killeen, First Baptist Church. Mother was a schoolteacher. She taught at five or six different schools. And when she was teaching, I think at Clear Creek, I believe that's when she met Daddy. I'm not sure.

MDF: I see. Where was she from?

JWY: Well, she was from a little town outside Gatesville called the Flat. You've heard of Flat, with all of your activities?

MDF: I have.

JWY: Her parents were really pioneers.

MDF: When did they come, do you know?

JWY: I'm not sure.

MDF: And what was her maiden name?

JWY: Young. Her father came from Tennessee. His father was a physician. His mother died, he remarried, and his stepmother was mean to him. Very mean, according to reports. And so as a teenager he left with just the clothes on his back, and he came to Texas. He married, and I don't know when he came to the Flat area. Anyway, his wife was from Brenham, Texas, and they married in 1881 and lived in a small little four-room house in Flat. And my mother was the only one of the children that continued her education.

MDF: So was your mother your teacher?

JWY: No, no. She quit teaching when she married Daddy. He didn't want her to teach even though she

wanted to.

MDF: Did you take your lunch with you when you went to school?

JWY: Oh, yes.

MDF: What did you usually take, what would be a typical lunch for you and the other kids?

JWY: Well, some type of sandwich. In the beginning, we had to take our own water. They didn't have a well there at the school. And later on they drilled a well, so we had water at the school. We'd take a sandwich and an apple, and I don't remember ever seeing any fat kids. When I grew up in the country, we just didn't have any fat people. Everybody had to walk or they'd run a lot, they moved around, worked, and you didn't see any fat folks.

MDF: Did you have—what did you do for entertainment as a community? Did you get together on Saturdays?

JWY: Yes, they would have ice-cream socials, cake sales. If a man really liked a lady, he'd be the high bidder on a cake or something she baked to keep her happy. This could be a fundraiser at the school. And that was kind of interesting. They would have Halloween parties there when everybody would be dressed up in costumes.

MDF: Did people meet in each other's homes much?

JWY: Occasionally they would, yes. They'd have parties, they'd have dances, they'd have a fiddler, banjo, or guitar, something like that. I can remember part of one song, "Shoo, fly, shoo. Sitting on the bedpost tying my shoe." I can't remember the rest of it.

MDF: So was there, was dancing acceptable?

JWY: Well, in the Baptist religion, it wasn't. But my dad played the fiddle, and he danced until he married Mother. And Mother kind of put the damper on dancing. But, of course, there wasn't any alcohol in the area, except bootleg. That was it.

MDF: And where was that made, do you have any idea?

JWY: I have no idea.

MDF: Would it just appear?

JWY: Just appear. Yes. Just appear.

MDF: And did your dad continue to play the fiddle?

JWY: No, he gave up. I only heard him play, I guess, a little bit once or twice. I still have his fiddle.

MDF: You do?

JWY: Yes.

MDF: Was it a store-bought fiddle, or was it handmade?

JWY: I'm sure it was a store bought.

MDF: It would be interesting to know where he learned.

JWY: I think he kind of played by ear. He never had any lessons, I'm sure. And Mother played the piano.

MDF: Did you all have a piano in your house?

JWY: Yes.

MDF: And what sorts of things would she play?

JWY: Basically, I think, religious songs.

MDF: So it sounds kind of subdued.

JWY: Yes, yes. We had to march to a pretty strict drummer. It wasn't too bad.

MDF: You enjoyed your growing up?

JWY: Yes, very much. A lot of freedom. I enjoyed the outdoors, hiking, fishing.

MDF: I was going to ask, did you do any hunting?

JWY: A lot of hunting.

MDF: Did you have dogs?

JWY: Yes, we had dogs.

MDF: Tell me about that.

JWY: We had hounds. When my grandfather had sheep, they had to have hounds to keep the coyotes and wolves out of their sheep. And they'd pen the sheep every night, and when they bought the place, there were a lot of rock fences there and around our house. When I was up there the last time, I was walking around, and I saw foundations where a rock fence had been built. And, I remember as a kid, around one of our fields, there was a rock fence. Quite a few of the buildings in Killeen had been built out of rock, and they got those rocks from the rock fences there on the Yancy Ranch.

MDF: Now, do you think those rock fences were there when your grandfather moved there?

JWY: I think, yes. I don't think they built any rock fences.

MDF: Kind of makes you wonder if there wasn't something there earlier.

JWY: Well, there had to be. Yes, there was something there, because around one field, there was a rock fence, and I remember all the rattlesnakes were around the rock fence.

MDF: Now, tell me what you remember about hunting with dogs.

JWY: Well, if it rained and we couldn't work in the fields, then we could hunt. We would chase foxes and bobcats, and when I was hunting myself, I had a little terrier and my pony. I had a single-shot .22, and we'd go squirrel hunting. I would shoot doves also with my .22. I didn't have a fancy gun. It was a single shot that shot the little short shells. It cost you about twenty cents a box. But, anyway, I'd shoot quite a few squirrels, doves, ducks, et cetera. With a shotgun, my father would not allow me to shoot one dove because shells were expensive. You'd line them up on a fence and get two or three in one shot!

MDF: Did your grandfather raise hounds or did he buy them?

JWY: Oh, I think they raised some and probably bought some.

MDF: Was there somebody around there who was well-known for their hounds?

JWY: Well, I think there was one breed that was well-known, that sticks in my mind, the Walker hounds. I think there are probably still Walker hounds.

MDF: Now, did groups of men ever get together and go hunting that way, with the dogs?

JWY: Oh, usually. I can remember two or three men going at a time. I remember as a barefoot boy, we'd treed a bobcat, and they wanted me to climb up there and flush it out. And so I climbed up the tree, holding my arm around the tree, and had a stick about six feet long, or so. The cat was out on the limb, and I was punching it in the tummy, and the cat was carrying on, and I thought it'd jump out, you know, just on the ground. But the cat ran down the trunk of the tree where I was holding on! We both survived.

MDF: What did you do?

JWY: I held on. The cat came down on the other side and jumped to the ground. The cat got away, and I got away.

MDF: Did you decline the next time they asked you to do it?

JWY: I never did that anymore.

MDF: Did you go into town much?

JWY: Usually Saturday. Normally, we'd go Saturday for a day in the city.

MDF: And what would you do?

JWY: Well, I remember in the '30s, the Depression was on. Daddy would give me a quarter, and I could go to the movie. I could buy a sack of popcorn, and a roll of caps for my cap gun with my quarter. And at that time, the streets in Killeen were not paved. They were just caliche, and when it rained, it would really stick to your feet. It was a real mess.

MDF: Were you aware during the '30s that times were hard, or was there—

JWY: We had plenty to eat. We didn't have a lot of money in our pocket. I can remember Daddy saying that the total income that year was about $250. He sent a truckload of sheep to Fort Worth to market to sell, and they just barely brought enough to pay the expenses. And he sold sheep for twenty-five cents a head. And goats, you could hardly give them away. And calves sold for about five dollars or something like that.

And of course, later on, the government came along and killed a bunch of the cows, hogs, and sheep, and we had to skin our sheep that we killed, and send the hides to the county seat in Gatesville. And those hides, lots of them, were used for inside the flight jackets for World War II pilots. And we grew our own wheat and corn for bread. Of course we had honey, wild honey, and molasses. And we took the sugar cane to where they would squeeze the juice and cook it. And the corn and wheat you'd take to town, and they would grind it for you for a percentage.

In fact, my great-grandfather, when he lived in Key's Valley at Belton, would go to Salado where they had mills on the river, or stream, whatever it may be. They would camp overnight. And they would grind their corn and their wheat and then get back in the covered wagon and go back to Key's Valley. The mill would take a percentage for grinding.

We ordered a lot of things from Montgomery Ward's catalog. Mother did a lot of sewing, and the ladies in the area did a lot of sewing. We had plenty of bean, hogs, milk, chickens, eggs, canned goods, fresh vegetables from the garden.

MDF: So, were you saying that the mills you could take your corn, wheat, and sorghum into were all in Killeen?

JWY: The sorghum mill was outside Killeen. I think it was kind of north of Killeen, as I remember. But your wheat and corn, you'd take them into Killeen. There were two or three places there that would do that for you.

MDF: Do you remember the drought during that time?

JWY: Well, the drought that I remember was in the '50s. Of course, we weren't there in the '50s. I don't remember a drought during the '30s, but I'm sure we had one. I was a small boy and don't remember.

MDF: And tell me a little more about the government's program to kill the cattle and the sheep and the hogs. Did your father or grandfather participate in that?

JWY: Well, my grandfather was dead at that time. He died in '30, 1930. Yes, my father did because you couldn't sell them. And I can't remember how much they gave you for the sheep, and the cows. We had sheep and cattle. I can remember the man from the government coming out there with an automatic .22 and standing up on the fence planks and shooting cattle in the head. And Daddy felt so terrible that we had to do this. We had to take them and bury them.

MDF: Where did you bury them?

JWY: Well, there was a place where they had dug out for a tank. They had one of these great big shovels you had mules pulling.

MDF: Fresno?

JWY: Yes. And we had a tank that had washed out, so we dragged them there with mules and buried them. A few families did use the meat from the animals that had been killed. But you must remember the people didn't have transportation and they didn't have refrigeration.

MDF: So were you—so did the government allow you to use the meat?

JWY: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. You could give it away. Sure.

MDF: Some places, I know, the government wouldn't allow them to do it, and they actually poisoned the meat.

JWY: Oh, gosh, I didn't know that.

MDF: Yeah, but, it's always interesting to hear a little different variation on it all. And so, then the, so the cattle, do you have any idea how many cattle you lost to that?

JWY: I have no idea. Or sheep either. I remember we had to take their hides to Coryell County, the county seat, and we had this four-wheel trailer and an old Model A Ford. It was pretty loaded. Daddy wasn't sure we'd get up those steep hills. But we made it.

MDF: Now tell me something about your grandfather's involvement with the bank in Killeen. What did he do?

JWY: Well, as far as I know, he was just a stockholder.

MDF: And I think you said something about the fact that you had a book that had his records about his loans and whatnot.

JWY: Yes.

MDF: Do you recognize names in there?

JWY: No. But I have some of his bank statements.

MDF: I did want to ask you what you remember about the acquisition of the ranches by the government. Tell me, you know, when you first heard about it. What happened with the, when did you become aware of the fact that this project was going to happen?

JWY: Well, I was in college at that time.

MDF: Now were did you go to school? You left Killeen High School and went to where?

JWY: Yes, I went to John Tarleton, a branch of A&M, and from there I went to Baylor Dental School, graduated in 1946, and from there I went to the army air force as a dental surgeon. I spent two years with the army air force, and I was discharged. Now, I was informed that they were going to build a fort there. I was in college when Mother and Dad told me they were considering acquiring a lot of land in the area to build a fort, and I said, "Oh, a fort, for the Indians?" Something of that nature. [They said], No, no, they're going to have a tank division there. And I said, "Great, how much are they going to give you for your property?" [They said,] Well, we don't know.

Then, my father told me there were two government appraisers and one local appraiser, and they appraised the property, and the local appraiser was a friend of Daddy's, and informed me that, he said, "I'm really just a figurehead. I have no say so in what the appraised value will be of your property." But our property was some of the first property that was taken, the first acquisition. And where the hospital is located now is where our little two-teacher country school was located. And, Daddy said, "They said the value is twelve dollars an acre." And he says, "I can't replace it. It would cost me twenty-five dollars an acre because so many people are being displaced." Demand for land adjacent to Fort Hood was in great demand. I can't remember how many families were displaced. At one time, I knew, but I've forgotten now. So, twelve dollars an acre was the value put on the property, and some money was deposited in the bank. I think it was in Temple. And Daddy was informed that he couldn't take any of his buildings or fences or improvements. He'd just have to get up and leave. And at that time you were only allowed two hundred dollars to buy materials that would replace what you were leaving for fences, or barns, or houses, et cetera. Daddy went to Temple to talk to the general there. He said, "I will give you so many days to move whatever you want to move." And also, he said, "I will furnish the trucks to move it if you'll get it torn down." Which they did. They moved a house and barn, but they left another house and a barn that was on the place.

And then a little bit later, I can't remember how long it was, they acquired my uncle's property. It was northeast of where we lived, and I guess it was about fifteen miles, and they paid twenty-five dollars an acre for their property. Then they acquired my grandmother's property, which was at Flat, Texas, and was still a little bit farther, for thirty-five dollars an acre, and then they kept going on towards Gatesville, which got a little higher. After the war, they came back across the railroad tracks and acquired the land for Gray Airfield, and I was informed they paid a hundred dollars an acre for that.

Do you want me tell you something about Gray?

MDF: Sure, I think that's interesting. That he was there in Killeen.

JWY: Yeah. Bullet Gray was a friend of mine. He was a senior in high school and I was a freshman, but his father, Marvin Gray, and my dad, John Yancy, were very close friends. They grew up together in the area. Bullet Gray's father had a hardware store there in Killeen. He sold all types of hardware and supplies you'd need for the farm and ranch. And Bullet Gray, after graduating from high school, went to John Tarleton, and he took flying. The war broke out, and he always wanted to be a pilot. Fortunately, because he was an excellent flyer, he was chosen to be one of Doolittle's pilots that bombed Tokyo. He survived the bombing of Tokyo, and they were promised if they went on this

secret mission, they'd be able to return to the States. Well, he landed in China some place, but eventually made it to Burma, and he was flying the Hump in Burma. It's my understanding he crashed flying the Hump in Burma, so he never made it home.

MDF: Where did your parents move the house and the barn that they were able to remove?

JWY: Well, they moved to San Saba.

MDF: Oh. So did they, did they move the house down there?

JWY: Well, they moved part of it.

MDF: Now, how did they happen to end up in San Saba?

JWY: Well, Daddy liked the land down there and the terrain, so he decided to move to San Saba. They had to build a home and barn.

MDF: How long did he have to look before he found a place?

JWY: I'm not sure. I think it was probably about a month. I know it was a very traumatic experience for all those people to have to go through so quickly.

MDF: Where did your neighbors move?

JWY: My cousins moved to near Lampasas. Sherwood Yancy's father and Howard Yancy's and DeLoyse Yancy's father was Frank Yancy, who was brother to my dad. And they moved to Lampasas. They live there at the present time.

MDF: How many folks in your family just stopped ranching at that point?

JWY: Ah, well, I don't think any of them did that were involved in ranching. Of course, I stopped, because I practiced dentistry. But I'm in ranching now.

MDF: So they were able to continue on.

JWY: Yes. In fact, my father gave my cousins the right to run cattle on his part of the Yancy Ranch at Fort Hood. They run cattle on Fort Hood at the present time.

MDF: Oh. Are they part of that cattlemen's association?

JWY: Yes.

MDF: Now, tell me about that.

JWY: I don't know anything about it. I just know my dad said he wasn't going to fool with it, and he gave my cousins the right to raise cattle on his property. And that's Sherwood and Howard Yancy.

MDF: And he was able to transfer his privilege over to someone else in the family.

JWY: Yes, he gave it to them.

MDF: Do you remember hearing anything at all about that? How that got set up?

JWY: No, I don't know any of the details. None whatsoever.

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Appendix A
Informants in the Fort Hood Oral History Collection by Community Affiliation

Community	Informant
Antelope	John Gail Edwards
	Juanita Manning Fleming
	Wayne E. Fleming
	Robert E. Gault
	Mary Edwards Groves
	Florence Joyce Haedge
	John A. Haedge
	Joe D. Insall
	Murrel L. Thompson
	Louis J. Tomastik
	Frankie Juanita Wright Trantham
	Hope Edwards Turner
	Hazel Graham Wilkinson
	Archie Spivy Wright
Boaz	Wilma Earl Colvin Edwards
Brookhaven	Margaret Hunt Carroll
	Juanita Griffin Duncan
	Norman Ricketts Hall
Brown's Creek	John Darel Bay
	H. P. Brookshire Jr.
	James W. Calhoun
	J. M. Carroll
	Billie Jo Calhoun Cartwright
	Gladys Merle Keener Chastain
	Zell Kinsey Copeland
	Wilma Earl Colvin Edwards
	Juanita Manning Fleming
	Joyce Calhoun Ritchie
	Andy Gordon Wolf
	John Daniel Wolf Jr.
Clear Creek	John D. Bowen
	James W. Yancy
Eliga	Christine Fleming Esparza
	Juanita Manning Fleming
	Wayne E. Fleming
	Robert E. Gault
	Hazel Graham Wilkinson
Ewing	Frank Aubrey Black
	Lois Pearl Shults Cathey
	Zell Kinsey Copeland
	John Easley
	Tommie L. Shults Haferkamp
	William Ake Powell
	Mary Lou "Honey" Hudson Powell
	J. W. Shults
Flat	William Ake Powell
Friendship	Lois Pearl Shults Cathey
	Zell Kinsey Copeland
	Edith York Faris
	Tommie L. Shults Haferkamp
	Mary Alice Dorsey Powell
	William Ake Powell
	Mary Lou "Honey" Hudson Powell
	J. W. Shults
Killeen	Norman Ricketts Hall
Manning Mountain	Juanita Manning Fleming

Community	Informant
Maple	John Darel Bay
	H. P. Brookshire Jr.
	James W. Calhoun
	J. M. Carroll
	Billie Jo Calhoun Cartwright
	Gladys Merle Keener Chastain
	Zell Kinsey Copeland
	Wilma Earl Colvin Edwards
	Juanita Manning Fleming
	Joyce Calhoun Ritchie
	Andy Gordon Wolf
	John Daniel Wolf Jr.
Okay	Ernest Allen Cole Jr.
	Clements W. "Speedy" Duncan
Owl Creek	Lois Pearl Shults Cathey
	Zell Kinsey Copeland
	Tommie L. Shults Haferkamp
Palo Alto	Juanita Manning Fleming
	Norman Ricketts Hall
	Kyle Hilliard
Pidcoke	Norris Sidney Graves Jr.
	Cecil L. Newton
	Estelle L. Newton
	Archie Spivy Wright
Pilot Knob	F. A. Barrington Bowen
Plainview	Melba Goodwin Bennett
Reese's Creek	Weldon Hicks
Ruth	Frank Aubrey Black
	John Easley
Sparta	Margaret Bert Wilhite Bounds
	Margaret Hunt Carroll
	T. A. Wilhite
Spring Hill	Doris Lee White Thomas
Stampede	Melba Goodwin Bennett
Turnersville	Christine Fleming Esparza
Union Hill	Margaret Hunt Carroll
Willow Springs	F. A. Barrington Bowen

Appendix B
Informants in the Fort Hood Oral History Collection by Year of Birth

Year of Birth	Informant
1901	Mary Alice Dorsey Powell
1907	John A. Haedge
1909	Archie Spivy Wright
1911	T. A. Wilhite
1912	Juanita Manning Fleming
1913	Ernest Allen Cole Jr.
1915	Frank Aubrey Black
	Edith York Faris
1916	John D. Bowen
1917	Hazel Graham Wilkinson
	Zell Kinsey Copeland
	F. A. Barrington Bowen
1918	Margaret Hunt Carroll
	J. M. Carroll
1919	Melba Goodwin Bennett
	Cecil L. Newton
1920	Estelle L. Newton
	Hope Edwards Turner
1921	John Darel Bay
	William Ake Powell
1922	John Gail Edwards
	Norman Ricketts Hall
	Florence Joyce Haedge
1923	Clements W. "Speedy" Duncan
	Juanita Griffin Duncan
	Billie Jo Calhoun Cartwright
	Frankie Juanita Wright Trantham
1924	John Daniel Wolf Jr.
	Wayne E. Fleming
	Norris Sidney Graves Jr.
	James W. Yancy
1925	Gladys Merle Keener Chastain
	Robert E. Gault
	Kyle Hilliard
1926	Mary Edwards Groves
	Doris Lee White Thomas
	James W. Calhoun
1927	Andy Gordon Wolf
	Tommie L. Shults Haferkamp
1928	Wilma Earl Colvin Edwards
	Weldon Hicks
	Murrel L. Thompson
	Louis J. Tomastik
1930	Margaret Bert Wilhite Bounds
	Joe D. Insall
	J. W. Shults
	Mary Lou "Honey" Hudson Powell
1931	H. P. Brookshire Jr.
1932	John Easley
	Joyce Calhoun Ritchie
1933	Lois Pearl Shults Cathey
1934	Christine Fleming Esparza

Index

This index exclusively references surnames and place names. In cases where these share a common reference, the place name is listed first and the surname follows. The names of cities, towns, and communities all refer to Texas locations unless indicated otherwise, with the state listed parenthetically. Place names may identify communities or waterways, or names of schools, churches, or cemeteries.

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