

Billie Ruth Russell

WinnAnn oral history one high gain 4-12-13

Q: Now it's recording. OK. I don't know why. So this is April 12th, 2013, and I'm talking to Billie Ruth Russell, and getting her memories of growing up in Georgetown. So you can just tell me whatever comes to mind. (inaudible) want to hear the story about the 1921 flood. That --

A: Yes.

Q: -- sounded like quite a, quite an ordeal.

A: It was quite an ordeal. We had to try to save our life, because we were trapped and we couldn't get out. We had two rivers and a branch that had blocked us in, and we had to go up a tree to save our life. And we stayed up there all night and came down the next day.

Q: Oh my! How many of there were you up there?

A: Well, see, my two sisters and I, and my little sister. That's four of us. And there's two of my dad's [field hens?] that were up in that tree, and my mother and dad.

Q: Wow.

A: So it was quite a few of us. The [field hens?] were in the next tree, but when the water began to get high, that little tree wasn't safe, so they came over. They crawled

over. Luckily the branches overlapped and they could get into the big tree. So we stayed up in that tree all day. My dad got the surrey out and his favorite horse, and we were going to go and leave, but when we got to the branch we couldn't get across. So we had to come back and figure out what we were going to do. And my dad said, "Well, the only thing we can do is to get up in that tree." And the house was filling up with water. We knew we couldn't stay there, and there's water all around us. And the house finally floated off of its blocks. And the well -- my dad had tied the horse to the well to save his horse, because that was his favorite horse, and he didn't want it to swim away. He had opened the barn up, and all of our cattle and our stock had gone from the barn. They swam out.

Q: Oh my.

A: And so all he had left was his favorite horse, tied to the well. It was one of those old-fashioned wells that had a bucket at the top that went down. That's where we got the water. And so the water kept climbing up, climbing up, and he saw it was going to cover his horse, so he wanted to swim over there and cut his horse loose so he could swim out, save his life. And my mother was afraid, because she saw whirlpools in the water, and she was afraid for him to do that. So the house finally -- the water got so high

that the house just mashed him, mashed the poor horse to death. And my dad had to sit there and watch his horse die. And we -- the water got up so close to us that some of us had to go higher in the tree to avoid it. It was nine feet below us, nine feet.

Q: Wow.

A: And we stayed there all night in that tree, and the next morning the water began to go down. It was pretty late, though, in the morning when it began to go down. And I think they told me -- of course, I was just a baby, and my little sister was younger than I. She was -- my mother held her. She was about a year old, and I was just three years old. And my daddy held me. And we finally got down about three o'clock in the afternoon --

Q: Oh my.

A: -- out of that tree when the water finally went down, and it had gotten up to in our house. There was mud in our house, and everything in our house. And the water did finally get out of the house, and we got back in. Some of my mother's folks came in as soon as they could get across the branch. They thought we were all gone. They didn't think they would find us alive. But we were. Everybody was safe. And they didn't believe it. My brother's -- my mother's brother looked straight at her, but he didn't

believe she was there. So it was quite an experience for us, and we were lucky to get out.

Q: Where along the San Gabriel was that located?

A: We were living in, on a farm. My daddy had leased the farm from George and Helen Glasscock. They owned the farm. And they were so sweet to Mother and Dad. They were really very nice people, and we loved it there. But afterwards, my mother had a breakdown, and my dad thought it best to leave the farm, because every time a cloud would come up she would have a setback. And so we had to move away from it. But he loved that place. He hated to leave it.

M: This is an old picture of the house. This is taken from Google Earth about 15 years ago, and what's circled is a house right there. You notice that it's facing east?

Q: Mm-hmm.

M: The original house before it was washed away faced north, which was facing the road, and the water turned it to move it that far. When it settled, it faced east.

Q: Oh my.

M: And the owners at this time had started building some things there, and then to give you an idea of what it looks like now, this is where the house was set, right in those trees right there. And this is just about where the Georgetown treatment plant is located.

Q: Oh, I was going to ask where.

M: Yeah. This is a picture here, (inaudible) by there, according to just about where the location of the house would be. And you see the three creeks coming down?

Q: Mm-hmm.

M: This is [Barry's?] Creek, that's Pecan Creek right there, and that's the San Gabriel River. So they were trapped. This is 130 Highway, so you kind of get, see that in perspective. It's not that far east of Georgetown.

Q: So it's east of town.

M: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

A: It was east, uh huh.

M: And it's just off of 971, that road to [Weir Granger?].

A: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

M: So...

A: There is Creek River ran on one side at one -- the north and the east side of it, and the Gabriel ran on the south, and that little Pecan branch ran on the west side. So we were cut off everywhere.

M: That's a little closer picture, and again, arrow is pointing to where that house was. It's gone now. Someone moved it toward town. I don't know, it just was gone.

A: The City bought the farm, and --

M: But I don't think the City did. The City bought this area

down here where the treatment plant is.

A: Did they?

M: Uh huh. And I think someone else owned, owned that land.

A: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

M: Remember where the house was. They have some storage buildings right along by the side of it right now, so you can see where Pecan Creek came down and just blocked them completely in. This is Barry's Creek, and that's the San Gabriel River, and they're on that right here, and that's [Katy?] Lake, if you remember --

Q: Oh, yeah.

M: -- you know, some stories about Katy Lake. That was a big recreation area years ago for people, for Georgetown. They'd go out to Katy Lake, and I think -- I heard that they had like little boats you could rent, and it was kind of a little water resort place out there. I guess that must've been, you know, 50, 100 years ago. I don't know.

Q: Is it -- pecan tree still alive, I wonder?

M: That pecan tree y'all were in?

A: A pecan tree's there, but I don't know if it's the same one or not.

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: But there's two trees there. We were -- we went over there about, what, five years ago?

M: It must've been longer than that, because that --

A: Ten years?

M: Now it's 10, 10 to 12, 15 years ago, maybe. Ten years ago, I guess.

A: Ten years ago. One of my nephews wanted to see it, so...

M: They came down, and the house was still there then, and he came back to show his kids, and it was gone, so...

Q: Oh. (laughter)

M: You know, whoever owned it apparently either tore it down or moved it, so... It was a pretty, really attractive little house. I think, as far as I know, there's been about three or four different owners of that track right there. And it's a pretty area. There's a lot of trees there, and the other creeks are close by, and --

A: I have a picture of it, but I don't know where it is. It's somewhere in a drawer.

M: Well, we can find it sometime and (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

Q: Yeah, that would be...

M: -- make a copy and (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

Q: That would be interesting, yeah.

A: I'll try to look it up when I have more time. (laughter) I didn't have time today. I thought about it, looking for it, but I didn't have enough time.

Q: Uh huh, uh huh. Did you -- what school did you go to since you were in the country? Did they have a special little school, or...?

A: My sisters went to -- what's the name of the school?

M: Oh, Jonah. Y'all went to the Jonah School.

A: No, not there. When we lived down at Jonah we went to Jonah School.

M: Oh, OK.

A: But we -- they had a school there at the corner, that grove that goes to where -- goes out to [Ganses?] Mill. You know where Ganses Mill is? We call it Ganses Mill, but they call it something else now. It's a park. It's a park.

M: Oh, where that new park is made down there. I'm trying to remember what that park is called.

A: What is that park called? Well, it turns to the left and goes north to the park, and there was a school right there at that corner, and it was called Prairie View. Was it Prairie View?

M: I have no idea.

A: Well, I did know. (laughter)

M: I think (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

A: That's where -- I went to the first grade there. See, I was just three years old then when the flood came, and then we moved to another farm pretty close by, and my sisters

went to that school, but I had not gone yet. But I did start, and I went to the first grade, and then after that the school was closed, and we went to Georgetown.

Q: Oh, OK.

M: But you went to the Jonah School at one time or another.

A: When we moved to Jonah, we did.

M: Yeah.

A: We moved to Jonah after I went to this first school, this -
-

M: Yeah.

A: -- Prairie View, I think was the name of it.

M: Yeah.

A: Prairie View.

Q: So that would've been, I guess, 1924 or so, maybe?

A: Probably '26 or 7 or 8. I think we lived there -- I went to Jonah School about four years. I was in the fourth grade at the Jonah School when we moved back to Williamson up here, close to Georgetown, to another farm.

Q: Did your school -- was -- were all the grades together?
Was it that small? Or were they --

A: It was --

Q: -- separate, or...?

A: I think my two sisters went to the sixth or seventh grade there at that school, and then when we moved they went to

the Jonah School, too. And I think the Jonah School had about -- I think they finished the ninth or tenth grade. Maybe it was the ninth. They both went to that school down there. But they didn't finish. They just went to the ninth grade, I think. That's as far as they went: to the ninth grade. But I went through the fourth, and then when we came back to Georgetown I entered the fourth grade here, in that old school that [rock or?] -- I think it had three or four floors to it, but...

Q: I remember.

A: Rock building.

Q: I remember it, yeah.

A: Yeah.

M: That was over on [Houston?] Avenue and University Avenue, on the corner was (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

A: Mm-hmm, right. I went to that in the fourth grade. I remember the teacher. I did know her name; now I can't think of it. But it was quite a big school compared to the Jonah School --

Q: (laughter) I bet.

A: -- but the Jonah School was not bad. It was a nice, nice school. And I remember my teacher down there. She was so pretty. I admired her so much. All of them were nice. But I don't remember much. All that I know is what they've

told me.

M: Well, your dad hauled gravel for I think it was Mr. Brown -
-

A: Bridges.

M: -- that built the bridges over the, you know -- the Brown, the family Brown had moved, went to Southwestern, and after he graduated one of the first construction jobs he did was build a bridge over, you know, the San Gabriel River there in Georgetown. And your dad hauled gravel. He had a large wagon. And he hauled gravel for him to build that first bridge over the San Gabriel River.

Q: Oh my.

M: So...

Q: And he -- I guess he -- did he have horses to pull it?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: Oh my.

A: Horses. You know, he lost all of his horses, all of his cattle, everything. All of his tools. Everything
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

M: That may have been before the flood, though. I don't, I don't -- I've never been told the years that that was built. I would think it would've been maybe 1910, 1920 --

A: I don't know, either.

M: -- right along through there. That would've probably been

before the flood.

A: Might've been, mm-hmm.

M: So...

A: But I was... I didn't know a thing. Mama said that I cried for my -- I had two little puppies, and I wanted those puppies. I worried about those puppies, because they were in the house. And Mama said I cried for my puppies. And when we got down and got into the house, the puppies were running around. And she, and she said the puppies survived on the mattress that was floating, and the water got up eight or nine feet in that house, and the puppies floated on my mattress, on our mattress that floated on that water. So they were all safe, but she said I cried for those puppies.

M: That water must've been 15 to 18 feet deep right in there. If you got nine feet in the house and the house is up on blocks about four or five feet, then the depth of the water flowing through there must've been around 15 feet.

A: Yeah. Mama said it really got --

M: From ground level.

A: Mm-hmm.

M: It would've been --

A: She said where the tree was, it was -- it got up almost to their feet, where they were sitting in the tree. And nine

feet, I believe she -- I remember. But so much I don't remember.

Q: (laughter)

A: But we have lived -- we have lived in Williamson County for a long time. Nineteen thirty-six was when we came to town.

Q: Mm-hmm. How were the roads?

A: The roads were gravel. (laughter) Gravel roads. But... We went to our house, they were not gravel. We had to walk quite a ways from our house to ride the bus to school, so we always had to carry an extra pair of boots with us.

Q: Oh. (laughter)

M: Well, the streets in Georgetown where we lived in the 1950s, on 6th Street and Elm Street, was gravel, and they paved 6th Street in the mid-1950s, didn't they? Something like that?

A: I don't remember.

M: I know Dad complained about the fact they made him pay for part of the paving in front of --

A: Yeah. (laughter)

M: -- the house, and...

A: It was half of it.

M: Yeah, half of it. And he griped about that. So that must've been -- I thought it was in the mid-1950s, because before that it was gravel, and when it rained, I used to

pull up and get out in the street and lay ditch dams. And you know, we made ditch dams, and there's this lakes that we produced right there where it rained, and then when they paved it we couldn't make ditch dams anymore. (laughter)

A: (inaudible) changes then.

Q: Yeah.

A: Still changes going on.

Q: Oh, yeah. So what was Georgetown like in, when you moved here in '36?

A: Well, it was a pretty small town, just a little town. We - - I think I was graduating from high school that year, 1937. I had one year left when we moved to town, so it was very convenient. I didn't have far to walk to school.

Q: (laughter) Didn't have to have two sets of boots.

A: No. (laughter)

M: Well, did you walk from where Grandmother's house was, and that was on Main and 2nd Street?

A: Uh huh.

M: And --

A: I walked to there, to the high school, you know, over on... What was that street?

M: University and --

Q: College?

M: -- College, yeah.

A: Yeah, it was along there.

M: Well, that's, that's a pretty far walk.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: Well, being from the country, you're used to long walks.
(laughter)

M: Yeah.

A: We... We lived there. My mother lived there until she died.

M: Yeah. Where did you shop? Where did you get groceries and things like that?

A: Well, you know, there was several grocery stores in town, but I don't remember. It seems like there was an A&P. I think that we had an A&P store that we shopped at some. And there was a Piggly Wiggly, wasn't it?

M: Well, yeah, but the Piggly Wiggly came to town in the '50s, wasn't it? Sometime in the '50s?

A: Might have. I don't remember.

M: The Daniels, you know, started that, the Piggly Wiggly, so... Which was the biggest kosher store in town. Didn't they build that building there? It's on [Austin?] Avenue?

A: I don't think they built it. It was already there.

M: It was already there? You probably remember the Piggly Wiggly there --

Q: Mm-hmm, yeah.

M: -- on [Austin?] Avenue.

Q: Yeah, I do.

M: So (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

Q: And I remember my grandmother would always get her groceries delivered from Davidson's, I believe was the name of it, and --

A: Yeah, that was --

Q: -- I thought that was nice.

M: Right.

A: Wasn't too far away, was it?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

M: Well, the A&P was located there on -- let me see -- 8th Street and Main, wasn't it? On the east side of the square?

A: I really don't remember. (laughter)

M: I remember vaguely in the '50s there being a grocery store there. I don't know if it was an A&P. Do you remember? Was that --

Q: Mm-mm.

M: -- an A&P grocery store there?

Q: I think there was one there. I don't remember if it was A&P or not, yeah.

M: Mm-hmm.

Q: Yeah.

M: Well, I know -- when Bill and I were growing up, you know, we grew up on the corner of 6th Street and Elm Street, in that little house there, which is not far from y'all. But we would walk up on the square, you know, and go to Henderson's, you know, and they had that candy counter there. I would, just would go up there. If we didn't have any money, we'd just go up there and admire the candy. But we'd get a few dimes and we'd go up there. As soon as we'd get a little money, we'd run up there and buy us some candy and look at the toys. They had a really neat toy counter there, so... And then sometimes we'd go in the back of the store if it had empty boxes, and we'd go in and ask Mr. Evans (inaudible) at the time if we could have. And he said, "Oh yeah, go -- just take whatever. I'm just going to throw them away." And we'd get the biggest box we could, Bill and I, and we'd bring it back home and make little houses out of them, you know, to play in.

A: Yes. Looked up the street one day and I saw this great big box coming down the road. They were inside of it, (laughter) holding it down. And you saw the box, and you saw some feet underneath.

M: Well, Mother and Dad ran that laundry there on, you know, [Sixth?] Street.

A: [Sixth?] Street.

M: And was there any interesting customers that ever came in there that you remember? The -- a lot of the old-time Georgetown people came there --

A: Yeah.

M: -- and especially in the '50s when the drought was so bad, and a lot of the, you know, old-time farmers and ranchers would come because their wells went dry, and they would come there to wash their clothes. And you knew that the guys that owned the ranch where Lake Georgetown is now, they would come in all the time.

A: Good customers.

M: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Then they went to Australia.

M: Yeah. They moved to Australia.

A: And they sold their farm, the ranch.

M: Right. Well, the government bought a big part of it by the lake. Let's see... There was an interesting couple that came in there. The name was Falkenstein. Do you remember the Falkensteins?

A: Yeah, I remember them. They were from Germany.

M: They were straight from Germany. They just -- Mrs. Falkenstein said that her husband was a German scientist, and they came to the United States, and they were a very interesting couple. And she spoke really, really good

English, didn't she?

A: Mm-hmm, she did.

M: You couldn't tell that she was even from Germany, her English was so good. And then --

A: But he didn't speak English.

M: No, he didn't. He would study... They had kind of a van-like vehicle, which was unusual in those days, and he had it loaded down with radio equipment, and Mrs. Falkenstein would say that that was part of what he did, you know, as a scientist. But he would sit there, and you'd hear those radios, and he'd be, I guess, listening to a German radio station. And then sometimes he would (inaudible), and you'd hear this high-pitched noise, (imitates noise) kind of go like that, you know, as the signal, I guess, went in and out. And so he was an interesting looking character, interesting... He never came in, but I, as a little kid, would sneak around and look through the back window and the back door and see him sitting in there.

Q: That's interesting.

M: And any other interesting customers that y'all had there?

A: I don't think of any right now.

M: But that building was the first car dealership in Georgetown. It's got a historical plaque on it. And my uncle had started a business there before Dad took it over,

and he had bought it somewhere else in town and had moved there. It was a vacant lot at that time, and they moved it there. And he had started that business, that he decided he wanted to go farm on the plains in West Texas. And so he turned it over to my dad, and then he left and went back into farming, which he was in before. So his wife was an aunt to the famous Tommy Lee Jones, and she was a Jones, and her, I think it was -- I don't know if this is correct; I don't know much about the Jones family, but I think it was her brother --

A: Her brother's son.

M: -- her brother's son. And she was a very small, tiny, little woman. And her nose was -- if you look at Tommy Lee Jones' nose, you -- I mean, they were identical. And we had this kind of family joke that all the Joneses had the same kind of nose. And so she was a sweet, endearing, tiny, little lady, and she probably was maybe four feet five inches tall, maybe.

A: Yeah. Four feet... Four feet four, I think.

M: Four feet four. She's real -- a real tiny little lady. And --

A: And he was tall.

M: And he was real tall. I got a picture of him in here. I got to show you the picture.

A: They were very religious, too. They didn't miss any church services. They were always there.

M: So to say the least, we can brag that we're akin to a famous person. (laughter)

Q: Oh, that's... (laughter)

M: That's her. This was taken when they were real young.

Q: Aw. That's quite a picture. It's pretty.

M: Thank you.

A: And they were nice people. Very nice. And if we -- he became a movie star later. When we knew them, he wasn't a movie star.

M: Didn't you have an aunt or uncle that rented a store on the square?

A: My grandparents, my mother's grandparents, the Williams, they ran a grocery store back in 1800s.

Q: Oh my.

A: Yeah. You know that building that the City, I believe, bought there on the corner of 5th and 7th, didn't it?

M: Yeah, 7th is where the Historical Society was located a long time, but now they've remodeled it, and -- is that where the new winery thing is built?

Q: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

A: I think it --

M: It was right there.

A: On that corner.

M: Mm-hmm.

A: They ran that grocery store for a long time, Williams. Williams Grocery Store. And I had my other grandparents, my grandmother's folks, they ran a store at (inaudible). So they were grocery store people on both sides.

M: Yeah. Well, your -- would it be fourth or fifth great-grandfather? -- was a guy named Aaron Williams, and he came to Georgetown in -- was it in 1845? No, it was 1847.

A: Yeah, I believe it was.

M: He came... They came from Chicago, didn't they?

A: Yeah, up in Illinois.

M: Oh, Illinois?

A: Mm-hmm.

M: And they came to Texas in 1845, and then moved from, I think, Caldwell County to Georgetown in 1847?

A: Yeah. They might've moved down there first and then they decided they didn't want to live down there, so they moved back up to Williamson County.

M: Mm-hmm. So he was one of the early settlers.

Q: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that would be real early.

M: Yeah. But I don't know -- do you know what he did? Was he a farmer at this farm up here?

A: Yeah, I think he was a farmer.

M: But he really actually lived in Georgetown. I remember reading an article in the *Williamson County Sun* dated 1900 that -- this is an early Georgetown pioneer dies -- who died in 1900.

Q: Hmm. Wow.

M: So he was around Georgetown, you know. I'm not sure -- we don't know for sure what he was doing. Probably farming, so...

A: He had a house out there on one of his farms that he owned.

M: Yeah. Where was that? You remember?

A: That was there on -- across from Leon Perez's house, across the road on the road to Jonah -- road to Weir.

M: Weir, yeah. Leon Perez lived about half a mile to the west of them during the flood, and Leon Perez tried to rescue them.

Q: Ah.

M: And Leon Perez just recently passed away.

A: Yeah.

M: And he's been alive all these years. And he was a friend of mine. You know, I'd go out and see him in town and talk to him, and he kind of told me some of the story about how he tried to rescue them. And they tried to get to several ways, because the water was so widespread that they couldn't get there. And he said they tried to go down the

railroad track, because the tracks was a little bit, you know, higher than the water right there. He said but when they got down parallel to their house, it was still quite a ways, and the water was too deep, and they couldn't, you know, get across there to rescue them.

A: No one had a boat.

M: No one had a boat! And so they would've had to take a boat, and even at that, the water was really swift.

A: I imagine, yeah.

M: And he... And then he said that they went back and they tried to get -- the only place they could get to was going way up through town and coming back, and finally get to the north side of various creek. But he said there was probably two miles of water between there and where that house is, and that house, you can see in the picture, was right there on the confluence of those three streams. And they just had no way of getting close. So then he was one of the first people, you know, to get to the house when the water came down. And he actually, as soon as the water got low enough, they waded through water to get over there, to get to their house. And of course, they were OK when they got there. So they were trying to rescue them. It was not only Leon, but their grandmother's brothers were all -- there was a bunch of people trying to rescue them, you

know, that knew they didn't get out, so... But they didn't know what their fate was or anything like that. And it was so interesting to hear Leon talk about how it was many people -- I mean, it sounded like a whole group of people -- I don't know how many; he didn't say, but, you know, I'd say 10 or 12 or 14 people were organized, trying to, you know, get over there to rescue them. And they got there just as soon as the water got down. They were fine, so...

A: My mother said that she saw some people over on the railroad track from Weir, and her niece lived at Weir, and she and her family were over on the railroad tracks, trying to look over there and see if they could see anything, but they were up in the tree. And Mama put a rag on a branch, and she tried to raise it up so they could see her white rag up in the tree. But I don't know whether she ever saw it or no, (inaudible) they saw the flag she was trying to (laughter) wave to them to tell them that she was safe.

Q: What types of crops did they farm back then?

A: They had corn, maize, cotton. Cotton was the main cash crop. And they all had gardens, and they raised everything in the garden. My mother always canned -- she had a room especially for her canned food, and shelves all the way around it. And she -- we lived on canned food. We had our pigs and our cows, and we -- they'd always kill a calf

every year, and two or three or four hogs. And we lived practically at home. But we had money from eggs to buy our necessities, like sugar and flour.

M: Well, you actually survived the Depression pretty well. The stories I've heard is, you know, the farmers all did. They seemed to. But Grandpa lost all his money when the banks collapsed, didn't he?

A: Yeah.

M: And when the banks collapsed, he lost every dime he had. But even at that, they were able to do pretty well, because they had, you know, farm animals and gardens and things like that.

A: Mm-hmm. But we didn't have any money. (laughter)

M: No money. But he actually lost a good bit of money is what I hear, from --

A: He did, you know. He had an eye operation. He had -- he was gathering his corn, and he stooped over, and corn -- one of those stalks hit him right in the eye, and he didn't take care of it. He didn't think anything about it, and it got infected, and he lost it. He had to -- we had to take him over to Austin to the doctor. Dr. Clark over there took his eye out, and he didn't ever... He had a glass eye, you know. But that was a bad thing. And he had insurance, and -- Woodmen of the World. (laughter) And they, I

think...

M: Well, I know you had a picture of him around here somewhere.

A: Yeah. I don't know where it is.

M: I thought it was hanging in there. He was a really good-looking guy.

A: I don't know where I put it. I'm getting absent-minded.
(laughter)

M: No, it's a good picture. Well...

A: I don't know if I've got it. And, you know, I lost my mother's picture, too. It got thrown away.

M: You used to have more around, you know. You'd have more pictures of both of them somewhere, just...

A: Yeah, they're somewhere.

M: But this is a big one. I thought it was hanging back in there.

A: I don't know what happened to it.

M: Hmm.

A: I'm trying to think what, where I put it. Can't think.

M: We'll find it.

A: Yeah. (laughter) But I haven't had much experience living in towns, and soon left, went to -- we went out on the ranch and stayed a long time.

M: She married Dad, and then they moved up to Florence. And

Dad had inherited his grandfather's place, which --

A: Father's.

M: -- his father's place, I'm sorry -- and they went to live on that for a while. But they soon moved back to Georgetown. I mean, you went from there to West Texas to farm for a while, didn't you?

A: Yeah, mm-hmm.

M: And then came back to Georgetown. What year did y'all come back?

A: Roger wanted him to come out there, farm with him.

M: Yeah.

A: We came back then -- oh, several years later.

M: Yeah. Back in the '40s, early '40s sometime?

A: About... Yeah, somewhere late '40s.

M: Yeah. Well, I was born here in 1945, so...

A: Yeah.

M: You know, y'all were already back here several years.

A: Yeah, right, '45.

M: And... But they lived on his dad's, father's place, and that was an interesting place up there. It was on the Williamson/Bell County line, and about half the property was cut in half by the county line, and then one half was in Bell County and the other half in Williamson. And so Dad -- Grandpa and then Dad would have to pay taxes on part

of Bell County and part of it in Williamson County. But there's interesting stories about that particular area, and one was that Grandpa hunted for buried treasure for years there, and he -- in the family we called it the legend of the Crosby Cave, and -- because one day this guy showed up there by the name of Crosby while Grandpa was living and working the ranch there, and he said that he, when he was a child, he played around the back of where he lived, which was not far from there, and he went down into a cave, and in the cave there was, you know, Spanish writing on the wall, and conquistadors' helmets laying in there, and a stack of gold about in the middle of the room. And he said when he got to be an adult he just wanted to come back and find that. So he and my grandpa started looking for it, and they together went where they thought he lived, and looked, and they were never able to find it. So he had to go back to, I think, Oklahoma, where he then lived, and he couldn't stay there long, but Grandpa continued to look for that cave several years. In fact, as the story goes, Grandpa lost several crops (laughter) looking for the gold. And there was marks on the trees, and marks like horseshoes, or, you know, C's, and...

A: The Mexicans put them there --

M: Yeah --

A: -- that hid the gold, and...

M: Yeah, the Spaniards had put a treasure map to find the gold on the trees. And so Grandpa found all those. He tracked them -- he found them, tracked down to one cave, and then went in that cave. There was nothing there. And he thought that might've been a herring of some kind. And it was not too long after that a guy shows up from oh, in Mexico, and he has a treasure map. And he had found records down there of where Spaniards had hid a buried treasure. And so --

A: The government sent him.

M: Oh, the government of Mexico sent him down there. And so he followed those marks on the trees, and then there was a place where Grandpa cut the marks out of the trees, so only Grandpa knew where the mark went. (laughter) And anyway, they never could get anywhere, except he located some landmarks that were on the map that Grandpa didn't know about. And so that just gave Grandpa a little bit more enthusiasm and motivation to go look for that gold again, and so he continued to look for it. The local people around there, the word got out, and there were many people looking for that gold around there, and --

A: They said -- the story was that some -- they had -- they had gotten that from a goldmine. They'd taken the gold

out. The Spaniards had found the gold, and they were taking it back to Mexico, and they were attacked by Indians, and that's why they had to bury the gold in the cave, keep the Indians from getting it.

M: And there was kind of a mysterious legend that developed from that, and it was that the spirits of the conquistadors were guarding the gold. And there are accounts of different people finding the cave, and they would find it, and then they'd go back with a wagon to get the gold and things out, and they were never able to find it the second time. And so that's an actual fact. Grandpa knew of, what, two or three different people that actually found that by accident. They just came up on it and found it and, you know, saw it, and then went to get someone, to get help or whatever, to get the gold out, and never could find it the second time. And that's why the legend grew up about the cave being guarded by the spirits of the conquistadors. And didn't J. Frank Dobie one day come up there to talk to Grandfather about that?

A: I think he did.

M: And J. Frank Dobie, you know, went to Southwestern, and... You know, and if you've read any of his books, there is some stories inside of his books that are very close to what this story is, and he talked to Grandpa, and I think

that's where he got, you know, the --

Q: His idea.

M: And what I was always told was that Grandpa made him swear to secrecy and not ever tell where, you know, this was. So I think in some of his books, he's maybe put two or three of the stories together. It sounds like what Grandpa's story was. But anyway, that's an interesting area. And that's the same area where the Gulf Springs Archaeological Society is now, where they've located people that have lived there 18,000 years ago.

Q: Wow.

M: And it's just a really interesting area right through there, right there on that [Plimpton?]/Bell County line. The [Goff?] Springs is located just on the Bell County side, and Grandpa once owned that, and he sold it to Henry [Goff?]. And Henry Goff's wife, Jodi, was Grandpa's niece. And then everything was kept in the family in those days. Grandpa bought the property from his wife's father, which was a fellow by the name of Bill Hasty, so -- which owned this section right in through there. And anyway, Grandpa and, I guess, Henry Goff had a garden down there, because Grandpa kept part of it. He sold only part of it to Henry Goff. And that's where the name Goff Springs comes from, archaeological site. And they would -- they ran, had a

beautiful garden down there, and they would raise vegetables and sell them. They would actually take them by wagon and sell them down at the University of Texas.

Austin back then was just nothing more than the capital and the University of Texas, so they made a lot of money by taking the vegetables (inaudible) and selling them all, because they would just pick them up off the ground down there.

Q: Wow.

M: And the Springs was one of the biggest springs around, and they would water the garden from the Springs, and had a tremendous garden. So I don't know how many times -- I guess quite frequently they would take the -- pick the vegetables in the spring of the year and take them down there and sell them, and then there was a Texas ranger by the name of Aldridge that would come and buy those, and he kept on buying arrowheads -- Dad sold him arrowheads.

A: Oh, when he was a kid. (laughter)

M: Yeah, Dad -- when he was a kid he would go down there, you know, and pick out arrowheads and go with him to Austin to sell the vegetables and the arrowheads, and...

A: Several of those University of Texas professors would come up on weekends, and they would sell their arrowheads to them. (inaudible) talking about he had a great, big one

that he sold for a quarter. (laughter)

Q: Oh. (laughter)

M: So then the University of Texas did a study on that area. Their science department, the archaeological department came up there in 1930s, wasn't it, sometime?

A: Yeah, in the '30s.

M: And they did the first archaeological study on it. And then no one did anything else until about 10 years ago, and they came back again and started this study, and they've been on the land now for about 10 years doing, you know, a study. And it changed hands, the owners, several times between that. Grandfather owned it, and then Henry Goff owned it, and then a fellow by the name of Lindsay owned it. And then Lindsay sold it, and then after that they actually ended up buying the area where the archeological site is located.

A: I think a University of Texas professor by the name of Collins --

M: Yeah, Mike Collins.

A: -- owns it now, or --

M: Owns it now, right.

A: -- there's another professor. I can't think of his name. I don't know if he has an interest in it, or --

M: He's the --

A: -- if he owns it.

M: That's the -- I can't think of his name, but he's one of the big -- you know, the scientists that's (inaudible) a big part of the study, along with Mike Collins, so... And I can't remember his name.

A: I can't, either. He was here. He --

M: He just gave a talk about --

A: I met him, and --

M: -- two or three months ago.

A: Yeah. I met him. He makes speeches around different times. And he came here to Dallas. I have some arrowheads, a collection that Ralph picked up, that we framed, and I'll show them to you if you'd like to see them.

Q: Oh, sure, sure.

A: They're right in this other room here.

M: Let me get them.

A: Can you get them off the wall?

M: Yeah.

A: OK, bring them in here, and I won't have to walk in there.

Q: Yeah, that way you don't have to get up and --

A: Yeah. (laughter)

Q: -- hurt your back more.

A: I'm so worried about falling. That worries me. I don't

want to fall again. I've fallen two times. That's enough.

Yeah, that's it.

Q: Oh, that's beautiful.

A: There's -- I've got the information in the folder in the back of that. (laughter)

Q: I'll definitely have to come with my camera next time.

(laughter) That's beautiful. That's a beautiful display.

M: Well, there's not that many of them that we have left.

A: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

M: At one time we had dozens of them, and hundreds of them, and Dad, I guess, sold them.

A: People want one.

M: Yeah. Somebody (inaudible).

A: (inaudible) (laughter)

M: Back then we didn't understand --

A: Said, "May I have one?" (laughter)

M: -- the significance of how old they were, and, you know...

To those guys, like my dad and my grandfather, they would find arrowheads everywhere. Yeah, they'd be everywhere.

And they --

A: I had some dirt hauled in one time in my yard, and went out the next day and found an arrowhead on top. (laughter)

M: There was a huge Indian civilization here, but, as I understand it, they were here 18,000 plus years, you know.

It's mindboggling.

Q: Yeah, it is.

M: And to know that, you know --

A: If he had the good ones that he sold... These are ones that he didn't sell, that (inaudible), mm-hmm.

M: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). So...

A: But that would've been something he... He's talking about how pretty they were, some of them.

M: Mm-hmm, perfectly cut. One day we went up there in a real hard rain. We -- the kids would -- Dad would go up there all the time to the place, and he owned it for quite a while after, you know, Grandpa passed away, and he sold it to Ms. (inaudible), didn't he? We were (inaudible) kids, and even after he sold it, he sold it to a fellow by the name of Lindsey. And Lindsey owned a part of it back then, but...

A: He's --

M: I've forgotten who he sold the place to, but she still let him go back up there and check on it for her, because, as a matter of coincidence, he sold it to a fellow that passed away, and his mother inherited, was then had she living next door to Mother and Dad there on 6th Street. So she would want him to go back up and check on --

Q: Yeah.

M: -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) at times. So he would go back up there, and all of us kids would go, and then we'd go back down there on the archaeological side... And one time there was a huge rain, like one of the little flash floods that we have today, happened up there. This was kind of in a -- it's kind of in a gully, where the archaeological site is, and (inaudible) spring comes out, and it's kind of a bluff. It looks a little bit like the San Gabriel River. Beautiful as all get out. It's just an absolutely beautiful area. And then there's a flat field that goes off, and that's where the airheads were, and anyway (inaudible) flooded and washed up this, like, pile of airheads, that was just like these in a pile, just as far as you could see. So we picked up some, but I don't know what happened to them. My uncle, Dad's brother, one of his oldest brothers, was kind of an explorer, and he would go all over that area on foot. And he said that -- and we're talking about now around the year 1900 or before, the 1880s, 1890s, and this is before a lot of the, you know, changes to the owners and things like that were in there. And he said that he found a, just to the northwest of the site, foundation stones of what looked like a huge city. And so we told a archaeologist about this, and I know they've looked on Google Earth, and they don't see any

traces of it now. But I think that in recent years, you know, the ranchers in there probably used the stones for making different things and cleaning the land up, so on and so forth, so they all disappeared. There was a rock fence that went near there, and I remember all the way up to my teenage years that same rock fence went all the way down from that area to down the highway, almost all the way to [Gerald?].

Q: Wow.

M: And of course, between that time and now, all those rock bars -- that whole area now is just filled up with rock quarries, and all those rocks have been picked up and used for something, and so the rock fences are no longer there. And -- but I'm wondering if that gold has ever been found, or if someone in the rock quarries, which are... Dad's old places mostly weren't rock bar now. You know, the Grandpa's old place on the Williamson County side is pretty much nothing but a rock quarry. And we just wondered if somebody ever found that gold, especially the rock quarry people. (laughter) Maybe that's how they got so rich so quick.

Q: It would be interesting to know. That's fascinating.

A: Yeah. When we lived up there, we didn't have time to look for it. We thought about it.

M: Yeah.

A: Well, I can see how it would be very tempting to try and find. Nowadays, just the helmets alone would be fascinating to have, you know.

M: Well, the price of gold being about \$1,500 an ounce, one of those bars would make you rich. (laughter)

A: Yeah, they said that there's a great big -- right in the middle of that cave was a mound, and it was covered up with dirt, and that's where they dug, put the gold down, right in the middle, and any would climb into that cave and land on the mound, and he thought that's where they hid the gold.

M: Yeah, that was the story that Mr. Crosby told, wasn't it?

A: Mm-hmm, that guy that would play in it, play in the cave. But he never could go back to it.

M: Never could find it. He looked for -- do you remember how long he might've looked?

A: I don't remember.

M: It was a long time. Several years, wasn't it?

A: Several years, mm-hmm. Several years. He'd come back in the summer on the vacations and look for it.

Q: I can see how legend would grow out of that, yeah. Yeah. That's interesting.

A: But they said that Ralph's father lost several crops

looking for that.

M: Daddy's -- our grandfather was an interesting character. He came to Texas when he was nine years old, and came from Mississippi, during the Civil War in 1862. And Grandpa, Great-Grandpa was a Confederate soldier, and he was wounded, and they -- apparently he... His name was Walter S. Russell, and was wounded probably -- and we don't know for sure -- in the battle of Baton Rouge. So I think he was in the 31st Mississippi Confederate Army. And he had his foot almost shot off, and he was not able to walk. He was disabled after that. And then he was, of course, at home. And we had some records and accounts of the amount of money he got. And I've forgotten exactly the amount, but in those days it was a considerable amount of money. And so when he was sent back home, his brother dismissed -- I don't know what you call it when they get out of the military, army -- dismissed -- discharged then his brother, who was also in the same regiment, was allowed to take him home. And then they gave him travel expenses on top of that.

Q: Oh my! (laughter)

M: And so with all that money he came to Texas, and Grandpa was nine years old at the time. And they settled in [Belton?], didn't they?

A: Mm-hmm, Belton.

M: So they settled in Belton, in --

A: Bell County.

M: -- Bell County, and then Grandpa started -- got a job with Mr. [Chisom?] on Chisom Trail, about 10, 12 years old. He was really good at horses, and then he worked for Mr. Chisom, taking cattle up and down Chisom Trail for many, many years. And so with that, the money he saved, then he was able to buy a ranch. And the first ranch he bought was over there near [Corn?] Hill, (inaudible). And he actually, I think, was one of the founders of Corn Hill, or one of the first branches he bought, I think. And then he didn't stay there long, and then went up there, and I guess he got married, and then bought that property there on the Williamson and Bell County line from his wife's father. And then that's where that originated, you know, so... But anyway, he would tell us -- we didn't know, and he had died before we were walking, but he would tell Dad stories, and then he'd pass them down to us, and, you know, and then stories and things like that, because back in the --

A: It's a shame we didn't write all those down.

M: Oh yeah, we should've written them all down, and --

A: Lost things we should've written down and didn't.

M: Yeah. One, he was -- it's kind of interesting that he had

a 10 year old, 12 year old herding cattle.

Q: Yeah. (laughter)

A: You know? But I guess Mr. Chisom would hire whoever he could get. And so Dad was original Texas cowboy, and then saved all that money, and then was able to, you know, get himself in pretty nice down the line, (inaudible) good ranch. And... But he would tell us Indian stories. Back in 1860s, '70s, and '80s there's still a lot of Indians around this area. And how Indians would follow him when, he said... One story, if I remember it correctly, was most of the time the Indians were pretty nice to him, but he said that they came across a war party, and --

Q: They were coming back from a drive to Kansas City.

A: Yeah, mm-hmm, up to Kansas City, and on the way back a war party came through, and he said those Indians were mean looking. (laughter) And he didn't -- I guess he was riding along with one of his --

A: Partners.

M: -- partners, you know, and friends, or whatever that took the cab up there, and they followed him some distance on the trail. And he said they just like -- they knew they were back there, because they weren't far behind him. He said they just followed him. And he said they had their guns ready, and they, you know, didn't want to, you know,

act like they were scared. And they, you know, didn't want to make the Indians mad, and so they just proceeded on the trail, just normally like they were just driving on down the trail. And he said the Indians just left him alone. He said that after several miles they just turned off and went somewhere else, so...

A: He said they were -- they came to a place where they could get supplies. What did they call those places? Very few of them.

Q: Like a trading post or something?

A: Yeah, trading post. And the Indians came up after they got there, and they would look at their horses, and they would -- there'd be painted faces, and they would look so mean. And somebody looked at one of their horses, and they shook their head at him, "Don't touch him," you know. And he said that he looked so mean, (laughter) such a mean look. They didn't want them... They could touch their horses, look at them, but they didn't want anybody around theirs.

M: Yeah. The Indians didn't want the cowboys to touch their horses.

A: No, unh-uh.

M: Yeah. Yeah, they were very sensitive about their horses.

A: Mm-hmm. They said he probably stole the horse. (laughter) That's probably a stolen horse. Reason why they didn't

want him to even look at them.

Q: This is all fascinating. I've really enjoyed hearing the stories.

M: Well, I'm trying to remember events and things, and like Mother said, we should've written down a lot of stuff. You know, growing up here in County, we grew up pretty much the same time, and I went to the same high school. Mother went to the grammar school, and then we opened up (inaudible) Pearl, you know, school over there, and then went over to the old high school, which was Williams School now. And Pop Williams was our principal. And he was the greatest man. I just thought the most, and respected that fellow.

Q: Yeah, he was pretty special.

M: Yeah. And --

A: His wife just died lately, didn't she? I think I heard she died last year.

M: Is that right?

A: Mm-hmm.

M: I remember -- this is kind of a funny story. I played tennis, and Pop's daughter -- I'm trying to remember her name -- played with us, and she had the same schedule in class. This was our senior year. And in those days, we'd try to get in shape really well, because we went to tennis tournaments.

A: Yeah.

M: And then she and I and a couple of other friends would take off, and we would jog down to the San Gabriel Park from the school and then jog back.

Q: Oh my.

M: And, you know, no one -- we didn't tell anybody. And so we didn't think it was anything wrong with it, because we'd get back in time for the next class. And so anyway, we were jogging along down there on [Calda?] Street, down there about where the football fields are now, almost all the way down at the park, kind of close to where the VFW hall is, and all of a sudden we could hear this car slowly following us, but it wasn't passing us. And we kept wondering, why doesn't that car go on by? We were all of us, about four or five of us, including Pop Williams' daughter, (laughter) all just jogging along there. And then when we turned around and looked he sped up real quick and got (inaudible), "You kids get back to that school!" (laughter)

A: Was this Pop Williams?

M: He said something like, "Now, don't you ever jog down there again. You stay on the school grounds." So...

A: Pop Williams?

M: Yeah, that was Pop Williams. And he was kind of laughing

when I first turned around. Yeah, he was laughing, but he got serious real fast. But, you know, then we just said we were, you know, working out, staying in shape, and so -- physical shape. That was OK with him. I mean,
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

Q: Yeah, yeah. (laughter)

M: But he just didn't want us getting off school grounds, you know, while school was going on.

Q: Mm-hmm. That's funny. Do you mind if I take these
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

M: No, not at all. We made those for you to keep there, and...

Q: Oh, very good.

M: We'll try to find a picture of that house [at mother's house?].

Q: Yeah. Yeah. We'll have to have another session --

M: Yeah!

Q: -- sometime, if you feel up to it.

A: That would be nice.

Q: Yeah.

A: I've enjoyed visiting with you, too.

Q: Oh, I've enjoyed hearing all the stories and the history.

M: Mother's told us a lot of stories through the years, and different people she knew, and it's -- I just wish we

would've recorded it or written it down or something, because I -- there's one story she was telling about one of the guys when you were riding the bus to school, when you lived... Did you ever ride the bus to school, or did y'all walk? Maybe you were just walking --

A: We rode the bus for years, just Georgetown schools.

M: Yeah, and there was this one old boy that would try to tease y'all all the time.

A: (laughter) Yeah. There were several of them. We have to fight with them.

M: Yeah. You girls -- they wouldn't let him, you know... They'd ended up fighting him or something. Now I've forgotten what the story is. So...

A: Well, I had... You know, there's on the center -- in the center of the bus is a seat, a long seat, and if you were late getting on the bus you had to sit on that seat. And every time the bus would turn, you'd fall over. And if you didn't watch out, you'd fall in the floor, on the floor. And he would give you a little bit of push. (laughter) That wasn't very nice. I didn't like that. So I had lots of run-ins with him, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

M: Yeah, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) sisters that way.

A: My books would go here, and I'd go there, and I sure didn't like that.

Q: Might've been his idea of flirting, too. You never know.

M: Oh, yeah. Just a kid, you know. As kids, they're a little, you know, flirty or, you know mischievous, more than anything else.

A: I think he just liked to laugh.

M: Yeah, thought that was funny. I was just -- we were talking about some other things the other day, about houses and buildings and things, that... Houses have burned down. There've been some beautiful houses here in town that burned down. And that one there on where [Wagaback?] is -- I was asking your mother about that -- everybody asks about... We own that little house behind there, and some little rock house, that's made out of hand hewn stones, hand cut stones. They look like they're about the same area as some of the buildings, you know, on the square made with rocks the same way. And so we figured that hand cut stones must be -- and I haven't talked with a real expert, but I would say somewhere in the 1880s, maybe. And so that house was a carriage garage for a big, huge mansion that's set up where the Wagaback is now. And we were thinking that it was owned by some people by the name of -- was it the Hugheses that owned that house? Was that what you were saying?

A: It was either the Hugheses or another prominent family, and

I think it was the Hughes.

M: I don't know if there's anything in the records about old houses in Georgetown that we could find that out or what, but Mother was saying you recall seeing it, didn't you one time?

A: Yeah, mm-hmm. I used to -- when we'd go to the hospital, it was right in front of the hospital. Great, big, two-story house. And it burned down.

M: Yeah. So a lot of people in that area come by, and they say, "What is this little place? It's so strange looking," backwards-looking house, and it actually has three little stalls where doors were, where you would put your wagons and carriages. And then it had a little area on the side where you'd put hay for where the horse would stay. And so then it was made into a house. We don't know when it was made into a house. I know that a fellow by the name of Woods owned it, and his son went to Southwestern. He was from Big Springs in the mid '40s. And his son lived in it then. So I don't know if he made it into a house, or it was made into a house earlier, so we just don't know, but...

A: You know Dr. Patterson? You remember Doctor...? He was a dentist.

Q: Mm-mm.

A: You don't remember him? Well, his daughter married -- his daughter, Evangeline Patterson, you remember her?

Q: Mm-mm.

A: You don't? Well, there's two sisters, and he married the younger one, Dr. Patterson's daughter.

(phone interruption; not transcribed)

A: But they moved, I think, to [Cawkins?], (inaudible). And he lived down at college -- he lived...

END OF AUDIO