

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

OLEN OLIVER

AUGUST 28, 2015

EL LAGO, TEXAS

INTERVIEWED BY PERKY BEISEL & JACKIE GRANT

ORAL HISTORY #998

EAST TEXAS RESEARCH CENTER

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EDITORIAL NOTICE

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Kurt A. Terry transcribed this interview in October 2015. Perky Beisel reviewed the draft of this transcript in January 2016. Kurt A. Terry incorporated his corrections into this final transcript in February 2016.

RESTRICTION

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ABSTRACT

Olen Oliver discusses his time in Arcadia as a boy working his family's farm. Oliver details numerous acts of violence in Arcadia including shootings, fights, and a run in with Clyde Barrow's brother at a local dancehall. He recounts the importance of stores, churches, and school on the lives of Arcadia's community. Having lived through the Great Depression, Oliver notes his time in federal CCC camps.

People Mentioned: Earl Prince, Woodrow Oliver, Andy Oliver, Bryant Oliver, Ewell Oliver, Adele Oliver, William Thomas Oliver, Sarah Francis Gunner Oliver, Harry Burns, Bucky Strong, Dee Golden, Marvin Jones, John Hughes, L. C. Smith, Frank Wallace, Joe Oliver, Voyd Hughes, Nara Hughes, Dalton Pate, Athey Mae Carter, Tom Aldrin, Jerry Peace, Lee Bishop, Ode Sowders, Bud Franks, Herman Williams, Jack Warren, Gerald Gunnels, Bob Crawford, Stewart Crawford, Rex Crawford, John Spradley, Vascal Jones, Bud Powdrill, Jo Neal Wallace, Henry Grant, Harold Franks, Charlie Strong, Marie Powdrill, Bill Reed, Troy Gillespie, Roy Gillespie, Travis Hendricks, Gene Elliot, John Bishop, Marshall Winthrow, Ed Barton, Will Pate, Ida Pate, Grover Ellison, Clyde Barrow, Bonnie Parker, Dee Brown, Ramon Helmsman, L. C. Barrow, Cody Russell, John Walker, Howard Sprole, William Pate, Rachel Pate, Ronnie Pate, Jerry Pate, John Manville, Jakey Smith

Places Mentioned: Lufkin, Texas; Huntsville, Texas; Arcadia, Texas; Timpson, Texas; Center, Texas; Whiterock, Texas; Pleasant Grove, Texas; Aiken, Texas; Shelby County, Texas; Walnut Grove, Shelby County, Texas;

Apple Springs, Texas; Nacogdoches, Texas; Baytown, Texas; San
Augustine, Texas;

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- OLEN OLIVER: ... was. She had her eyes...
- JAKIE GRANT: And then because they had that um gonorrhea that caused them to be in that situation, you know.
- OLIVER: And them Johnson boys and Earl Prince. Earl Prince killed his wife uh there at Lufkin because she wouldn't live with him. And she—he killed her.
- J. GRANT: Killed her? Oh my.
- OLIVER: He went back to the pen.
- J. GRANT: Yea.
- OLIVER: And I was going with his sister. And uh me and her and I forgot who else went to see a rodeo down there, and he had made a billfold, and give it to her with a secret addition in it. And she gave me that billfold, cause I brought her to see him there in Huntsville. This all kind of [unclear] to me, but Woodrow said that you could get rid of gonorrhea as easy as you could a cold, bad cold. [laughter]
- J. GRANT: This is gonna be juicy. [laughter]
- PERKY BEISEL: Well, we'll have to finish this story when we get started. Yea.
- J. GRANT: Y'all got your...
- BEISEL: We're ready.
- J. GRANT: Okay, we're going to start with calmer things. [laughter] Okay?

OLIVER: Okay, go ahead. [laughter]

J. GRANT: Just easy things.

BEISEL: Hold on, before we get started, um thank you very much for doing this.

OLIVER: Thank you.

BEISEL: And, I'm going to do this for the transcriber. Uh, we have in the room is Greg Grant. Can you say hello so they can know your voice?

GREG GRANT: Hello. Greg Grant here.

BEISEL: Okay. Linda Reynolds, we know. Jim Oliver.

JIM OLIVER: Hello.

BEISEL: Okay. Kelley Snowden, Perky Beisel, and Jackie Grant.

JACKIE GRANT: Yes. [unclear]

BEISEL: Okay.

KELLEY SNOWDEN: Who are we interviewing?

BEISEL: We are interviewing Olen Oliver. Is that your full name, Olen Oliver? Any middle...

OLIVER: Yes. Olen Bernard. Olen Bernard.

BEISEL: Bernard?

OLIVER: Olen Bernard. Olen Bernard.

BEISEL: Okay.

J. GRANT: I didn't know that.

OLIVER: Yea.

[laughter]

BEISEL: All right. And today is August 25, 2015. And we are... Oh, 28. 28? See, I have it written down. We are at 204 Confederate Way, El Lago, Texas. Okay. Can you tell us uh when you were born?

OLIVER: When I did what?

J. GRANT: When you were born.

BEISEL: When's your birthday?

OLIVER: 1918. [1917?]

BEISEL: What day of the month?

OLIVER: August 10.

BEISEL: August 10. All right. And where were you born?

OLIVER: I was born out there at the... out there at the farm. At uh Arcadia.

G. GRANT: On August 17? That's your birthday?

OLIVER: Do what?

JIM OLIVER: (August)10, 1917.

G. GRANT: Oh, 1917.

BEISEL: And who owned the farm that you were born at?

OLIVER: I still own it, but I deeded it to my boys.

BEISEL: Mmm hmm.

J. GRANT: Your family owned it then, where you were born and he still owns that land.

BEISEL: Good. What was your father's name?

OLIVER: William, I mean Bill. William Thomas.

BEISEL: Okay. What about your mother?

OLIVER: Sarah Francis. She was a Gunner. Bill comes from Mississippi.

J. GRANT: A Gunner?

OLIVER: Gunner. G-U-N-N-E-R.

J. GRANT: And she came from Mississippi?

OLIVER: Uh huh.

BEISEL: When did she come to Texas?

OLIVER: Ooohhh I don't know. She would have been before or 1918 there at Timpson, so I don't really know when she come to Texas.

BEISEL: Okay.

OLIVER: But her Cox, but her Cox's are...uh Dr. Carr was a doctor there when I was in [unclear]. His name was Carr. C-A-R-R, but he changed it from the Cox. C-O-X. And his tombstone were in Powdrill graveyard are near Cox.

BEISEL: Mmm hmm ahhh. All right. And uh did you have any brothers and sisters?

OLIVER: I've got uh...three bro...uh let's see Woodrow, Andy, Bryant, Eule. That four?

BEISEL: Can you say their names again?

OLIVER: Woodrow, Andy...

J. GRANT: Slow down so they can get it on the tape. Woodrow was one of your brothers.

OLIVER: Woodrow uh...Adele, Woodrow...

J. GRANT: Adele was your sister. Okay. What was another brother's name?

OLIVER: Andy and Bryant.

J. GRANT: Andy?

OLIVER: Andy and Bryant. B-R-Y-A-N-T.

J. GRANT: Andy and Bryant, okay.

BEISEL: Okay. All right. Are any of them still living?

OLIVER: Do what?

J. GRANT: Anybody still living?

OLIVER: I think I'm the only one left.

J. GRANT: You're the only one that is left. That's right.

BEISEL: You're the winner. All right. [laughter]

J. GRANT: Were you the youngest? Are you the youngest of your brothers and sisters?

OLIVER: I think so.

J. GRANT: I think you are. Yea.

BEISEL: Yea, All right. Ah, so um, your parents did they farm? That land?

OLIVER: Yes, they were farmers.

BEISEL: And did you grow up helping...

OLIVER: We had, we had a slave back then. We had during that time when I was born. There was two old trees and they still growing. Well, they're dead, but they're growing out there at the farm. Two old pin oak trees that are...but there was lighting hit them. We had a slave during that time, for a short time in there his [unclear] I don't know where...

J. GRANT: There was somebody that lived with y'all that worked for you?

OLIVER: Yea he was a nigger.

J. GRANT: Okay.

OLIVER: Nigger that...his father sent him to jail up there for...he had a...on the street he had an old buggy he'd push and he'd hot tamales and hot tamales and nothing at all. But at that time he was bootlegging whiskey and they caught

him and sent him back to the jail. And when he come back out, he said, “hot, the hot tamales and that is all.” [whole room laughs]

J. GRANT: But he worked for y’all before he went to prison then?

OLIVER: Yes, yes, uh huh. I supposed to have a birthmark up here by two brothers that are older were whooping him and they whooped him and hit him with a stick or something and wrinkled up my head. He said it was a birthmark I had.
[room laughs]

BEISEL: Ah well, uh were there, were there many other people who made moonshine in the area?

OLIVER: Everybody made moonshine. That’s the way they made their living. They couldn’t make it... [clear throats] I had a brother that made it there he’d always dig wells or something, but he made that whiskey. And I seen this, he made that whiskey there in his house and his wife would sweep the yard and sweep the trash, and that is where he kept the corn, and they would take it in the house and cook it off.

J. GRANT: Nobody ever came out to, no law enforcement?

OLIVER: Yea, they’d come and look, but he, there was an officer that lived there he told them, he called himself a sheriff. He knew who knew about it because it was happening, but it wasn’t. Bryant would always go around, I’ve seen these places.

J. GRANT: So is Bryant the brother that had the...

OLIVER: Bryant, Bryant he was...

J. GRANT: He had the moonshine, okay.

OLIVER: He was something else, Bryant was. They put him in jail here in Center. He went in, Harry Burns did, this was way back. They put him in jail, he had a pistol and a pint of whiskey. And just locked him up overnight then turned him lose. But he had a pistol and a pint of whiskey on him when they locked him up in the jail.

J. GRANT: Did he still live at home then? Did he live with y'all or did he have his own house?

OLIVER: No, he lived with... he lived... he had an operation and he had gas problems, but he had to live with us for a while there.

J. GRANT: Okay. Okay. What did y'all grow out there?

OLIVER: Cotton and corn.

J. GRANT: Cotton and corn.

OLIVER: Uh huh.

J. GRANT: Did you grow a garden for other things?

OLIVER: Oh, always had a big garden, yea.

J. GRANT: Yea.

OLIVER: Yea. I think the one time we killed thirteen hogs. Thirteen hogs we killed them there. Old man Bucky Strong had penned them and I's sitting with the gun [clears throat] my momma was staying the night at Uncle Roland's, and I seen old man Bucky Strong coming down there, and I told Woodrow I says, "He's coming down there. If he shoots those hogs I'm gonna shoot him." And I went and sat down there in the bushes on the side of where he come or where he had came, and I sat there with that shotgun waiting for him... I was

gonna... he shot the hogs then I was gonna shoot him. I done had this in my mind. I was gonna kill him.

J. GRANT: Where these hogs that y'all had raised?

OLIVER: Yea, them were hogs we raised.

J. GRANT: And he was gonna, why was he gonna shoot your hogs?

OLIVER: Well, I don't know. I mean him and my daddy always kept cross with each other.

J. GRANT: Oh. There was some family disputing going on.

OLIVER: Yea, uh huh.

BEISEL: Was he...he was a neighbor?

OLIVER: Yea. He lived across the way.

J. GRANT: He was a neighbor? Yea. But he didn't end up shooting the hogs either?

OLIVER: Nah, he didn't. I woulda killed him if he had. I sure would.

J. GRANT: Did y'all dress the hogs then?

OLIVER: Oh yea. You cut them up and quartered them and then... You'd dress the hogs then you put in salt covering them after. Hogs only take salt while the heat was eminent. What you did you killed that hog and you'd mix up your pepper and stuff and put the salt that you want on 'em, put the—smear it on 'em, leave them overnight, you'd turn it over to the water to drain out, then you'd have a box you stored it in, you'd cover completely with salt. Then you'd let it stay there for a short while, take it up hang it up and smoke it. You'd smoke it the rest of the—you'd dry it out and once you dried it out, it'd hang there forever.

J. GRANT: What kind of wood did you use to smoke it with?

OLIVER: We usually used hickory or red oak. Red oak was good. Hickory was usually what you would try to use.

J. GRANT: So, you had a smokehouse out behind your house?

OLIVER: Oh yea. We had a big smokehouse.

J. GRANT: I know we did back when I was a kid, I remember. But it kinda had—it was kinda like the log cabin type thing, had cracks in it so the smoke would kinda go out then...

OLIVER: Then on top they'd smoke there. But it'll hang there. I had, I had to paid for picking cotton with some of that meat that hanged and dried. It'd dry, but you'd bring it back yourself, it would spoil on you. I brought a ham back from up there while I stayed with Woodrow. Louise didn't cook it right up and later on there was enough moisture down here that had spoiled. Had to throw it away.

J. Grant: So you have to cook it pretty quickly after brought it out of the smokehouse?

OLIVER: No you didn't. Nah it could hang there from now on. You could just hang it up there. After it smoked and dried, you cut pieces off there and [crosstalk]

J. GRANT: Oh, you cut pieces then you cooked it. Was it good?

OLIVER: Oh yea, you better believe it. You didn't buy anything except staple goods.

J. GRANT: Like flour?

OLIVER: Flour and salt and stuff like that.

J. GRANT: Salt, sugar, that's the only thing you bought?

OLIVER: I tell them. One time I tell the men, Dee Golden he killed a calf and we sold it between six and eight cents a pound to the community. And what, we would just drive up to the house and people'd come out and head over and I'd take a knife and cut it off and go ahead and give it to 'em.

J. GRANT: That's the way you did your food then. Well, let me ask you this, you didn't buy meal did you grind you corn for the mill?

OLIVER: Oh yea. We had a grist mill, we had a grist mill at Arcadia. And you also had one at—down the oh Whiterock at the stables down there had one. I never will forget the first time you put your meal in a meal sack and corn and take it down there and I thought, well, what it took out I wasn't gonna have nothing left, but it was over the ground, over a sack full when done. And oh Marvin Jones and Woodrow those coming back from Arcadia one time and had some grinded up there and they scared an old mule and it throwed Woodrow that there at West Creek Bridge.

J. GRANT: The mule throwed him?

OLIVER: Yea.

J. GRANT: And he was bringing the meal home?

OLIVER: Yea.

J. GRANT: Did he spill all the meal?

OLIVER: They scared that old mule. That old mule throwed me a couple of times.

J. GRANT: I can imagine.

OLIVER: He wasn't bad, but you'd scare him or anything and you're gone, he'd buck you off.

J. GRANT: Did it ever hurt you?

OLIVER: I just turned, flipped, but never broke my bones.

J. GRANT: Y'all were tough then, weren't you?

OLIVER: What was...we had to been.

J. GRANT: Did you have a corn crib to put your corn in?

OLIVER: Oh yea. We had a sack half section of it, kept the corn in that and cotton seed in the other side. And you feed the cotton seed to your cows and feed that corn, nubbings and things to cows there. And you can take corn that cattle are having trouble discharging after she had a calf and you can feed her that burnt corn and she'd kick that off to clean up. She'd clean up with it.

J. GRANT: Oh really? That'd help her clean up after calving then? Huh, so you knew—had lot of tricks like that?

OLIVER: Oh yea.

J. GRANT: You didn't have veterinarians around to take care of it, did you?

OLIVER: No, we had to—I remember one-time John Hughes was—he lived there in Center and he uh castrated a mule for a dollar and a quarter but he was just uh he wasn't a licensed veterinarian he was just a regular...I mean.

J. GRANT: Just a person who came out and knew a lot about doing that, you know? I don't know even, when we moved there. I don't know of any veterinarian around that time, you know? Cause I...

OLIVER: You'd have later on you'd have one moved in up there Pleasant Grove.

J. GRANT: Yea.

OLIVER: Uh can't figure his name right now, but he was there for a while.

J. GRANT: Yea. Okay. Did you grow any cane? Ribbon cane?

OLIVER: Oh yea. I bought a saddle with cane, L.C. Smith, I swapped that syrup you got a dollar a gallon, if it weighed eight pounds. It had to weigh eight pounds it had to be a gallon of syrup.

J. GRANT: Eight pounds was a gallon and you got a dollar for it then?

OLIVER: If you didn't, they'd do that, it would sour on you and if you cooked it too long, it'd turn to raw candy, but you'd put water in it and it would be back on.

J. GRANT: Where did you take it to have it made into the syrup? Where was the syrup mill?

OLIVER: Right there in Arcadia. Right there at your house where Joe Oliver made syrup down there.

J. GRANT: Joe Oliver was the syrup maker uh huh. Did he know how...

OLIVER: Him and Frank Wallace.

J. GRANT: Frank Wallace? Yea, Frank Wallace was my granddad, Greg's great-granddad.

G. GRANT: He had a syrup mill too.

J. GRANT: Had a syrup mill. Uh, did they know how to cook it right?

OLIVER: Oh yea. You could take it up and watch it. They had, had sections in that pan, and you'd skim it, get it clean. And uh they'd take it, drip it in the last one, and when it would drip and hang, like they thought. Then they'd—If you didn't, it would sour on you.

J. GRANT: Well that was kind of a talent to just know whether it was cooked. [crosstalk]

OLIVER: It was Frank Wallace was good and Joe Oliver was good.

J. GRANT: Yea. Did everybody, most everybody grow cane in Arcadia?

OLIVER: Back along then about the Bucky Strong's time, yea old man Bucky Strong had a uh he grind syrup up, ground cane up there on a mill. He had an old gas engine pulled his, there in Arcadia they had a mule that went around and around. Like I think you had one of those mills now.

J. GRANT: Greg has one. We don't have a mule, we use the grandkids to pull it around and round. [laughter] Well, I remember that Voyd used to have a syrup mill.

OLIVER: Who?

J. GRANT: Voyd Hughes, Nara and Voyd Hughes. They'd run their own after I moved. You were probably in Houston at that time, so you didn't. It was later on and he had a syrup mill. He used a mule to pull his around. But you were living then with Joy in Houston, so that was—you were a young man and I was just a kid then, so you probably didn't know about Voyd's syrup mill. But that's what we used.

OLIVER: I don't remember his.

J. GRANT: Uh what stores were in Arcadia when you lived there?

OLIVER: Miss Lou and Walker. Miss Lou and Walker had a...

J. GRANT: Did they both have a store at the same time?

OLIVER: There was a store across the road from each other, and then later on winched it across and drug it up where it's at now.

J. GRANT: Did both of them sell, you know, groceries about the same thing?

OLIVER: The sell about everything. Everything's on credit there. In other words, if you didn't get—the bank could only loan you so much money to make a crop on, and you'd have to set a charge the rest of it and pay at the end of the fall.

J. GRANT: Do you think they ever got paid for all of their, their things that they sold?

OLIVER: Yea. Most. If you didn't pay up like that, well then, they knew who you were and you couldn't get credit, see.

J. GRANT: So, there were enough people in Arcadia to use two stores then?

OLIVER: Oh yea. And they also had a post office in Arcadia that had little boxes they put the mail in. First they had two routes. They had two routes there. One to Center and Timpson and one right there to Arcadia.

J. GRANT: Well where was the post office?

OLIVER: It was in a store. In that store, the one across the road over on where your house is.

J. GRANT: That was the Walker's store wasn't it?

OLIVER: It was the Walker's store uh huh.

J. GRANT: And that's where the post office started?

OLIVER: Yea, and it had little boxes in there. People have to come get it at their store.

J. GRANT: Well, Reginald, Miss Lou's grandson, said the way they moved the Walker store was they cut trees and they rolled it on those trees after he left and Miss Lou bought it.

OLIVER: They skidded that old man from down there at Aiken. He carried a wench and they'd tie it on to and skidded it across.

J. GRANT: You call it skidding. They skidded it across the road then?

OLIVER: Uh huh. They put things on there for it to slide on, but they did skid it across. They used to have there, they use to have there at the old Baptist church, they had electric rods that made—they had an old uh agent that made electricity

and they had—when they didn't have that, I remember the, the pans, they had, they'd hang kerosene and they'd have a big one on top and low and up about two foot, you'd light it up and it'd burn off that.

J. GRANT: That's what they had in that church?

OLIVER: That's what they had in that—where they had uh Woodman of the World Lodge. They used to have Woodman of the World Lodge and it had that old goat up there that would initiate them on. Where they would roll some strap on. We'd roll it, had a goat.

J. GRANT: Well, I had heard about some people going up there and trying to see that goat. Was that you or daddy that got...[chuckles]

OLIVER: Well, it was in my time. I remember it was in my time.

J. GRANT: Yea. Was, was— it the goat was an initiation thing, it wasn't a real goat was it?

OLIVER: No. It was on wheels and it was an initiation.

G. GRANT: It was a bucking bull [crosstalk]

J. GRANT: Yea. So, in that Woodman of the World that was the lodge building?

OLIVER: Yea. That was the old, old church used to be.

J. GRANT: And the church, they used it for a school too didn't they?

OLIVER: Used for—they did one time. They had that early [unclear] trying to work cause the sun went into eclipse. So, sun come over the moon, or whatever. But and they looked through it, smoked glass and see it, the sun was over the moon.

J. GRANT: So y'all saw the eclipse of the moon then?

OLIVER: Yea.

J. GRANT: All right. That sounds, well let's go back to your family. I know that there were some hardships with your family. How old were you when your daddy left?

OLIVER: About four years old. The only thing he ever give me after he had left home, and he give me a baseball. I remember him coming by, he had a sack. I'd kill him at one time if I knew how to shoot. My brother had an automatic pistol and then my other, Woodrow, was eating dinner over at Bryant's and we had one over there, this was while momma and him was separated, he went over there and he was gonna take old Dolly [horse] to see some of his friends. Well, when we started eating dinner, Woodrow got up and left the table. And I got the idea that something would happen, so I caught up and followed behind him, and he was untying the horse. And him and the old man was struggling over the horse, and Bryant had an automatic pistol. Later on I tell you about it. He had that automatic pistol laying on the dresser and I went by and picked it up, and carried it out there pointing it at, I didn't know how to pull the safety on, so I couldn't shoot him. But, he hollered for Bryant, said, "Oh, Bryant come get this boy, he's got this gun." So he come get the gun away from me out there.

J. GRANT: How old were you then?

OLIVER: I couldn't have been over about five, maybe four.

J. GRANT: Four or five.

OLIVER: Yea, something like that.

J. GRANT: But he didn't live at the house with you at that time?

OLIVER: No, him and my momma had separated...

J. GRANT: But he was coming to get a horse that belonged to y'all?

OLIVER: He was still kept at home. She was an old swayback mare and we was, had rode here over there and he was going to take her away from us and go see some of his friends.

J. GRANT: So, you weren't gonna let him have the horse?

OLIVER: I put that gun on him, and if I knew how to I'd shot him, Woodrow, or the horse or something. But I didn't know how to shoot that pistol. Later on, old Sauders used it to kill everybody. Go ahead.

J. GRANT: Well, how did y'all manage to raise the crops after your daddy left? Did your brothers...

OLIVER: Yea, my brother named Ewell, he come in and started doing things needed to do. Made...

J. GRANT: Helped your, helped your mother out.

OLIVER: Only plow he had with us there was an old wooden beam Kelly. He didn't have a stab, he used cast iron. An old wooden beam Kelly with a wooden beam that you would pull with a mule one row at a time. Later on, we got a cultivator from Tom Aldrin. I used it myself. But uh.

J. GRANT: Well your brothers all, and your sister got older and left, it just left you and your mother.

OLIVER: Yea. Started leaving when—I was left there when they went off and left me when Woodrow went into the Army. Woodrow got Athey Mae Carter pregnant and he run to the Army to get away.

J. GRANT: Athey Mae who?

OLIVER: Athey Mae Carter. She was...

J. GRANT: Carter. So.

OLIVER: Momma had also said she uh her and Adel had done got married, and momma had troubles with them and she said, “One black sheep in the family was enough.” [laughter] So, Todd and Carter went to work in Houston and Adel they were borned there at Todd’s daddy’s place. And she wouldn’t let [unclear] use her breast and momma went and talked to her. Anyhow, I don’t know what the problem was then. Anyhow, that’s the way that turned out.

J. GRANT: Well, then you ended up being that last one at home with your mother?

OLIVER: Woodrow moved off and left me, I was sixteen years old. Woodrow went—of course to go in the Army to get away from Athey...

J. GRANT: Woodrow left because he had gotten a girl pregnant then. So, he went to the Army and you were the only one left at home.

OLIVER: Right, uh huh.

J. GRANT: And you were what, sixteen?

OLIVER: Sixteen years old, uh huh.

J. GRANT: You and your mother then?

OLIVER: Yea. Me and her.

J. GRANT: Was it pretty hard making a crop by yourself?

OLIVER: Well, I knew how to plow and do all of this it wasn't—how it was she told me to watch Jerry Peace, how he plowed and plow mine like it. And then check it. And that's what I did. It was a Georgia stock, a lighter there was differences between a Georgia stock and a Texas stock.

J. GRANT: A Georgia stock and a Texas stock?

OLIVER: Texas stock. Yes. A Georgia stock has two handles, right back to back that met up and down. A Texas stock you had to use a back band. Under that to raise your teeth. Your traces go high or low and I use a, use that on them.

J. GRANT: Well, you had to be pretty knowledgeable to do all of that.

OLIVER: Well, you learn that stuff cause you growed up with it. I know, I know there is a certain signs and stuff. We'd grow up planting stuff with a [unclear]. They'd still have—now you don't know it, but with the dark nights in August, if it rains, you won't have any pecans or acorns or anything to mash. In dark nights in August.

J. GRANT: Dark nights in August.

OLIVER: Yes, sir.

J. GRANT: You won't have any...

OLIVER: If it rains you won't have any...[crosstalk]

J. GRANT: If it rains it won't help pecans.

OLIVER: ...won't help pecans or nothing.

J. GRANT: Okay, that's a new one. I didn't know that one. Did you know that one, Greg?

OLIVER: There's another one. If the—Whippoorwill hollers, before nine o'clock in the morning, the whole—I'm talking about a whippoorwill. If he hollers there will be a change in the weather before eleven o'clock, before the day is over.

J. GRANT: If he, if he...

OLIVER: Whippoorwill...

J. GRANT: ...Hollers before nine, before nine o'clock

OLIVER: ...hollers, a hoot owl, a hoot owl.

J. GRANT: Or a hoot owl. Then the weather's going to change.

OLIVER: Yea. If it hollers the weather will change in twenty-four hours.

J. GRANT: Oh, within twenty-four hours.

OLIVER: Uh huh.

J. GRANT: Okay. We're gonna have to start paying better attention then. [chuckles] We don't have many more whippoorwills anymore though. So...

OLIVER: It's a whippoorwill, not a hoot owl, a whippoorwill.

J. GRANT: A whippoorwill. Oh okay.

OLIVER: There's a difference with a hoot owl. You ever see a hoot owl? A hoot owl is little I forget something if he would. If the hoot owl screamed or something there'd be a death in your family.

J. GRANT: Oh, if he screams...

OLIVER: A hoot owl will scare the hell out of you when they squeal. I've had them, I've had them things, a hoot howl, I remember one time I was coming to a bridge [unclear] and I come out the field in the evening and that hoot owl

hollered out of that tree right there over me, well it scared the hell out of me.

[laughter] It screamed.

J. GRANT: And that's telling you somebody's gonna die if you hear them scream.

OLIVER: That's what I said said, there'd be a death in your family.

J. GRANT: Oh, I don't want to hear one of those. [chuckles] Well, tell us about the Bishop killing. Can you go back and tell them all about that?

OLIVER: Yea, let me start way back before the Bishop killing.

J. GRANT: Okay.

OLIVER: It was some of them a fellows name, it won't come to me now, making whiskey down at Aiken. And he knocked, two boys had found his mash and they gettn' in it, and he knocked them in the head with a pine knot and killed them.

J. GRANT: Oh, he killed them. He found them getting in the mash?

BEISEL: What was his name again?

J. GRANT: He can't think of his name right now.

BEISEL: Oh, okay.

OLIVER: Let's see... Ode Sowders one Lee Bishop...Right now I can't think of it.

BEISEL: Okay.

OLIVER: Uh down below Aiken they used pine knot to knock them in the head.

J. GRANT: He hit him with a pine knot and he killed these two boys for getting in his still, in the mash?

OLIVER: I remember watching [unclear] him afterwards.

J. GRANT: Okay.

OLIVER: And Ode Sowders. The Bishops place. The Bishops, Ode Sowders...

J. GRANT: What's his name?

OLIVER: Lee Bishop killed Ode Sowders.

J. GRANT: Lee Bishop killed?

OLIVER: Ode Sowders. He was a uh Lee Bishop's wife was a sister to the woman teaching school at Aiken. I mean Walnut Grove. Anyhow...

J. GRANT: Walnut Grove, okay.

OLIVER: Back on the—and he killed him.

J. GRANT: Walnut Grove is south of Arcadia, right?

G. GRANT: Close to [unclear].

OLIVER: Walnut Grove is just down the road. But Lee Bishop's wife's sister and her—I can't think of the guy's name. Anyhow, he was washing her feet and he made some statement about her having sex with them and the Bishops, Lee Bishop and old man Bud Franks and Herman Williams and several more went and loaded up and went down there to confront him at home. And they called him out of the house. Herman Williams said this, he was a good friend of Ewell's, Ode Sowders was. Called him out of the house and they promised his mother that they wouldn't let nothing happen to him and Lee Bishop was walking up on the bank and Ode Sowders down lower and Lee Bishop shot him, while he was walking down the road. And when he shot him, he laid—his daughter had a kid and had a birthmark where he was shot, his left side, a big blood splotch in her skin. She went to school and had that when I went to school. That was her birthmark. A birthmark that I believe then would birthmarks do happen.

My momma was making some teacakes and a neighbor lived across—across from us come over there and she wanted them teacakes because they're good. My momma had plenty of them for her, but she wouldn't ask for, so she had placed her hand on her hip, and I remember my momma, them pulling her up and lifting her dress and she had the picture of that teacake on her hip.

J. GRANT: That was the birthmark.

OLIVER: That was the birthmark. Absolutely. The reason I'm saying this is because the blood, Lee Bishop's wife's daughter's boy birthmark on her.

J. GRANT: You think after the killing that the birthmark was placed on the...

OLIVER: After the killing...yea.

J. GRANT: Well, I didn't know that part. So were there, you mentioned two killings.

G. GRANT: We haven't finished the Bishop Hill killing yet.

J. GRANT: Okay, All right. Go ahead, Greg. Do you have more to say about the Bishop Hill killing?

OLIVER: Well, Jack Warren he went to school uh I went to school with him. In fact, I said this probably but Jack Warren...

J. GRANT: What did you do with his pocket knife now?

OLIVER: Huh?

J. GRANT: You said...

G. GRANT: None of that was Bishop Hill killing.

J. GRANT: Oh okay.

OLIVER: I had gotten his pocket knife. But anyhow.

J. GRANT: Okay. [chuckles]

OLIVER: Jack Warren, Gerald Gunnels asked them what they wanted to be, a farmer. What they want to be when they grow up. Oh Jack Warren, ole Gerald Gunnels was a school teacher...

J. GRANT: Gerald Gunnels.

OLIVER: Gerald Gunnels and he got sixty dollars a year for teaching at Arcadia. But he told uh about him, Gerald Gunnels he was gonna be a farmer and a damn fool. [laughter] Well he went to assault him, see.

J. GRANT: He wanted to be a farmer and a damn fool?

OLIVER: That's what he told him, uh huh. [laughter] [background TV noises-gameshow]

BEISEL: Now you had mentioned was there another killing and the Bishop Hill killing.

G. GREG: Tell about Jack Warren when the Bishop Brothers...

OLIVER: Jack Warren killed Lee and Van Bishop.

BEISEL: What was the—who did he kill?

OLIVER: Lee and Van.

G. GRANT: Lee Bishop. Lee Bishop that had already killed a Pate.

OLIVER: [crosstalk] empties his gun and shoots him in his hip. And uh, this other guy, in a minute I'll think of it. Anyhow he was running and he run by and the shooting started. He run by old man Bishop's house, and went over to old man Baker's house, that's where his wife lived. He run through there and he had shot a hole through his britches leg. When he kept running over there and told them about the killing. I can't think of his name right now.

BEISEL: Okay, okay.

G. GRANT: Wasn't Jack Warren killing them because uh they'd all been sleeping with his wife and he was mad about it?

OLIVER: Do what?

G. GRANT: Wasn't the reason Jack Warren was mad and went to kill them, hadn't they all been sleeping with his wife?

J. GRANT: Were they fooling around with his wife?

OLIVER: Well, they didn't know that for sure, but I had, when I was sixteen years old. I had made out with her.

J. GRANT: Oh. [chuckles]

G. GRANT: Everybody did, didn't they?

J. GRANT: So everybody had taken a turn with her, huh? So it took him that long to figure it out huh?

OLIVER: Anyhow. They figured that she had told him that Lee was coming up there.

G. GRANT: Lee was waiting on him an ambush.

OLIVER: Lee Bishop and—uh huh. And...

G. GRANT: His brother Van.

OLIVER: Bob Crawford lived out below them and they figured Bob Crawford, Lee, and Van had aggravated him about his WPA time and he had to go back to the asylum. Old man Bob Crawford.

J. GRANT: Oh, he had been in the asylum, huh?

OLIVER: He had been in the asylum and they had stirred him up. So they figured, they heard this horse eating corn and he died shortly after. And they figured old man Bob Crawford had poisoned them horses to get a stir—to mix up between

Jack Warren and them. And he did. Later on when Bob Crawford, Stewart Crawford killed himself, and his grandson, Rex, he killed himself on a dam there at Aiken. I can't think of his name right now, but it was uh I'm having to slow down.

J. GRANT: Now, all of these had something to do with the Bishop killing then?

OLIVER: Well, kinda yea and kinda tied in...

J. GRANT: Tied in with it.

BEISEL: Well did uh—you said he'd been WPA. Were there working the New Deal Programs? Were there many of them there in Arcadia?

OLIVER: The government, the government had a, had a deal where there were taking a bunch of people to forestry work. I was in a CC [CCC] camp myself.

J. GRANT: They were doing forestry work?

OLIVER: Yea, and they paid your parents twenty-five dollars—fifty—thirty dollars a month and you got five dollars of that money yourself to keep.

J. GRANT: But they gave it to the parents?

BEISEL: Yea, uh huh.

OLIVER: There was old WPA. There was old relief. Relief was always get those guys, you could say so and so, but you are on relief because they're doing that much. They got—we got five and they got the other of it.

BEISEL: Where'd you work? Which camp did you work in?

OLIVER: I worked at Apple Springs. And Apple Springs was [unclear]. They had a killing up there, a nigger had killed another hog and the guy caught him and killed him too. And I was there at Apple Springs when the old sheriff from

Nacogdoches, Spradley—John Spradley, come to Nacogdoches with two bloodhounds and old John Spradley went over to Niggerton that was an old permanent place out in front of Frank he and old Stevenson kicked the gate open and lined all those niggers up right on the fence and told them they were gonna kill them all if they didn't tell them where he was at. So they told them he went down and climbed up in a peanut crib and found where he went to sleep and them dogs took them to the bottom and they got the whole city people in there to him that knew him and told him if he didn't come out they were gonna leave him to the mob. And a mob had killed a nigger in Center. A mob had killed—Now I'm get mixed up.

BEISEL: Well they killed one down in Nacogdoches. They had, with Spradley, yea.

OLIVER: Do what now?

J. GRANT: Now this one you said he had killed a hog. Had he killed some—this...

OLIVER: He dield, the CC camp was my boss, his brother, and he had come over there and caught him killing that hog and turned around and come back.

J. GRANT: Well was he killing the hog to take home and eat?

OLIVER: Yea. This nigger was gonna take home to eat. And he went back and he killed him then. And then of course when they sent some guy, carried him to Huntsville, and locked him up in prison.

J. GRANT: So, they did find him and he went to prison then?

OLIVER: I don't know where he went from there, but he did.

G. GRANT: Olen, back to Jack Warren. What type of gun did he use to kill Van and Lee Bishop?

OLIVER: A twelve-gauge shotgun. He emptied that twelve-gauge shotgun on—he shot uh Lee after he hit the ground and walked the side of him, shot the side of his head off and uh then Van, he started shooting him and Cecil, he shot him in the back. He emptied that gun of all them shells and taken that pistol and shot at Ode Sowders. He's the one that killed him. He shot at old man Baker's house.

G. GRANT: And did he turn himself in or did they go get him, or what?

OLIVER: No, he got into a car and he went on to down there after he killed them two Bishops he went and got on to old man Warren they had an old Model-A car and he went down there and took that car and got in it and went around by Uncle Allen's and passed Vascal Jones. He threwed that shotgun in the window and headed to Helton and drove by him. He drove by Vascal Jones and went on to town and turned himself in. Course they carried him right on in to—and locked him up in the insane asylum.

J. GRANT: Didn't he throw that shotgun out along the way?

G. GRANT: Yes.

OLIVER: No, uh huh. He carried that gun with him to jail. Cause he done that shootin' so he carried that gun with him to jail.

J. GRANT: You know I have a shotgun that Jo Neal Wallace says is the gun that was used.

OLIVER: He may have the shotgun that old man Bud Powdrill killed his son with.

G. GRANT: No tell us about that killing.

J. GRANT: Maybe I got confused. Maybe that's the one I have. Tell us about that one.

OLIVER: What? About the gun or what?

J. GRANT: About the...

G. GRANT: Tell about Bud Powdrill killing his son.

J. GRANT: Bud Powdrill killing his son.

OLIVER: Old man Bud Powdrill and his boy was they were having a family argument there. And he come out and shot—I can't think of the boy's name, but he killed him.

J. GRANT: It was his son?

OLIVER: Yea, he killed his son.

G. GRANT: Where'd that happen?

OLIVER: That happened there in down there in West Creek Bottom. Right down—you know where the hill used to be to Bud Powdrill's house?

G. GRANT: Yes sir.

OLIVER: I was down in that bottom down there where he farmed down there.

J. GRANT: Why did he kill his son?

OLIVER: There was an argument about something about something had come up. And there was a division—and her and her husband. And she had said stayed with the old man Henry Grant's—he stayed at old man Henry Grant's the night he loaded that shotgun killed, that Bud Powdrill killed his boy.

G. GRANT: Did they send him to jail or what did they do with Bud Powdrill?

OLIVER: They uh sent him to the pen and another man in the pen shot him off—shot old man Bud Powdrill off his horse down there while his horse was drinking

water. He shot him at the legs and he lost both legs and he had to—he died from there.

J. GRANT: Oh my.

OLIVER: That was Bud Powdill's son.

J. GRANT: There's a lot of shooting going on in Arcadia.

OLIVER: Yea. It was pretty rough.

J. GRANT: Well I want to know—you talked about having the black man that worked for y'all, I know.

OLIVER: Rube, his name was Rube.

J. GRANT: Rube, who worked for you. I know at that time that the black people were not allowed to come into Arcadia.

OLIVER: No. They said that—they had a sign that said "Black man don't let the sun go down on you." They had a sign there in Arcadia when you came into Arcadia. Harold Franks and bunch of them on horses there one day. And they had a guy that delivered gasoline there on a truck. And they was arguing before going in there but they uh they asked that guy from Timpson, on that truck, on their horses, and they run him and that truck and he had to leave it down in that creek below your house, and go to Timpson and get him a way back home.

J. GRANT: Well how did that allow y'all to have room to work for you? [unclear]

OLIVER: What happens—they, they see niggers use to have that area. The Powdrill graveyard was up there, I mean at the—there was a graveyard up there on the Charlie Strong place. Right there...

G. GRANT: Who was buried in it?

OLIVER: Well I remember us going to school and there was one name in there was on a tombstone Marie Powdrill. And uh, they'd always take her—you'd go by there and put your hand on her tomb and say "Marie, what you doing?" she'd say, "Nothing." See. [laughter] [unclear] But uh.

BEISEL: Do you remember where that was located? You said the Strong property.

OLIVER: What now?

J. GRANT: Where the cemetery is located.

OLIVER: It wasn't no—It was just rocks and a tombstone and rocks laying there. Rocks laying the graves and it had one tombstone.

G. GRANT: It's on the way to your house coming home from school.

OLIVER: You remember that day you found, you found my dog up there?

G. GRANT: Yes, sir.

OLIVER: It's right across the road from there. That's where...

J. GRANT: He's shown Greg before, he can give y'all the information.

OLIVER: You can find them tombstone now if you go back over there. Bill Reed hauled them off over there and threw them in the gully. But you can find—if you go right back from where you found my dog...

G. GRANT: Right.

OLIVER: ...you go back over there in that brush, you'd find them rocks.

G. GRANT: We'll have to look for them. And those were black Powdrills right?

J. GRANT: It's off County Road 1505.

G. GRANT: Were there more black Powdrills in Jennyville?

OLIVER: Jennyville was school up on that edge of the mountain up there, had a spring in it, and...

G. GRANT: Back behind your house?

OLIVER: Yea, up on that hill up there, they called Jennyville. Waterman used to have a big saw mill down there. It sawed logs, it had a freight train that run out, and seen cross by bottom and run up Walnut Grove where up in there, hauling logs. And then, that train runs till—well they closed, they closed the post office routes, they closed all that up. It run, that train run—we used to go, quit, quit work when that train blows to go down. It would blow about eleven o'clock, and if you hear it blow you'd go out for dinner time.

J. GRANT: Didn't they have a big train wreck?

OLIVER: That was one I'm talking about. Where they used to go, come from down Walnut Grove and come down Snow Hill there and come out of my field cross it and there across there on...

G. GRANT: I think that predated him.

J. GRANT: Yea, probably was.

BEISEL: Um, well tell us when did you leave home?

OLIVER: Do what now?

BEISEL: When did you leave home?

J. GRANT: When did you leave home as a boy? How old were you when you finally left home?

OLIVER: I went in the CC camp I guess I was about sixteen. I guess something like that. When I got on relief got—momma and them drove twenty-five dollars. But

that was relief money. Roosevelt done two good things. He built some roads and like that. But he killed the cotton, burnt corn, and uh plowed up everything like that. But he was no good. Roosevelt was no good. Herbert Hoover ended the war for us when he dropped that atomic bomb. [sic, Harry S. Truman]

J. GRANT: Well how did you meet Joy, your wife?

OLIVER: I met her when I was working there at Baytown. When I was working over there for transit work.

J. GRANT: You left CC camp after that? How old were you...

OLIVER: It was after that when I met her.

J. GRANT: How old were you when you left the camp and went to work then?

OLIVER: How old was I when I went to work?

J. GRANT: Uh huh.

OLIVER: Ohhh.

J. GRANT: When you met Joy how old were you?

OLIVER: I must have been about, let's see. Let me think about it. I went to work with Woodrow.

J. GRANT: You went to work with Woodrow, he was working...

OLIVER: Woodrow told your mother that he would—to leave me alone. He would—he had more important things for me and her to do. He told your mother that he don't want her to bother me and he was gonna take me to Houston. That was, that was way on up there about—must have been about '40, 1940. For five hundred—I mean, yea for five-hundred dollars, if you had that much cash,

you could go to Ramon Pearson's and put it down on a car, if you worked for an oil company, you could buy it on credit. For that much money, so 1940 I would say.

J. GRANT: How uh, how old were you when you married Joy? Do you remember? When did you and Joy get married?

OLIVER: Ohhh. Uh, we married while I was living—I mean uh about 1940.

J. GRANT: Around—and your mother lived with you some. Did she live with you?

OLIVER: She lived with me and her up till, well till she passed away.

J. GRANT: Till she passed away, uh huh. Did y'all live in Houston the entire time then?

OLIVER: She uh I was living in—working—I went to work at oil and chemical, for—I went work there for uh a dollar a...about a dollar an hour.

J. GRANT: A dollar an hour.

OLIVER: And I was promoted later on, for boss.

G. GRANT: Ask him when he met Grandma.

OLIVER: I was an expert on fixing machines. Sewing machines and stuff like that. And I—St. Louis was the, had a big place in Louisiana they had already interviewed me and I figured they offer me more money and everything to go work for them on them sewing machines 'cause I really knew how to fix a sewing machine. A sewing machine they'll loop and make a chain. If, if it don't do that, you got something really wrong with your sewing machine. Your judgement on your needle and stuff and the bobbing. If you have—if it makes that loop, you know your trouble is somewhere else. So, if it started to have—if it wasn't doing nothing—you could do that for the chain, you'd

know to look somewhere else. And it had a dribble gate. It dribbled in it was ninety percent on when. The company set ninety percent accuracy and ten percent weight. And that dribble gate would have to dribble and actually weight to mount up for the difference in the poundage. And you'd set that and you had the little latches on them dribble gates, you could make it dribble in more, more fertilizer to weigh the sack out to a hundred pounds.

J. GRANT: Well, I don't know of anything you couldn't fix. Not just the machines.

OLIVER: Well, I was pretty lucky. Pretty lucky, I didn't have no education. Tenth grade, I quit school in tenth grade.

J. GRANT: You quit...

G. GRANT: Where did you go to school?

OLIVER: At Cooper.

J. GRANT: At Cooper School? Tell them about the fire.

OLIVER: Old Troy Franks — old Troy Gillespie set that school on fire and used my sweater, stuffed it in uh and blocked it out and set that schoolhouse on fire and burn it down. That was Troy Gillespie.

G. GRANT: Well, did he stick it in the furnace?

OLIVER: I don't know where he put it, but he used my sweater soaking with kerosene and set the schoolhouse—schoolhouse burnt down, they had to finish the year up over there church house and your house.

J. GRANT: When did you meet mother? When did you meet Marquette?

OLIVER: That be 1940.

J. GRANT: Didn't they, didn't they live over there close where your farm was? My—
Reatie and the Wallace family didn't they have a place...

OLIVER: Yea. There way before, before my daddy left home. Momma and Aunt Lil
lived there next to them.

J. GRANT: Did you and mother ever play together as kids?

OLIVER: Oh, yea. When we was kids, we had on a hill down there. We had—I would
be able to holler and scope it and everything. Boy and stuff like that. She
wasn't but six years old I think. She was six or seven, something like that.

J. GRANT: So you had known her a long time then?

OLIVER: I'd known her ever since she been born, I guess you would say.

J. GRANT: Well, what kind of kid was mother?

OLIVER: What kind of what?

J. GRANT: Was she a good kid? Was she a quiet kid? Was she...

OLIVER: Yea, didn't have no trouble. Weren't no trouble over her, nuh huh.

J. GRANT: What about Marguerite?

OLIVER: Marguerite was uh—we didn't know too much about her. She got to go—I
mean, Vada took her to Houston.

J. GRANT: Oh.

OLIVER: To learn how to fix hair.

J. GRANT: So, she was gone.

OLIVER: She met Woodrow down there in Houston.

J. GRANT: Yea.

OLIVER: Uh she already knew Woodrow, but...

J. GRANT: They dated some, didn't they?

OLIVER: Yea, she would...

J. GRANT: That was my aunt, his brother.

OLIVER: Woodrow was, was going to marry her, but he said he wouldn't marry her on account of Roy Gillespie had got to her before he did. [laughter]

J. GRANT: He didn't want any used goods, huh?

OLIVER: I'm telling you. If Marguerite would tell you the truth, she could tell you more about this than I could. [laughter]

J. GRANT: I'll bring that up before she does. [laughter] You know a lot of good stories.
[laughter]

OLIVER: Its been ninety-eight years, a lot of this has been in there.

J. GRANT: What did you...

OLIVER: In the meantime, I have knocked three people in the head. [laughter]

G. GRANT: Who were they?

J. GRANT: Tell them about your fights.

OLIVER: Travis Hendricks and Gene Elliot. And Gene Elliot stabbed me right here, and Travis Hendricks, he kicked me—he kicked my eye, and kicked me in the eye. And I got him later. I walked up—John Bishop I had him and helped me cut a pine sapling there on Walnut Grove and all just so I could reached around it, and I told him if—I Hart Martin had a pair of oaks to slip behind him and knock him in the head. And uh, anyhow he lift shirts and I didn't get to get him at that time, I told ol' John Bishop go help me cut and he went down there and he helped me bend a pine sapling down. I cut me a club, about oh about

two or three-foot long, and propped that thing up by the Sunday Schoolhouse, and walked up there and told him if he, if he told him I'd whoop him.

Anyhow, when church was over, he walked out beside the house, walked up beside that tree, and I went and got my club, walked back—I hit him. And uh, Marshall Winthrow was kin to Hendricks, and he come running in, and I hit him, cause it felt like when I hit him the pieces of that stick were still hanging on, it busted. Well, Ed Barton later told me that stick had shattered like that—it just shattered all to pieces. I'd probably killed him had that not happened. Ed Barton said he asked him did it hurt [laughter] and...

J. GRANT: But you told me you never fought with anybody unless they'd done something to you.

OLIVER: Right, right. Well, me and Pershing paid to fight all the time. That was a neighbor there. Will Pate's boy. Who did Ida—Ida Pate. Who was Will Pate's wife? Who was she?

J. GRANT: I don't know. I don't know, Olen. I'm sorry. I can't remember.

OLIVER: Ida, may have been a Powdrill, I'm not sure, if she was a Powdrill or not. I know my brother, uh Towhead and Grover's wife they offered money for—for to marry Towhead cause she got pregnant from uh, from uh Grover. And my brother Ewell was...

J. GRANT: Oh, she was pregnant and needed to get married, huh to somebody?

OLIVER: Yea, and my brother Ewell, he was going to marry her and mom and them put a stop to it. Wouldn't let him do it.

J. GRANT: But they were gonna pay him to marry since she needed a husband.

OLIVER: Yea, Towhead he was gonna pay him to marry, Towhead.

J. GRANT: Did she ever find somebody to marry her?

OLIVER: I guess so. Grover had some kids there.

G. GRANT: What was Grover's last name, Ellison?

OLIVER: Ellison, Grover Ellison. And he—he had a brother named J. B.

J. GRANT: Tell us about—what was the dancing—dance hall that, y'all went to?

OLIVER: Do what?

J. GRANT: The Dance Hall Brown's or..

G. GRANT: Dee Brown's?

J. GRANT: Dee Brown's.

OLIVER: Dee Brown's was a beer joint down there in San Augustine.

J. GRANT: Yea.

OLIVER: That's where you spent your Saturday nights. You know about Clyde Barrow? You heard about Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow? They were born right, right at the—well, right across the river, the Attoyac, Martinsville. Up in the woods. Bonnie Parker she had—a woman still living over there by the name of Bonnie Parker. But anyhow, she went—her and Ramon Helmsman killed a highway patrol. Uh Bonnie Parker, well she was a mean one. Anyhow.

J. GRANT: Life went on at that Dee Brown's, didn't it?

OLIVER: Yea, you go down there Saturday night—if you go there keep your nose clean.

G. GRANT: Would Bonnie and Clyde come visit there?

OLIVER: Do what?

G. GRANT: Did Bonnie and Clyde go to Dee Brown's?

OLIVER: Yea. Let me tell you L. C. Barrow, Clyde's brother, Clyde's brother pulled two automatics on me and Cody Russell and some old boys that went over and come out the door. Went out there to where he's at, and he pulled those damn guns out on them, two nickel-plated guns. You could hear that first click, going back "you guys are looking tough you can damn sure get it." That was L.C. Barrow. That was Clyde Barrow's brother. And uh—actually, we left him alone.

G. GRANT: Did anybody ever get cut with a knife there?

OLIVER: Do what?

G. GRANT: Did anybody ever get cut up with a knife at Dee Brown's?

OLIVER: No. I knocked a guy in the head over there.

J. GRANT: I remember you telling a story about knocking somebody in the head at Dee Brown's.

OLIVER: Yea. Ol' Woodrow had this boy was gazing with his gal, and they got together. I had to shove Woodrow and keep him out of Dee Brown's way cause Dee Brown has shot somebody out there in the hallway. [coughs] Woodrow's over there—excuse me—I tell boy, he made me wait, we got in the car and waited they pulled out of the—pulled out and started to leave to go to Nacogdoches. And we drove up back behind them—as soon as we started up the hill over there, went across the creek, he told me to cut into them into the side of their car, but I cut over. They dodged me to get out of the way to keep me from wrecking them. And I got out and got the extra [unclear] And I got that double-barrel in the back. I went to open the door and I couldn't pull

it open and he'd hold it in front and I managed [unclear] at the same time.
And I did, I swung the hammer. Come up with it at same time. That guy got that piece of wood loose, Woodrow got that. But that was as the people come up and we drove on. That was the end of that one.

G. GRANT: Ask him what his first car was.

J. GRANT: What was your first car you ever owned?

OLIVER: Model-A.

J. GRANT: A Model-A?

OLIVER: Uh huh.

J. GRANT: How old were you when you owned it?

OLIVER: I was about, let's see, about—I got that—Woodrow bought that one—I guess I was about sixteen.

J. GRANT: Where you still at home?

OLIVER: Yea. Oh, yea.

J. GRANT: How did you afford it? How'd you have money?

OLIVER: Miss, Miss. Lou run a store where'd buy on credit. Ha, I'll never forget...

J. GRANT: Did they sell a car—did you buy a car at Miss. Lou's?

OLIVER: No. I bought it at C.I.T.

J. GRANT: C.I.T.?

OLIVER: Yea, uh huh. In Houston. I'd pay so much a month. But, I'd buy it from her on credit over there from Miss Lou one time. I made four bales of cotton and I went to sell and come pick up. And uh, I went to sell that cotton, she said I want to pay my bill over here. She said, everybody said she'd cheat you and

keep the bill, and I kept up with it. And she told me how much it was. She said I don't know if you got enough money to pay it or not. But I did have enough and I paid her, and she hadn't charged me enough. And I told her I still owed something. Anyhow, she put that on the good and I paid her for the whole thing.

J. GRANT: You were honest about it. You paid all the bill.

OLIVER: Yea, I was honest. My momma wouldn't allow me to go into church. We had a church right over the hill every Sunday. But on the Sunday, you didn't holler or done anything on Sundays. Sunday that was a sacred day.

J. GRANT: That was the Lord's Day.

OLIVER: You... Yea, the Lord's. You didn't holler or hoot or anything like that.

G. GRANT: Ask him where he went to church.

J. GRANT: Where did you go to church?

OLIVER: Right there in Arcadia in the old that old...

J. GRANT: That uh wood one? Yea. I wonder when they built that church on the other side of Greg's that Baptist Church? Was that um after you left?

OLIVER: Well let's see, when they built the Baptist Church?

J. GRANT: Uh huh.

OLIVER: The Baptist Church—Jim Walker, it was there when they run the store. They bought it and them run the store there in Arcadia.

J. GRANT: Yea. So it was there when the Walker store was there then?

OLIVER: Uh huh.

G. GRANT: Ask him when they got their first tractor.

J. GRANT: When did you get the first tractor? Did y'all ever have a tractor? And you didn't have to plow a horse.

OLIVER: My first tractor I bought it...I bought it down while I was working in Houston.

J. GRANT: You were in Houston then.

OLIVER: Uh huh.

J. GRANT: You always just used a horse then—a mule?

OLIVER: Mules turn the plow, and a walking cultivator, had a walking cultivator.

J. GRANT: Yea.

OLIVER: Walking cultivator you can get one over time. Mules you had to go twice. Which you walked one time. I put over two handles hold your plow feet. I put me a cover on and hang my hat on it and watched Jones. I had me my cover up to keep that sun off.

G. GRANT: Ask him about fighting with a bull.

J. GRANT: One more—you mentioned, we were talking about stores and we talked about Miss Lou and Jim Walker, were there anymore stores besides those two? In Arcadia?

OLIVER: That was the—that was the only two we had—all of them we had kept—One store there kept feed and stuff in. Miss Lou and them didn't. But he and he had a place on this side of the road. And he kept feed and stuff. We already had the post office there.

G. GRANT: Was there a barbershop?

J. GRANT: Was there a barbershop there?

OLIVER: No, in Stockman there was. A barbershop.

J. GRANT: Okay, but not there yet? Okay. What'd you tell me?

BEISEL: Why don't we finish with the story about the bull.

J. GRANT: Okay. They want to know about your encounter with the bull. Remember when the bull got you there in Arcadia?

OLIVER: Yea, I remember that. [laughter] That bull had jumped over and Howard's bull and my bull were fighting and I separated them and drove...

J. GRANT: Howard's bull and your bull were fighting?

OLIVER: Uh huh. And I separated them and drove them to the house and put mine in the pen. Was gonna go back and I made the mistake when I come back, and instead of opening the gate and letting him come on out and pen him that way, I didn't. I opened the door and he snorted and he come in on me and he butted up against the fence, and gimme a—lost his—gimme—fractured my [unclear] I remember I couldn't smell and can't taste out of that side. And uh...

J. GRANT: And injured your eye.

OLIVER: Yea. I couldn't see no more. I couldn't ever figure out what was wrong when I first got up. I knew that I had lost my glasses and stuff. But he did, broke two ribs when he butted me.

J. GRANT: Well you really didn't know a lot because I think you were out for a little while.

OLIVER: I was out when they were [unclear] took care of me and bring me to your mother be put in the hospital. The Doctor came to in the house. I couldn't remember.

J. GRANT: How did Howard find you? Did he come over to check to see what was the matter?

OLIVER: No, I hollered. I hollered.

J. GRANT: Oh, you hollered at him?

OLIVER: Yea.

J. GRANT: His neighbor was Howard Sprole and I guess he woke up enough to holler and yell that he heard him and come to help you then. Did he take you back to your house in Center?

OLIVER: Yea. He carried me and they couldn't find me. I remember [coughs] asking what they want [coughs] Richard and them told them to take me over to the hospital and your mother put me in the car and they called a helicopter to fly me in and he flew me in and landed me up there, and they put me in—and that pilot called the next morning, he wanted to find out—he told me on the phone if that would have been his brother, they—his brother could have never lived over it. That I lived over it without it killing me.

J. GRANT: I already told them that you were a tough man. [laughter]

OLIVER: The good Lord was with me. He was with me.

BEISEL: All right. Well, thank you very much.

J. GRANT: Have we worn you out?

OLIVER: No, you're doing all right. Maybe some of this stuff missing in place. You're gonna have to get with Marguerite and she, she'll tell ya—she ain't probably won't tell you the truth. [laughter]

BEISEL: Well, we'll talk to her real soon.

J. GRANT: We're—Reatie has been in the hospital herself with congestive heart failure.

OLIVER: She has?

J. GRANT: She's supposed to be out now. You know come October she'll be a hundred.

OLIVER: She will?

J. GRANT: And Dalton is not doing good at all.

OLIVER: Who was Dalton's mother?

J. GRANT: I'm not sure cause she died at Dalton's birth. You know he was raised by...

OLIVER: Will

J. GRANT: ...Will and Rachel.

OLIVER: Rachel? Rachel?

J. GRANT: Rachel was a uh uh...

OLIVER: Powdrill?

G. GRANT: Bob and Mary Pate's parents.

J. GRANT: Bob and Mary Pate's parents. William Robert Pate. William Robert and Rachel Pate. Pate, Ray's Dalton.

OLIVER: That's his grandpa Pate.

J. GRANT: That's his grandfather. They raised Dalton.

OLIVER: I remember him. He would—in the Civil War, a cannon ball hit him on the arm or something.

J. GRANT: Yea. He died when he was 101, so. And Rachel was his grandmother, but I don't know Dalton's mother. She died at uh...

OLIVER: She may have been a Powdrill, I don't know. There was some pieces missing or somehow.

J. GRANT: Dalton said he was about six weeks old when his mother died. But then Will was his dad, wasn't he?

OLIVER: Yea. Yea, I remember Will running Ewell to the hill to fight one time. Ewell had a hatchet to keep him back with. [laughter]

J. GRANT: Y'all did a lot fighting and shooting around there [unclear]. Y'all were characters.

OLIVER: Well, we king of, you tell the truth and like it used to be growing up you tell the truth, if you didn't treat me fair, I'd get you later. [laughter]

J. GRANT: But didn't most everybody go to church on Sundays?

OLIVER: Yea, uh huh.

J. GRANT: After all the fighting and shooting they all got ready and went to church, didn't they?

OLIVER: Most of them did. Some wanted the homebrew. You know how to make homebrew?

J. GRANT: No, I never made any.

OLIVER: You go to the house. You got a five-gallon keg?

J. GRANT: Uh huh.

OLIVER: Put your ten pounds—five pounds of sugar, three yeast cakes, and a can of malt. You put it in there and let it—and boil it after it gets working. It'll boil— to make your home brew. It'll start rolling just like it had a fire under it. And it quits rolling and starts just barely popping, boil it then. If you boil it before, it'll blow up on you. It'll still be green. But you put them yeast cakes,

malt, and sugar in it and it'll work—do that until it's ready, gets ready to bottle. And he...

J. GRANT: And then you got some. Well, Ronnie told me he got...

OLIVER: You could sell two bottle, two bottles for a quarter. [laughter]

J. GRANT: Two bottles for a quarter huh? Well, Ronnie um, my brother Ronnie and Jerry Pate said they made some but they bottled it up either too soon or something...

OLIVER: It'll blow up.

J. GRANT: ...and all the lids blew off and everything blew up and daddy thought somebody was shooting at them cause all their homebrew was blowing up in the barn.

OLIVER: Yea, I had, I had some I carried down [background coughing] my brother Bryant's up there in Timpson, I put it in the back end of the car and [background coughing] I parked in Timpson and it blowed up there in town. And it was leaking on the street.

J. GRANT: So we'd better be careful. We [unclear] blow anything up.

OLIVER: If it ain't. I bought a bottle one time that some niggers had made. I was working, they were older, and they brought me some that they had made. He put it in the icebox and it blowed up. [laughter] You bottle it too quick it'll blow up. But if you didn't...

J. GRANT: We'll remember that the next we make, won't we? [laughing]

OLIVER: If you didn't bottle it—when you pulled that cap off the first time, a little blue smoke would come out of it, boy. And it'd start foaming and if you didn't get

it quick it'd foam out on you. If you took a nail and punched a hole in it, you'd suck it on out without losing any of it. [laughter]

BEISEL: All right.

J. GRANT: Y'all got any other questions?

BEISEL: No. That's, that's good. We appreciate it, thank you very much.

OLIVER: Do you think that's gonna help you out?

BEISEL: Absolutely.

OLIVER: Do you think Marguerite is gonna tell you the truth? [laughter]

J. GRANT: We'll see.

G. GRANT: We'll ask her anyway.

OLIVER: I bet you she don't. I bet she won't tell you the truth. [laughter] I know this happened because I know. [laughter]

J. GRANT: You know a lot of people's secrets you know. [laughter]

OLIVER: Not all. I know some, some. [laughter]

J. GRANT: You didn't tell us all your secrets huh?

OLIVER: Nuh huh. [laughter]

J. GRANT: Well, we'll come back again one of these days maybe you'll be ready to tell your secrets.

OLIVER: I'll get you the parts I've missed out. [laughter] I got you on the two guys that got killed at Aiken didn't I? With a pine knot?

BEISEL: Mmm hmm.

OLIVER: The two killed. I didn't know who they were, but they knocked them in the head with a pine knot.

J. GRANT: Okay.

OLIVER: Then I can't think...

J. GRANT: Did you remember the man's name...

OLIVER: John Manville was one that worked—knocked them in the head.

J. GRANT: John Manville? That was the man who owned the still that killed the two boys.

OLIVER: Manville was his name. And the rangers went down there to get him and he give them concussion and stuff like that. And they helped him push his car out of the mud hole, and he told them who he was. Well, they said you're the man we come after. John Manville.

J. GRANT: John Manville.

OLIVER: He knocked them—He was the one that knocked them in the head.

J. GRANT: And it killed them then huh, when he knocked them...

OLIVER: It killed him [unclear]

J. GRANT: Well, that's kinda sad.

OLIVER: I can't think of their name. But did kill them with a pine knot.

J. GRANT: But took him on off to...

OLIVER: Yea. He went on done time in prison for it. Cody Russell worked for him. I didn't know. He was the guy that run around with him. He was the guy that wanted me to take a rope and let's put a rope on Travis Hendricks and tie horse and run off with him.

J. GRANT: To put a rope on who?

OLIVER: Uh Hendricks boy before I knocked him in the head. He wanted—Cody Russell said they were and he helped me on the farm some too. But uh he wanted to throw a rope there and run off with him.

J. GRANT: What had the Hendricks boy done to you?

OLIVER: He had jumped on me.

J. GRANT: Oh he stabbed you huh?

OLIVER: No. He was the one that jumped on me and kicked me. He kicked me.

J. GRANT: He kicked you. Okay, I remember.

OLIVER: Him, Jakey Smith was there with me.

J. GRANT: Jakey Smith?

OLIVER: Was there with me when he jumped on me. But Jakey was cowardly and wouldn't fight you.

J. GRANT: Well he pretty seemed like a pretty quiet man.

OLIVER: Jakey?

J. GRANT: Uh huh.

OLIVER: He's still alive huh?

J. GRANT: No. No. But I knew him before he died.

OLIVER: Yea.

J. GRANT: He, he's gone now.

BEISEL: All right. Well thank you very much we really appreciate it.

OLIVER: Think that's helped you a lot huh?

J. GRANT: You have to be tired of talking. [laughter]

OLIVER: Make Marguerite tell the truth, tell the truth, come back later.

J. GRANT: I'll come back and tell you okay?

OLIVER: I bet you she ain't gonna tell you.

J. GRANT: Did I tell you that uh Ronnie had had a stroke? Ronnie's on a walker. And not doing well.

OLIVER: On a walker?

J. GRANT: Uh huh.

OLIVER: He can't drive no car, can he?

J. GRANT: He can't drive a car, no.

OLIVER: Well who in the hell is driving him now? What am I gonna do?

J. GRANT: I have to take Ronnie to the doctor when he goes. We have an appointment in a couple of weeks. He goes to the heart doctor. He's had four bypasses.

OLIVER: Four?

J. GRANT: Mmm hmm.

OLIVER: Bypasses?

J. GRANT: I'm sorry, stints, not bypasses. Uh four stints. Umm and uh had opened him up...

OLIVER: He's in bad shape then uh?

J. GRANT: He is. Uh huh. So, he's not doing real well.

OLIVER: He still living in your house down yonder?

J. GRANT: No. Ronnie—this is—Ronnie lives up there you know across from Holiday. From the nursing home. Now Noel is still living next door to us, Neil's brother Noel.

OLIVER: He's still uh...

J. GRANT: He's doing great. He'll be eighty-one in a couple of weeks. And he's still working for Neil baling hay.

OLIVER: I don't know how I feel about him after he stole my cows.

J. GRANT: Well...

OLIVER: I was gonna kill him there for, hollering I done made out I was gonna kill him.

J. GRANT: Well, you know he went through a period there being pretty mean and stealing.

OLIVER: He went from Powers.

J. GRANT: But he's kinda straightened up. He doesn't drink anymore.

OLIVER: Is that right? He's something else ain't he?

J. GRANT: And his wife. He's got his eighth wife and uh...

OLIVER: Eighth?

J. GRANT: Eighth one, uh huh. And uh, she's a pretty nice lady. She's uh...

OLIVER: She's come down there—one of his wives come down there wanted me to go testify about what I said. If I come testify, he'd send him to the pen for sure.

J. GRANT: That was probably Dell and she's...

OLIVER: Yea, that's her. That was her.

J. GRANT: That was Dell and she's crazy as a loon. She's nuts. I would of shot her first before...

OLIVER: She's something else ain't she? Old man you're doing good, you take care you hear?

G. GRANT: You too. Good seeing you. What's that cow bell for over there? Is that how you call them?

OLIVER: Yea. If I have to have it, I have to ring that.

G. GRANT: That'll work.

J. GRANT: You heard him say he has to have another hip replacement. He's going to go
back for surgery. This is his second one.

[background talk]

[End Interview]