

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

**WITH**

**LESTER HUGHES**

MAY 17, 2014

ARCADIA, TEXAS

INTERVIEWED BY LINDA REYNOLDS

ORAL HISTORY #815

**EAST TEXAS RESEARCH CENTER**

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Amanda Carr transcribed this interview in September 2014. Perky Beisel reviewed the draft of this transcript. Amanda Carr incorporated her corrections into this final transcript in October 2014.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Lester Hughes recounts his childhood in Arcadia with special attention upon the farms, schools, and social events of the community and the meeting areas, playing fields, and buildings. Hughes once lived in the house where the interviews took place so he describes the changes his family made to the structure which were typical modernizations of the time. After college, Hughes had a career teaching high school in Rusk, before working in a bank and later teaching in the Texas Department of Corrections.

People Mentioned: Eloy Emanis, Greg Grant, Neil Grant, Earl Crawford, Jeanette Peace, Fonda Wheeler, Noel Grant, Jackie, Van and Elva, Voyd Hughes, Nara Hughes

Places Mentioned: Arcadia, Huber, Cooper, Timpson, Rusk, Shelbyville, Center, Houston, Dallas, Lufkin, and Pasadena, Texas; Shreveport, Louisiana; Stephen F. Austin State University; Powdrill Cemetery; and Pleasant Grove Cemetery.

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

## LESTER HUGHES

ORAL INTERVIEW #815

LINDA REYNOLDS: This is Linda Reynolds. It's May 17, 2014 and I'm in Arcadia, Texas, and I am talking with...

LESTER HUGHES: Lester Hughes.

REYNOLDS: Hughes. H-U-G-H-E-S?

HUGHES: Yes, correct.

REYNOLDS: Okay, and we're going to be talking about Arcadia and... the community here. So, have you always lived in Arcadia or were you here for a short time?

HUGHES: No, I've been here most all my life. Moved to Arcadia when I was one year old. We did move a short time, uh, to the Huber community, which is North of here about seven miles, and we, go north, right there on this highway here, and uh, we moved up there and we had a farm here. We had this, we lived in this very house, but then we also owned a farm down about four miles down the road, and a large farm, and we had tenant farmers on it who were running it. Then my grandfather in the Huber community got older and so my father moved to the Huber community...to run his farm, and so we lived there two years and then moved back to this house and then lived here. I was approximately three years old, and we lived here until I was in the uh, sixth grade and then we moved down on our big farm. There were only twelve acres with this house at the time we owned it, and then we sold it to my uncle, Eloy Emanis, which is Greg's

grandfather. Anyway, my mother's brother. We sold it to my mother's brother, and they moved from Clute, Texas up here to start living, and uh, that's my history with the house, and, some of the rooms they look so small now. I thought this was a large room. This was a uh, a bedroom, and uh, we re-configured the house. We enclosed the dog-run, dog-trot or whatever you're talking about we enclosed that and made a very big living room over there where those two rooms were all going that way. But this room was exactly like it is now.

REYNOLDS: So, these walls were...here?

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: Or..?

HUGHES: Well, I guess. I, these look...I can't remember exactly. He made have put new boards or stained them. I have a feeling they've been treated. They, I don't think they look quite as pretty, and this would have been in 1944... that I'm talking about. So, they probably didn't look that pretty then. [chuckles]

REYNOLDS: So this was like a living room area?

HUGHES: No, this was a bedroom. As you went in that door you went in to the living room which in the, the dog-run or whatever it's called was enclosed on the way back, and then that was the bigger living area.

REYNOLDS: And then you still had a kitchen and was the southern bedroom, uh, was it a bedroom?

HUGHES: Well, right behind here was what we would call a bathroom, but we didn't have running water, so it had no fixtures, but we called it a bathroom. We had the tub

in there that we took a bath in, and then my and my brother's bedroom was behind that, and then, uh...there was a bedroom on the back at that time. That was built on later I understand, and uh, cause this was a bedroom, too, and it was just my mother and father and then my brother and I, so it was just two bedrooms initially with a bathroom in between.

REYNOLDS: So you were here at this house until you were...twelve?

HUGHES: Six, uh, uh twelve or thirteen.

REYNOLDS: Thirteen, [intelligible] right in through there, and you just went down the road, to the, to the bigger, uh...

HUGHES: Four miles. We had a farm and we commuted--my dad did--and I went to school at Cooper for the first three years.

REYNOLDS: That one that used to...

HUGHES: Just right over here. Cooper School.

REYNOLDS: ...be up here?

HUGHES: My mother was the school teacher for the first three years.

REYNOLDS: Oh, was it like a one-room schoolhouse? Or..?

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm. Eight grades in one room. One teacher. You had to have absolute discipline because we were in rows. The first graders here. Then maybe the second behind 'em. Third grade. Maybe there nobody in the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth, and sometimes, if there wasn't any but just one student, say, in the fourth grade, and they might just promote him up to the next grade... Because we didn't have enough people for that grade. So he went to the next grade. [chuckles]

REYNOLDS: What happened after eighth grade?

HUGHES: You transferred into Timpson.

REYNOLDS: Timpson. Okay.

HUGHES: This is in the Timpson school district. Uh, the school existed a few years after, ah, but my brother graduated from here went into town and I moved and my mother quit teaching just became a housewife.

REYNOLDS: So, what was it like to have your mom as your teacher?

HUGHES: Well, I don't think I knew any better then. It was okay. [chuckles]

REYNOLDS: So you were really good when you were in school, you were..?

HUGHES: Oh yeah. Yeah. Tried to be. [smacks lips] But I uh, do remember you were expected, you had the, teacher had class with the first grade and then second grade and then you were expected to study and do your homework and you had to be absolutely quiet because there she was at the board teaching the next grade right beside you and...she was teaching the fourth grade work or the sixth grade or eighth grade. Then she came back over and then she came back and went across the room. So...

REYNOLDS: So you pretty much been here in Arcadia your whole life?

HUGHES: Right. All my...Yup, childhood through the twelfth grade.

REYNOLDS: Twelfth. Okay. So you went to Timpson for high school...

HUGHES: Right.

REYNOLDS: And then...What did you do after high school?

HUGHES: Uh, went to Stephen F. Austin [Austin State University] to school, college, and got my Bachelor's my Master's there and...

REYNOLDS: Wha-Wha-

HUGHES: ...moved to Rusk.

REYNOLDS: What was your major?

HUGHES: I majored in Music and uh, Masters in Administration.

REYNOLDS: Okay. That's like uh, uh, N-uh, Neil.

HUGHES: Neil.

REYNOLDS: Neil.

HUGHES: Neil Grant, myself Lester Hughes, Earl Crawford, Jeanette Peace, and uh, Fonda Wheeler, are five people. We all in the same grade. We started and went to school at Cooper and we graduated from Timpson together. We all five from this community, and uh...

REYNOLDS: Wow. That's pretty good for a small community like this.

HUGHES: It just happened to be, we all started to school together and then we all went to Timpson together and all graduated so, we were from here. So.

REYNOLDS: So, were you like Neil or Noel? Were you more of a trouble maker in school? Or were you...

HUGHES: No, I was a more of a Neil.

REYNOLDS: [laughs]

HUGHES: Yeah, we always were best friends, and played in the band together, both majored in music, theater, and then uh, he married Jackie, Greg's mama, eh, which was my first cousin. I introduced them when they moved and bought this house from us when they moved from Clute, Texas, here. So, she and I have always been close, and Neil and I have been very good friends. [6:45]

REYNOLDS: So what kind of things did *you* do for fun then, as a, as a young person here?

HUGHES: Uh, we, right beside the property line over there, I think Greg has since bought the property, but uh, there was a volleyball court, and every Friday night, from...March through August, every Friday night we played volleyball. That was our recreation here in the community.

REYNOLDS: Was it all kinds of people come to play, or?

HUGHES: Yeah, adults, kids. Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: Wow. I uh...

HUGHES: If you would like to, every Friday, we didn't do it during football season because that would have been a little conflict...

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: ...but the Friday nights, starting about March, and eh, going through August about the time school started. So we did that. One time, we had a uh, in the lower part of--I lived about four miles down the road, and we, every Sunday afternoon we went horseback riding had about ten of us and we'd go horseback riding every Sunday afternoon. Most of us had horses on their farm.

REYNOLDS: So did you, you worked on the farm then, too?

HUGHES: Yes. Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: Uh, Wha, what did, what, what did your father raise?

HUGHES: Uh, we had cattle, and--

REYNOLDS: Did you do any farming?

HUGHES: We had corn and hay, and uh, in my early years I told you about we had tenant farmers, and, and back in those we raised cotton, and the other crops, of course

with big gardens and all that kind of stuff. We did a lot of canning and out here I remember we killed hogs all the time and there was a big oak tree. I'm not sure that oak tree is there, I'm going to look around now because I probably couldn't see it, but we had a hog—we'd get hot water and put in the barrels and dip the hogs in it, put 'em down, scrape 'em. I was fairly young, but we did that and had cotton, and corn...

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: ...and hay, but primarily we did cattle.

REYNOLDS: Oh, okay.

HUGHES: But that was for feed for them, so it was all related.

REYNOLDS: Did you, did you know anything about the moonshining that used to go on around here?

HUGHES: No.

REYNOLDS: Or anything like that? [chuckles] You were like, you had nothing to do with any of that. [chuckling]

HUGHES: Well, I don't know. If it went on I didn't know it. I'm sure there was somebody, but, but, I didn't know about it.

REYNOLDS: [intelligible] [chuckling] Um, so when you went to high school in Timpson, um, was it obviously different going to Timpson? Did you know kids from Timpson or anything like that?

HUGHES: Well, we didn't run to town...everyday. We went, I lived about seventeen miles from Timpson school, because I went on down further, a little more south here on my road over there, and uh, I knew the kids in school and participated in

events, but as far as going to town. Here, our telephone is in Center, our address is Center, and we came moved here out of Center, Texas, so we were a little more aligned to Center, Texas and so yes, I knew all the school people and became associated with them but only through school events. In the summer, I told you about Friday nights...

REYNOLDS: Yeah.

HUGHES: ...we played and stayed around here. When we went to town we went to Center, so I may not go to Timpson for a month or two in the summer. Now, we were—Neil and Jackie—and we all were heavily involved in school activities, from band to plays to UIL competition, we were all involved in that a lot. And so, we did go, sometime we'd find ourselves going almost every day after school as we were older in school. So...

REYNOLDS: ...So UIL, there was UIL competition?

HUGHES: Oh yeah.

REYNOLDS: Oh, okay. I didn't realize. I didn't know how old UIL [University Interscholastic League] was.

HUGHES: Yeah, we had uh, Declamation, Poetry Reading, Ready Writing, Typing, Shorthand, which they don't even have shorthand anymore, do they?

REYNOLDS: No, they really don't have typing they have called keyboarding now.

HUGHES: Keyboarding, now, yeah. Yeah. It's changed. They changed the names. I'm sure it's not called Poetry Reading or Declamation anymore. [10:28]

REYNOLDS: Yeah.

HUGHES: Anyway, they had all that, and then of course music competition which we were all, Jackie and myself, we were all involved in that.

REYNOLDS: So, what did you do after you got your degree from SFA?

HUGHES: Uh, I uh, had taught part-time band at Shelbyville, which is a small town southeast of Center, and I taught there, and went an extra year and got my Masters from Stephen F. [Austin State University] and then I moved to Rusk, Texas and taught band. And that was my first and only other teaching job other than my part-time at Shelbyville, and I'm there ever since. After then I quit teaching, worked at a bank then, taught for sixteen years, well I really taught nineteen years, went to a bank for twelve years as a loan officer then I went to TDC [Texas Department of Corrections] in their educational division for twelve years and now I've been retired fifteen years.

REYNOLDS: So you taught at the uh, NISD? The high school? The Rusk? NISD. [chuckles]

HUGHES: Rusk. Rusk. RISD.

REYNOLDS: Not the, sorry. [chuckles]

HUGHES: Rusk. Uh-huh. All my teaching career was really there.

REYNOLDS: [chuckling] So, uh when did you stop teaching at, at Rusk?

HUGHES: Uh, probably, I taught from...probably retired, or quit teaching in '79.

REYNOLDS: Oh...

HUGHES: Then I went to work for a bank for twelve years then I went to work for TDC in their educational division for twelve years, and now I've been retired fifteen. I been around a long time going to work.

REYNOLDS: You're still young. [chuckles] So what about, what is it about Arcadia that you connect with or that you love? Or that just...speaks to..?

HUGHES: Well, just the friends and friendships. We were pretty close. Like I said, there were five of us, and we were all close, and, and uh, and I had a guy, a year older, that lived across the street and different places, so we're all pretty close knit, and most people in the communities were then because of you didn't travel around. My favorite tale nowadays everybody has been everywhere and done everything. When my mother was teaching school here, we were all in the one room, so I remember this. So, she said one day in class, to uh, eight grades, there were about twenty-five of us in all eight grades. She said, "Has anybody in here ever been to Houston?" And maybe two hands went up, or three. Now that, don't, don't look *puzzled* at me, because this was in 1940-something, and most people didn't have, maybe they didn't even have a vehicle. We walked to school over here. My dad had—we had one truck. He used it to go to the big farm down the road, and we walked and my mother walked as a teacher one mile over to the school. Now that wasn't very far. But...so my mother says, "Has anyone ever been to Houston? How many have of you have ever been to Houston?" Two or three hands went up. "How many people been to Dallas?" Well, two or three hands went up, and I think she threw in, "Has an—how many people have been to Shreveport, Louisiana?" And maybe one or two or three hands went up. Well, not everybody raised their hand and she was talking about that, and one girl says, "Shoot, that ain't nothin'! I've been slam to Lufkin and back." [13:46]

REYNOLDS: [chuckles]

HUGHES: Now, in her mind, Lufkin....Where are you from?

REYNOLDS: Uh, um, Nacogdoches.

HUGHES: Nacogdoches, I figured...

REYNOLDS: [laughs]

HUGHES: ... So,...just knowing Greg and figured the connection, Nacogdo--So we don't think of that as a big trip, but she lived right over by the school pretty much, and she had been to Lufkin and that was the most traveling she had ever done. And so she thought, "Shoot, that ain't nothin' y'all going to Houston and Dallas, I've been slam to Lufkin and back." So, that's our...

REYNOLDS: Yeah.

HUGHES: ...tale of times changed, and...

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: ...we're so mobile now.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, it is. It's quite different, uh, but I've still come across people that haven't done things that, like, stay in a hotel, or things that I think are common and I did a lot as a kid, but uh, I, I was military so... [chuckling]

HUGHES: Yeah, you've been around a lot of places.

REYNOLDS: I've been around. [chuckling]

HUGHES: Yeah, so, living in the small community we were a little more closely connected with pretty much our people around it seemed like to me. And I, I can remember I had cousins living down the road right here...two houses down, and cousins

up the road, and uh, you know, like we went to visit them. If, if, a week had passed, my dad might say, “Well, we haven’t seen Van and—Van and Elva...”

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: ...my aunt and uncle, his brother, “We haven’t seen them in four or five days we need to go visit them.” So we’d all get in the car and go visit them that night. Well, people don’t do that much anymore.

REYNOLDS: No. There’s not like that...

HUGHES: And you didn’t call ’em, you just went up to visit ’em, and, “Hello, here we are to visit. Oh, good! Y’all come back now.”

REYNOLDS: So did you do a lot of family outings like that kind of thing? Just visiting relatives?

HUGHES: Just visiting. Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: Family?

HUGHES: A lot.

REYNOLDS: Uh, did you, there I noticed, Greg told me about this big rock out here, and I actually tracked down to look at the rock. I guess there used to be a pond down there where people used to fish and...

HUGHES: Well, down probably by the creek...

REYNOLDS: Yeah.

HUGHES: ...close to it. Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: Uh, did you, uh, did you spend a lot of time down there, or..?

HUGHES: Well, we did. There was a little creek running in the back back here, and we did, we fished down there quite a bit. Sometime we'd jump on our bicycle and run up the road to a new creek or pond and fish.

REYNOLDS: So...

HUGHES: We did...

REYNOLDS: ...those rocks just look like something fun to play on.

HUGHES: Yes, everybody likes to climb on those.

REYNOLDS: [chuckling] I want to build like a little [unintelligible].

HUGHES: And this was all dirt roads. I remember when they brin--brought in the farm-to-market road. I remember when we didn't have electricity and uh, we got electricity in this house. They wired the house and we'd still have the pull chain up here, and... we had already had the house wired and so, we didn't know when they were going to turn on REA [Rural Electrification Administration], you know...

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: ...what that is. They, through a government program—they got electricity to the rural areas where we'd never had it and we had it, the chain, hanging down.

Well we'd pull on it days ahead. "Well, it's not on yet."

REYNOLDS: [chuckles]

HUGHES: Just waiting for the, finally one day we pulled it and it was on. And so that was in the forties. Somewhere right in there.

REYNOLDS: When did you get running water in the house?

HUGHES: We never did.

REYNOLDS: Oh.

HUGHES: We moved without, without running water. We had a...

REYNOLDS: Where did you...

HUGHES: Mmm?

REYNOLDS: Where did you have to go to get water?

HUGHES: We got it out of the cisterns. [Reynolds gasps] You remember? I was telling you we had two or three top ground cisterns and one underground, which was just a concreted... Uh, reservoir.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, the cist--there was a cistern in the back of the house here and you said there was one...

HUGHES: There was one here on the corn—right behind here, and one back there and one at the, one or two at the barn.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

HUGHES: It'd catch the run-off water.

REYNOLDS: Okay. Was it above ground cisterns?

HUGHES: All except one. We had one underground.

REYNOLDS: So did...

HUGHES: At the time.

REYNOLDS: Did you have a garden here?

HUGHES: Yes, out on that side of the house was a garden. Greg has gardened there. He's gardened over here. We never gardened over here. This was a little pasture that we kept...some horses or something in. I don't even remember.

REYNOLDS: When you were here, was that Masonic building here that's up the road?

HUGHES: No, if you saw the picture it had that big two-story—well, it looked large at the time, probably wouldn't look so large now—two story and had a community center downstairs, upstairs was the Masonic Lodge. They tore it down or sold it and moved it down the road about a mile and a half or two miles and then built the brick one.

HUGHES: Were you, did you ever go into the...

HUGHES: Oh yeah.

REYNOLDS: All the time?

HUGHES: My dad was the secretary for the Masonic Lodge, and I'm--he'd go up and do some paperwork and I'd go with him all the time. No mystery to that.

REYNOLDS: [chuckling] Did you ever become a Mason?

HUGHES: I was.

REYNOLDS: Okay. That's just something I've noticed that there's uh, this area, there's a lot of men who became Masons.

HUGHES: Well, at one time the Masonic Lodge in Rusk—my dad told me this I never looked up—he said that the, this is called uh...Newburn Lodge, I think that's the name of it. But anyway, number so and so, I don't know that, I never was a member here—that they had the highest ratio of attendance in the state, and they had a unique—I think unique, their meeting, the way they decided on what day they met, they met once a month, every Saturday night after full moon. Have you ever heard of that?

REYNOLDS: No...

HUGHES: So you into your—you look for when the full moon is and you meet on the Saturday night after full moon...which was as good a way of any, and everybody knew that, and I still remember it, and I was telling my cousin just a while ago about it and she said, “I remember that.” And uh, anyway, that’s the way they meet. So my dad said we had the highest attendance in the state—ratio, like of members, the percent members that attend—and uh, he said, “Well no wonder!” He said, “By the time once, one time of month, by the time the month rolls ‘round we all wanting to go somewhere and we glad to go, to get to go to Lodge to see our friends and visit.” [grinning] So...

REYNOLDS: [chuckling] So, uh, so was your mom was a member of the Eastern Star?

HUGHES: She was.

REYNOLDS: And did they meet also in Center?

HUGHES: No, they met in town, either Timpson or Center.

REYNOLDS: Oh, okay. So there was a, a group there, bigger group there they were a part of in Timpson or Center or?

HUGHES: Yes.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

HUGHES: They didn’t have—now, occasionally the men and the women would meet and have joint meetings, but I don’t know much about that.

REYNOLDS: Oh, okay. I just, I just find it interesting because it is such a small community...

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: ...and you have a Masonic Lodge here. It’s...

HUGHES: Well, years ago, there was a pretty good sized school here, and times change.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm. Uh, there was a couple churches...

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: ...Um, and I've been told church—Sunday—everybody goes to church...That's the one thing you did on Sunday.

HUGHES: Pretty much.

REYNOLDS: [chuckling] Nothing else to do. Uh, so, as you got older, as a teenager, what kind of things did you do for fun then?

HUGHES: Well, I've already...

REYNOLDS: Just besides volleyball.

HUGHES: ...talked about the volleyball and the horse riding...

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm

HUGHES: ...and as we got older—cause we *did* get out of the community—but uh, we did a lot of visiting, and we, we were very into school activities. Uh...

REYNOLDS: I just didn't know if you were able to borrow a car and go to town...

HUGHES: No.

REYNOLDS: ...go to dances or...

HUGHES: ...Well, we didn't too much of that. When, when I was growing up, though, uh, we had a group of people from Timpson, and they were my school mates, a bunch of us—and I was one who liked to dance a lot. So there weren't places to go dance for youngsters, and so we had a group and we'd meet at our houses and dance, and so we did that where we rotated around did that a little bit, so. But, and we went to the movies on the weekend. We generally didn't go to town but once a week, and we had went to Center. They had two movie theatres

at that time, and, and just about every Saturday our parents went to town and that might did, and uh, so we didn't go during the week. Now, I went to school during the week, but I didn't go to *town*. I just went to the school, and I rode the bus for twelve years... [21:26]

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: ...for all the years I went—and I just got on the bus and rode to school, head to school, rode back home.

REYNOLDS: What uh, what were your parent's names?

HUGHES: Voyd and Nara Hughes. And my mother has a lots of brothers and sisters, and my dad had lots of brothers and sisters. A lot of 'em who lived around here.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm. What uh, when you went to SFA, did you still live here and commute or did you live in?

HUGHES: No, I lived on campus.

REYNOLDS: You lived on campus.

HUGHES: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Where on campus did you live?

HUGHES: I lived in the dormitory.

REYNOLDS: Oh, okay. What, what years did you go there?

HUGHES: Uh, graduated in high school in 1957, so I went...

REYNOLDS: Okay.

HUGHES: ...four years.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm. Okay.

HUGHES: Uh, '57-'58, '58-'59, '59-'60, '60-'61.

REYNOLDS: So how did you, I mean how did you like—uh, I don't want to say “living in the big city”—but, uh, it was a, it was a little bigger, a little different.

HUGHES: Well, I was well familiar because my brother, four years older, had gone to school there. Uh, the...college band director—and I played in the band—had been my high school director at Timpson at one time. So—

REYNOLDS: Oh.

HUGHES: ...I's pretty familiar with all the people, and so it was just pretty... like it was the next step of my life. I already knew what I was gonna do pretty much when I's graduating high school. It wasn't “Well, I'm going to have to figure out what I'm gonna do.” Well, I'm going to Stephen F. [Austin State University], and... that was it.

REYNOLDS: When you were a freshman, did you have to wear a beanie?

HUGHES: I did. They shaved your head.

REYNOLDS: Really?

HUGHES: That's tradition back then.

REYNOLDS: Well, I've heard rumors about that, but—[chuckling]

HUGHES: Yeah, well, they just took a razor and just shaved it off like that.

REYNOLDS: Uh-huh, and how long did you have to wear the beanie?

HUGHES: I don't remember....I think, uh....I'm gonna say about half a year.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, cause I've seen pictures of...

HUGHES: Yeah, seem like I remember having the first I remember football season...

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: ...and seem like by the end of that my hair was back grown back out, and so seems like I didn't wear it after then.

REYNOLDS: [laughing]

HUGHES: It was pretty, I didn't think much about it as being...a task or punishment or anything. Just kind of a...tradition, I guess.

REYNOLDS: So did you enjoy your time at SFA?

HUGHES: Oh, yeah. I liked it a lot.

REYNOLDS: Um, friends and classes and....

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm. All above activities. I wasn't far from my house to the campus. I was a little more south than west.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

HUGHES: Uh, from my house to the dorm room were twenty-five miles.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

HUGHES: But I lived there all four years.

REYNOLDS: Okay, okay.

HUGHES: And thoroughly enjoyed it.

REYNOLDS: Is there any places in town that you remember going to uh, after class or anything like that? Hanging out at café or?

HUGHES: Well, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Or just.

HUGHES: There were several. Uh, can't even remember the, Nant's café, I think, up there on North Street is that—I think that was it. That was kind of a big hangout about my first or second year there, and then I think it went away sometime, but I

don't remember. And then there was another little place and I can't even remember the name of that, but, we hung out there for about a year or so, and...anyway...

REYNOLDS: So, are...

HUGHES: ...and the Main theater was downtown. That was the--and the SFA theater was up there...and all those I frequented.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm. So, uh, did you get married while you were there?

HUGHES: No, I got married after I moved to my present work, Rusk.

REYNOLDS: Rusk, okay. So that's where you met your, your wife, was Rusk?

HUGHES: Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: ...So, uh, moving to uh, Rusk is...

HUGHES: Small town.

REYNOLDS: Small. I was like uh, you're moving from, just kinda moving around. Uh...

HUGHES: Well, I'm pretty much small town...being from here. Very small. Stephen F.[Austin State University]—Nacog—that wasn't too big. I been, my mother had gone to college there, and uh, I had been over there and, and that was where we went to town there a lot. So I had relatives over there. So I was well familiar with it.

REYNOLDS: So your mom went to school at SFA?

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: When did she go to school there?

HUGHES: Well, she was born in 1909. So...

REYNOLDS: So it was like after high school she went, before she got married?

HUGHES: Yeah, uh-huh. That would have been probably not too long after the college opened. [chuckles] [25:28]

REYNOLDS: Yeah, cause it was opened in '23.

HUGHES: Yeah, so, I think she went about a year or two after it opened, two or three years after it started.

REYNOLDS: You come from a long line of folks going to SFA. [chuckling]

HUGHES: Well, she was the only one.

REYNOLDS: [chuckling]

HUGHES: My mother and dad never lived out of the county, except my mother lived Nacogdoches County. They never lived out of the county.

REYNOLDS: So, what, do you know what your mom majored in? When she was at SFA?

HUGHES: Uh...Education.

REYNOLDS: Educa—

HUGHES: Yeah. Cause—

REYNOLDS: Did she finish her degree?

HUGHES: She was gonna, I don't know if she did. Back, I don't think she did because you could go to school two years and take an efficiency exam and start teaching. And she started teaching then. She taught...she only taught til I got in the third grade. When I finished third grade she quit teaching because we were running a farm, and... anyway, she didn't teach anymore.

REYNOLDS: [intelligible] Wow. Uh, what was your mom's maiden name?

HUGHES: Emanis.

REYNOLDS: Emanis.

HUGHES: The—

REYNOLDS: [chuckles] I knew that. Sorry.

HUGHES: You've heard that name.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, I was like...

HUGHES: [laughing]

REYNOLDS: Well, I've been trying to keep...

HUGHES: Well you can't get it all straight, though!

REYNOLDS: Yeah, I've been trying to keep it...

HUGHES: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...all straight in my head. It's like okay, I have Greg as my center point here,--

HUGHES: Right. Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: ...and I've got mom and dad. Okay, you've got dad and we've got brothers and then I talked to Noel, and Noel and Neil's great-aunt, or, and or I uh, or, I just got confused...

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: ...there for a minute. [laughing]

HUGHES: Well, Neil, of course I've known, started the first grade with him and finished the twelfth grade. He did move a short time to Pasadena went down with his folks, but anyway, uh, he and I have been good friends and started together, and of course Noel, I've known him always, too, cause they just live right up the road.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, they keep joking that Noel is the Devil and Neil is the, the Angel...

HUGHES: [chuckling]

REYNOLDS: So...It's just, it's like okay, that's kind of fun. Uh....So, uh, have these homecom—cemetery homecomings been going on?

HUGHES: Well, they were going on, I, I didn't know they still, I haven't been to one in a long time here. Now all my people are buried up at another cemetery. My close relatives, I have some relatives here, and of course I'm familiar with all the people from this community that are buried here, but I have no close relatives buried here. Our cemetery is about...eight miles up the road where my mother's people are all buried, which were the Emanis, and then the uh, Hughes, are all buried up there, too, so both sets of my parent's families are at the next cemetery up the road.

REYNOLDS: So, I mean, does that cemetery—does it have a homecoming?

HUGHES: Yes.

REYNOLDS: Like the one...

HUGHES: ...It's...

REYNOLDS: ...that they...

HUGHES: It's, it's a much larger cemetery than the one that is in town. This one in this local community is Powdrill Cemetery. That one's Pleasant Grove. Pleasant Grove is pretty much larger...

REYNOLDS: Okay.

HUGHES: ...and whatever reason, I don't know.

REYNOLDS: Yeah. Do you remember going to any of them when you were a kid?

HUGHES: I remember going to one at Pleasant Grove, since I was born... long as I can remember, til last year. We have it on the uh,...Sunday after Fourth of July, the Sunday closest Fourth of July and I've been going to it for many years.

REYNOLDS: So what is it—the same kind of thing? It's like a family reunion?

HUGHES: It's due—we have a—there's a church building there, so they have an indoor singing, and they sing and do the same thing.

REYNOLDS: Same thing.

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: Did they do that when you were younger?

HUGHES: Yes, since I was one year old. Long as I can remember, there has been a Pleasant Grove. [chuckling] Now here, we used to have it here and they had the two story lodge we met downstairs in the bottom. And then I didn't know if they still had it until I heard about it this year, and so I decided to come.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, I just didn't know if there was like—it's like a family reunion almost.

HUGHES: Exactly.

REYNOLDS: And I just didn't know if the, the homecomings when you were younger were, "Let's clean up the cemetery," or is more like "Let's meet together as a family."

[29:11]

HUGHES: Uh, meet together as a family. Now years ago it used to be on that—on the Saturday now. We had them on Sunday years ago, this one's on Saturday now, but the one Pleasant Grove is on Sunday, and before that everybody would meet on Saturday...to clean the cemetery. And they raised money to get somebody to help during the year, and that's the purpose of it. And they take up a collection

today. The Pleasant Grove Cemetery, I've seen a time where there'd be hundreds of people at those. People get more busy, and they got to watch television, and they got to...do their iPad, whatever those are called, and so, more people have less time to do those things, so at The Pleasant Grove Cemetery—they, about twenty, twenty-five years ago, started a perpetual fund that will fund this thing after no one comes any longer.

REYNOLDS: [rustling sounds] I think it died. That's okay.

HUGHES: You think it's what?

REYNOLDS: I think it died on me.

HUGHES: Oh, okay.

REYNOLDS: I still have my audio recording, so that's what's really important to me.

HUGHES: But, anyway, so I's can see...down the road, fifteen, twenty more years they probably won't have these much, or thirty, maybe. Because people will, times change, and I'm not expecting it to stay the same.

REYNOLDS: Yeah.

HUGHES: When I was in Stephen F. [Austin State University], you couldn't be caught out in pants.

REYNOLDS: Oh yeah.

HUGHES: Only wear pan—only leave the dorm, and I'm talking about 1957.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: You could only leave the dorm if you were going to uh, some physical activity or marching band or something.

REYNOLDS: Wow.

HUGHES: I tell my kids and grandkids that and they just can't believe it.

REYNOLDS: No, yeah, my mom, yeah, she, she grew up in dresses...

HUGHES: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...even though she lived out on a farm, too, uh, so we've... Anyway, okay. It's been after lunch, and I'm like naptime and such. I mean, between the sun and the good food, and a lot of people have left. Wow. It's just, um, getting down on my knees. So, with, with Arcadia, when you were here, and living in this house, or even down the road a bit, there was a store over here?

HUGHES: Mm-hmm. Well, the store was over yonder...on the other side of that house right, that house right there, next door to it was a store.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

HUGHES: A big old store. It had one big building and then another big building. The other building was the feed part of it. They kept feed in it and the other store kept the other, groceries and dry staples.

REYNOLDS: So, oh, you could buy—like, it was like a mercantile kind of thing?

HUGHES: Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: Where you could buy.

HUGHES: At one time you could buy thread...uh, cloth material...

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: And of course back then you, we would buy feed sacks and you bought matching feed sacks, and my mother would say, "Okay, run over and get some..." chicken feed or whatever we were getting or flour sack, and they would

have patterns on 'em, "Well get one like this cause I need two of those to make a dress out of or shirt," and...

REYNOLDS: Yeah.

HUGHES: ...so you match those....and we did that.

REYNOLDS: Did, did your mom quilt?

HUGHES: Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: So she, did she have a quilting frame in her..?

HUGHES: Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: It was...

HUGHES: I think we had it in this room.

REYNOLDS: In this room a quilting frame...and so, the relatives would all come over and...?

HUGHES: Neighbors, and relatives. Uh-huh.

REYNOLDS: ...come over and quilt.

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: Okay. Did you ever have to card any of that cotton as a kid?

HUGHES: No...

REYNOLDS: ...card.

HUGHES: I, we—I don't think we ever did that. I think we bought ours.

REYNOLDS: So, because I've talked with other people and I know...

HUGHES: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...a lot of quilters to where they had their kids to do the carding...

HUGHES: I never did that.

REYNOLDS: [laughing] You got lucky.

HUGHES: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So, what do you think of the changes that Greg has made to this place?

HUGHES: It looks great.

REYNOLDS: It's...

HUGHES: It looks a lot prettier.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

HUGHES: I think he stained these walls because I don't think they'd be this perfectly matched in color, ceilings and that. He may have put some new boards, but I have a feeling they're stained because that's the width of the ones that were on here when I was here...

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm. So did you have, I want to say, wallpaper or..?

HUGHES: I's fixing to say, I think at one time I know we wallpapered that room, and we probably did this cause my aunt lived down the road, and uh, my mother they would wallpaper rooms like that cause you had to get on a ladder and get up pretty tall you know, cause yeah, were very high.

REYNOLDS: [chuckling] They are very high. I don't want to imagine trying to get cobwebs out of the, out of here.

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: So when you, when you were living here you had no electricity, and this just goes to like everyday life and, and how you lived, did you have an icebox or root cellar?

HUGHES: We had an icebox, and then, after the icebox—but we didn't go to town but about once a week, so, a rare occasion that we would have ice. And so you put

your...milk, we milked a cow, and butter, and you'd churn, and we put it in the well let it down in the water to keep cool.

REYNOLDS: Oh, where was the well at?

HUGHES: It was a cistern...

REYNOLDS: Oh, the cistern.

HUGHES: ...an underground cistern.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

HUGHES: Yeah, underground. Not the top ground because it would get hotter...

REYNOLDS: Hotter, yeah.

HUGHES: ...but down underground it would stay cool, and uh...Anyway, that's the way we did it—had an outdoor toilet. Greg has fixed one out for the meeting here out here. My grandson was out there and he said, "What is that?" He says, "I need to go to the bathroom." Well, go, there it is. "Well what is that? I don't think that's real. That's not a real bathroom." But it is.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, that is. Where there this many trees when you lived here?

HUGHES: Oh, yeah. There were more.

REYNOLDS: There were more than that?

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: Did you ever like just got out into the forest and play?

HUGHES: Oh, we played all the time out in these woods right out there.

REYNOLDS: —that kind of thing.

HUGHES: Those weren't all pine trees back here, that was a field. We grew cotton and corn and whatever we grew. The pasture was down as you go, back of the barn,

there was a little lane and then it went over the hill. There wasn't too much pasture, mostly was field.

REYNOLDS: Okay, um, I'm wondering if, um...if we could take a trip outside with the camera, and you could show me where the cistern and stuff might be...

HUGHES: Mmm-hmm...

REYNOLDS: ...be at and stuff?

HUGHES: I can tell you.

REYNOLDS: If that's okay?

HUGHES: I can do that.

REYNOLDS: Okay, okay. Let me pause it. [35:15]