ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

NEIL GRANT

MAY 17, 2014

ARCADIA, TEXAS

INTERVIEWED BY PERKY BEISEL

ORAL HISTORY #810

EAST TEXAS RESEARCH CENTER

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EDITORIAL NOTICE

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Kelsey Brown transcribed this interview in September 2014. Perky Beisel reviewed the draft of this transcript. Her corrections were incorporated into this final transcript by Kelsey Brown in October 2014.

RESTRICTION

ABSTRACT

Neil Grant, a native and resident of Arcadia, Texas discusses his early childhood, his parents' farm including crops and livestock, and his extended family. Of particular note are Mr. Grant's stories of childhood adventures, schools, social events, local businesses including the arrival of electricity through the REA, and the effect of Great Depression in the community.

Persons Mentioned: H. D. Grant, Ruth Grant, Henry Grant, Dr. Lawrence Franks, Dr. Tommy Franks, Miss Mary Hughes, Mrs. Lou Wheeler, Jim Crawford, Gladys Crawford, Mr. Chapman, Greg Grant, and Burgay.

Places Mentioned: Center, Stockman, University of Texas, Stephen F. Austin State University, Pasadena, Rockdale, Cooper, Timpson, Tenaha, Bobo, Blair, Commerce, Lufkin, Longview, Gladewater, White Oak, Grigsby, Carthage, Garrison, Marshall, Houston, Bishop Hill, Darnell Hill, Palestine, Lakeview Methodist Assembly Camp, Longview High School, and White Oak High School.

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PERKY BEISEL: My name, and this is for the transcribers because they really hate when they don't know when it is and who's talking and all of that. So, um, Neil Grant, correct?

NEIL GRANT: That's right.

BEISEL: Okay. So today is May 17, 2014, we are here at the home of Greg Grant in Arcadia, Texas and I am Perky Beisel and I'm going to be interviewing Neil Grant about Arcadia and life here in deep East Texas. As we get started, why don't you tell me just a little bit about where you born, who your parents where, your early life, childhood, just a little background information.

GRANT: Okay. I was born in, uh, 1940 [clears throat] January 6 about, um, a mile north of here my parents, uh H.D. Grant and Ruth Grant, my parents, uh, and I was one of the few that actually, uh, was born in a hospital at that time. My wife was born right down the road here about a quarter mile, at home, as most people were. And somehow or another my grandfather, Henry Grant, who lived about a mile the other direction he owned a pickup truck and so uh, uh, my parents, uh, my dad borrowed it to take my mom to town to have the new baby and it was in January and the weather was quite bad so uh. The old Warren Hospital in Center that's no longer there, it was a big two or three story white building that uh, had a big pine tree out front. So he parked the truck under the pine tree and took my mother in to have the new ten and a

quarter pound baby and uh during the night it came a big ice storm and so a humongous limb fell on the truck and caved it in so that was a momentous occasion. [Laughter] We wrecked the truck and uh the new baby was on the floor the next morning by my mom's bed and so it was never known for sure if one of the nurses just played a trick on the other nurses and put the baby on the floor or if I actually fell off the bed. [laughter] So anyway, that was when I was born and in those days of course there was no electricity in this community until 1949, nine years later and this Farm-to-Market Road out here was paved the same year uh, and uh, the same year we got electricity so um.

BEISEL: In 1949?

GRANT: '49 yep and uh these drop bulbs that were in all the old houses, we thought that was just wonderful you know. We had a light up in the middle of the room so we didn't have to study our, our homework by the coal oil lamp or the um the fireplace fire. So uh we grew up um farming mostly.

BEISEL: Um-hmm, what crops or livestock?

GRANT: Now we ran cattle and uh, we'd grow corn to gather and feed the cattle through the winter months, and in those days there was no modern hay baling equipment like we have now. So uh any hay that we did we would uh use horse drawn implements to rake it up in a pile and take a pitchfork, a manual labor pitchfork, and throw it up around a tall pole until you got it as high as you could get it and then they'd put a little piece of tin at the top to shed the water and so that was uh the extent of hay baling. So you couldn't really have a large operation.

BEISEL: So, so around here people didn't put them up in large hay mows like up north where hay would get put up loose into the up, tops of the barns?

GRANT: No, no it was…

BEISEL: Here it was mostly left out in the field?

GRANT: This was around your barn area where you were going to be feeding it and then in the winter months you'd feed them some hay. And you'd crack those ears of corn so that the cow could eat a, a half a ear we'll say, and they'd eat the shuck and the cob and the corn so they'd get roughage as well as the carbohydrates from the corn. So we did that and we also tried to raise cotton. In those days, everybody around here, in fact I own a lot of land now that were family farms, and a lot of my land still has the rows in it that goes back to the cotton crops where uh they never, when we converted it to either timberland pasture land, never came back and smoothed out the rows. So sometimes driving around my pasture I run across some rows you know. But the cotton wasn't well suited for East Texas. Uh it was too wet most of the time, uh we had too many insects and bugs and boll weevils, so uh consequently uh not too long after I was growing up, now I was growing up picking cotton and chopping cotton and doing those things like even after school we'd get off school bus. We'd usually, they'd let us off at the field rather than the house so we could work on the farm you know. But anyway finally cotton left this country all to West Texas you know where its more suited, but anyway back to the question primarily then things became some corn and uh mostly when we special we got hay balers and finally some

tractors and then people started running cattle primarily. And then have hay for the cattle and then later, you know I wasn't involved with this, but I think maybe in the fifties probably, the chicken house industry became big in Shelby County and so nearly everybody had chicken houses and uh we never did but [clock chimes in background] uh a lot of people did, you know.

BEISEL: Now when you're talking about the um the cattle was that primarily beef around here or did you all get into the dairy industry as well?

GRANT: No, there was no dairy in this neighborhood just uh the beef cattle.

BEISEL: What breeds of beef cattle?

GRANT: Mostly mixed breed but uh, crossbred you'd have in those days Herefords were pretty popular and my grandfather was one of the first to, in Shelby County, that brought in the Brahma breed and a lot of people would uh use the Brahma bulls on the common cows, so to speak, keep the heifers and have some pretty good mother cows. But uh anyway growing up was kind of uh we didn't think we were disadvantaged we, [chuckles] we didn't know any better. But uh we grew mostly what we ate and mom and grandmothers would can it and we'd have it for the winter months and of course in the fall you'd always kill a hog you'd been feeding, you know when you get the first hard freeze. And so we'd string up the hog and scrape it down and cut it up. We had a smokehouse where you'd smoke uh the bacon and the sausage and the hams. And so it was always really fun the day after you killed the hog we'd have fresh spare ribs for breakfast with homemade biscuits and Ribbon Cane Syrup when also everybody around here grew ribbon cane so they could make syrup.

There were a few syrup mills my grandfather Smith right up the road had a syrup mill and I was a little kid growing up and I could watch them do it. They had a mule that would go around and around and it was pulling the long pole gave the power to the grinder and people would have to feed the cane into it to make the syrup. I mean make the sap and then the juice would go down in a long vat, pan and my grandfather was the official cooker and uh, they'd have to cook it a certain amount of time before it became syrupy but everybody did that because everybody wanted the ribbon cane syrup. [8:30]

BEISEL: Right, um now when you were talking about cotton where was the closest cotton gin that you all took your cotton to?

GRANT: Uh Stockman five miles west of here. Uh, there's a fella named Franks that had a cotton gin.

BEISEL: How do you spell his last name?

GRANT: F-R-A-N-K-S. Now Stockman has uh, many people by the last name of Franks, most of them were in the school business, superintendents and uh Dr. Lawrence Franks was Dean of Men at the University of Texas and uh SFA actually had one in the Education Department named Tommy Franks, Dr. Tommy Franks, recently retired I think. So Franks was a pretty common name. They're all kin folks and uh most of them long, tall basketball players. And uh anyways Stockman is a community about five miles west of here about the same size as this one is. A few people still live there kin folks of the, the past.

BEISEL: Well now, did you have any siblings?

GRANT: I had a brother. Uh five years older and he uh you know grew up similar to what I've described and about, let me think [clears throat] about 1950 there about, we were still farming some and probably barely scraping by and uh my dad one day threw the hoe down and said he was going to the town. So we moved to Port Arthur and then we moved to uh Pasadena he was a pipe fitter by trade. And we eventually moved to Rockdale when they put in the Alcoa plant and uh then he developed a disease called Nephritis kidney ailment that was incurable and we came back to the farm here in the early '50s I'll say. So um, we traveled around a good bit in his work and everything. Got away from the farm for a little while, but I always wanted to come back.

BEISEL: You did? Okay now did you start school here or did you move right before you started?

GRANT: I started school about a half mile west of here a little one-room schoolhouse called Cooper, C-O-O-P-E-R. And uh we had one teacher Miss Mary Hughes and uh eight grades in one room. So she would teach one of us for a while, then the others for a while, and we'd have three or four kids per grade and so I went there for two years. And we walked about two miles to get there and then my mother transferred me to Timpson in my third grade year, and that's about fifteen miles away, but they did have a school bus coming out here so then I went to Timpson for the third grade. And then we moved to Houston and I went to school there for a year, then uh back to Timpson for a year and back to Pasadena for a year and, two years actually, then Rockdale for two years and then back to Timpson my last three years in high school.

BEISEL: Okay and you graduated?

GRANT: Yeah.

BEISEL: Did they have eleven grades or twelve grades at that time?

GRANT: They had twelve.

BEISEL: What was your favorite subject in school?

GRANT: I guess I'd have to say English. Very unusual for a boy to be interested in English, but I was good at it and the teachers liked me cause I was a boy and I was good in English. I was teacher's pet usually.

BEISEL: Did you play any sports while in school?

GRANT: No, uh I was an outstanding band student all state trumpet player. In fact, as a twelve- year- old in Rockdale I made the All State Band so that kind of was my destiny thereafter, and I became a high school band director for ten years after I got out of college, which I went to Stephen F. Austin.

BEISEL: Now, uh, did anything in particular that you remember about Stephen F. Austin when, when you went here?

GRANT: Well now coming out of high school and being an all state trumpet player I had an opportunity to go to several places on scholarship. And uh my daddy had died about, when I was about, uh, sixteen a year before uh so not having any funds particularly to go to college on. SFA besides knowing who the band director was, that had actually been my beginning band teacher the fact that I could continue to raise cattle and put myself through college sort of dictated that I go to SFA which I kind of wanted to anyway. But uh, I could have gone to University of Texas or Lamar or East Texas in Commerce or several

colleges would have liked to have a good trumpet player you know. But that's why I ended up at the Stephen, fortunately so uh, it worked out well.

BEISEL: Right, and so you got to stay around here.

GRANT: Right and they've awarded me a few honors over there, like the Band Director's Hall of Fame, and the Outstanding Music Alumnus and some things, some things hanging on my wall at home.

BEISEL: Did you uh when you were a band director is there anything I know the marching bands and things have changed was there anything you helped introduce to the area?

GRANT: Well actually, uh, East Texas was always the home of the military marching band, copied after the service bands. And its pretty well remained that way, one of the few places in the entire country that you have military marching bands with these are centered around Nacogdoches, Lufkin, Longview, East Texas area. When you get out of this area, you get into corps style bands so uh this is kind of an unusual area. And that tradition has been carried on from one generation to the next pretty much.

BEISEL: Why did that kind of become the standard around here?

GRANT: Well uh, the better band directors, there were several that had outstanding band programs such as Longview and Gladewater and White Oak, Nacogdoches and Lufkin, the top programs were military so the younger people coming out wanted to emulate these and I think that as much as anything had an influence from one generation of band directors to the next. And even though the trend in most things has been to change, in this particular

area its been no, to remain the same, and just to be good but not different. [15:06]

BEISEL: Well coming back to Arcadia, I have to ask because we have this [laughter] wonderful shotgun here, tell me the story about the shotgun.

GRANT: The shotgun belonged to my grandfather Grant and its got a date on here somewhere of 1890 something I think its made in Belgium but he passed in down to my father and uh that's how I ended up with it when my father died and it kind of became mine. One of the unusual things that happened along the way is when we were growing crops up the road here, and uh the neighbors had cattle running in the big woods, so to speak, open range, and uh the fences weren't very good. And so the cattle would get in our crops and make my daddy pretty unhappy. And so uh he would go tell the neighbor that if your cattle are back in there tomorrow I'm gonna shoot em, I'm gonna shoot them with my shotgun and I'm gonna have it loaded with buckshot. And that's pretty severe ammunition and so sure enough the cattle were back in there the next day and so he shoots the guy's bull and the bull limps home and uh ends up with an ailment called screwworms which was prevalent in those days. And so uh I think the neighbor decided they'd build some fence he didn't ever get in any trouble about it I think you were allowed to do anything if they were in your crops. Anyway that's where the shotgun came from.

BEISEL: Oh how fun.

GRANT: And so I don't ever shoot it it's still in pretty good shape.

BEISEL: Oh, looks like it's in excellent shape.

GRANT: Yep, I keep it along with a few more modern guns that I do shoot sometime.

BEISEL: Um now were you all big into hunting? Was there kind of some hunting around here?

GRANT: Yeah uh everybody squirrel hunted and everybody had uh squirrel stew and squirrel dumplings on Sunday, usually. And so uh we did not have any deer when I was growing up. The deer had been pretty well obsolete and uh had gone away I guess with hunting probably before I got big enough to hunt. Now later, in recent years the last twenty years we'll say, we've reintroduced the deer population we have a pretty good deer population so hunting we still do a little deer hunting, uh but the most hunting going on right now is trying to eradicate the feral hogs and they're terrible. We have, I have thirteen hundred acres of land and I have a lot of damage from hogs and so uh I built twelve large traps bigger than this room made like a fish trap where they can go in but they can't come out and I've trapped approximately six hundred in the last three years.

BEISEL: In three years?

GRANT: Mmhm and so I've helped a little bit, but haven't nearly eradicated them.

BEISEL: They reproduce so quickly what two or three litters a year?

GRANT: They'll have two to two and a half litters a year and they'll start reproducing when they're about seven months old. So uh you know you just don't know what to do except eradicate as many as you can and like I have some meadows I've just baled hay on and they'll come in there the night after you baled that hay and make a mess out of it. And then a lot of times, you wont

catch them they'll leave and go somewhere else and sometimes they'll come and stay and you can trap them but uh trapping's gotten a little bit I don't catch as many as I used to either there's not as many or they're a little smarter maybe.

BEISEL: Hmmm hmmm now when did the hogs start to become a problem around here?

GRANT: Oh about ten years ago.

BEISEL: So they're recent? Were there, there must not have been many around when you were a kid?

GRANT: None, none. They tell me that these Russian breed of hogs came in with introducing them into hunting clubs and that a lot of them were either turned loose or that they got loose. And uh some of them have been crossed with domestic hogs but they're still a lot of these just solid black, long haired, long snout and tushes about this long if they're very old which pretty much indicate that those are traits from the Russian hogs.

BEISEL: And they're the ones doing all the damage is that correct?

GRANT: Yes they're doing all the damage.

BEISEL: Well, now so around here in Arcadia, uh, what are some of the structures that used to be around here that you remember from your childhood that no longer exist? Different buildings and places?

GRANT: Well right out in front here where there's a little brick um [clears throat] lodge building, masonic lodge building, there was a I'm pretty sure it was three stories this tall building its down the road I'm pretty sure it's been moved.

That structure was the biggest landmark we had probably and in the years past beside the top floor being a masonic meeting room and my father and my grandfather and most of the men in the community were Masons. They'd meet periodically up there. And we'd have our community meetings like 4H clubs for example uh and uh the adult community meetings would be held in the bottom floor which still had some old desks and things and benches and stuff I understand it had been a school at one time before, before I grew into it. And so uh that building was quite a structure and uh other than that there was a store right across the street here across from where there is a present store there was one across the street, between the two houses over there, that was pretty active that was where everybody got their…

BEISEL: Was it canned goods or more of a general store?

GRANT: A general store they would have cattle feed and they would have staples and fence materials and they even had uh some dried goods they had some shoes, I remember seeing those what did they call those little shoes hook-and- eye shoes that were really old older than my time, but they still had some in there and there was a lady, Mrs. Lou Wheeler, that actually started the store and her son-in-law Jim Crawford and his wife Gladys who was the daughter of Ms. Wheeler they ran it for a long time. And of course, with no electricity, there was a gas pump about that big around and about eight, nine feet tall that um to get gas in your pickup or your tractor you would pump this fuel out of a tank underground up into this little gas tank until you got five gallons up where you could see it and, then, you would let it into your vehicle with a hose just

simply gravity flow because there's no electric pump. And so that was an unusual little sight and it looked common to us cause it had been there the whole time and uh I'm not sure what happened to the old pump but I I've been told that a neighbor that got it that his son may have it if I see him one day I'm gonna see if I can get him to let me have it and bring it out here to this in front of this old store building. But uh those two structures were pretty unusual and then there was a little Baptist church on this same property that we're sitting on, on the other side of Greg's chicken house, that um a lot of people went to a little missionary Baptist church. And uh so the church, the laundry building and the general store were the three biggest things and other than that people had rural farmhouses a lot of them were dogtrot style houses like the one we're in today and then up the road I've redone my grandparent's uh dogtrot house, and so those houses that looked pretty common to us then, now look pretty unusual cause there aren't many left standing or that is been taken care of so the houses and the three structures I've described catch most of the structures around here that are no around so a few of the houses still here.

BEISEL: Most people um around their homes since they were farmers had small barns along with corncribs or?

GRANT: Yeah the corncrib uh from my old home place we lived to this property is out here and the corncribs were pretty common as we described earlier about the storing the corn for your cattle in the winter and so nearly everyone had a corncrib made out of logs. And so a few of them are still around but not very many and then nearly everybody had some kind of a barn to have a stall or

two, everybody had a milk cow, you know, because you didn't have access to run down to the grocery store and buy a quart of milk so everyone had a cow and you'd separate the calf from her in the morning and let the cow would go out and graze and then in the evening she'd come back in and then you'd milk the cow, and then you'd let the calf stay with the cow overnight so he could get half the milk and you'd get the other half. And so that's kind of how we did it and so to keep it cool, from spoiling, you'd do, usually you'd have a gallon jug you'd let it down in the water well so that uh it would stay cool and not spoil and then you'd carefully draw it out so that you didn't crack it against the wall the uh and then. Other than that there was boxes that were literally an icebox not a refrigerator that would have room for about a fifty-pound block of ice and that ice would be in a certain area and the other area beneath it would get some coolant from that of course and so uh about every two or three days the iceman, so to speak, would come in with his tongs that would grab a hold of the block of ice and he'd bring it in and put it in your ice box for you so that was the amount of the cooling.

BEISEL: Was he coming out of Center?

GRANT: Center.

BEISEL: Okay now were there many windmills around here to pump? Or everything was just dug wells?

GRANT: No windmills just shallow dug wells that were most of them about thirty feet deep. Now in the severe, we had a really severe drought about 1951 or 2 and uh a lot of people's water wells went dry because these shallow wells were

contingent a lot on ground water actually. And I remember we drove our cattle down the road for about two miles down the road everyday to a neighbor who had a deep pond he had water, the rest of us didn't, so he was, I think he was my dad's sister's kinfolks. But anyways the wells there were no deep wells of course they had no electricity to have a water pump anyways so you couldn't have pumped it out if you'd of had one.

BEISEL: Right hmm well um I was thinking of something else outhouses, plumbing?

GRANT: Everybody had an outhouse, and so no indoor plumbing because you had no electricity. When people got electricity then you started seeing people putting in bathrooms and having a bathtub or a shower and uh that like I said that was about '49 so in the '50s most everybody ended up with electricity.

BEISEL: Was that part of the Rural Electrification Administration, the REA?

GRANT: Yes it was. Yeah in fact the company that serviced this area is out of St. Augustine and it's now called Deep East Texas Rural Electrification or some such title and uh, but it was the REA all along.

BEISEL: Okay it was REA? Alright and um and when or is most people still well water here or community water has that come in?

GRANT: We have no community water but most all of us have a big deep well. We're on an aquifer here that has excellent water and plenty of it so uh I actually have six deep wells in six different locations all about 234 feet deep to good water. And uh so that part's been good now we have a lot of oil and gas activity in recent years that occasionally will interfere with somebody's deep well. They'll frack a well and use so much ground water, underground water,

in fact my main well at my house was, went dry over one night when they fracked the and they had to come dig me another well so I've had that happen twice actually. But other than that the oil and gas, in our area it's primarily gas, natural gas, and uh I think I have about twenty wells that I have some royalty interested in and most of them are on my land too so uh we have a little, a little petroleum industry.

BEISEL: Now what about timber? You mentioned that some people were converting those cotton fields to cattle and timber. When did that occur? Same time?

GRANT: Well, uh yeah a lot of the land in this country was in timber, uh before they got to farming it a lot so then they would have what they'd call new grounds where they'd take the timber off usually with cross-cut saws because even in those older days there wasn't even chainsaws. And uh I know we rented the bottom up here near where I lived, and instead had the stumps in there that you'd have to avoid if you were planting, of course as I was growing up we were planting on horses and mules rather than tractors, so um it was more in timber land and then they cleared some for farming and then some for cattle. Now some people, in recent years, have gone back to putting some out in timber and uh on my land I have about 1000 maybe 1100 acres of open pasture for cattle and then I do have 2 or 300 acres I have in timber land so uh, there's some I'm gonna say there's more people using open land in this particular community than there are using timber but there are some people who are going back to the timber.

BEISEL: Okay.

GRANT: Actually the timber prices have been pretty low so uh not too many people are willing to wait twenty years to get a low price for something. And the cattle prices are really good so uh that's what everybody's liking right now the fact that they're getting a lot of money for their cattle.

BEISEL: Right now you've mentioned horse-drawn hay equipment and horses and other cases what type was there any particular breed people had or were they just kind of Grade-A, Heinz 57?

GRANT: A lot of them would have some draft horse in em like the Belgian or Persian but I don't think that any of them would have been purebred in this country like they might have been up north or over on the east coast. But uh we had one horse that was uh obviously about half draft horse because uh it was a big stout mare and she had larger feet. And uh other than that we had uh a usually people paired up a mule and a horse and uh I'm not sure I ever understood exactly why you'd want a mule and a horse as opposed to two horses or two mules but uh that's what we did, that's what most of our neighbors did. And so uh the uh horses and the mules were pretty important they're vitally important we finally bought a little tractor in the early fifties and we continued to use the horse the mule and the little tractor for a while and so uh.

BEISEL: Did you usually just have two? One horse and one mule or?

GRANT: Uh we just had the two and then later we bought the younger mare that became one of the main ones, so at that time we had three plus a tractor.

BEISEL: Was there anybody here that was particularly breeding mules like middle Tennessee and Missouri and areas that are big mule breeders?

GRANT: Some there'd be a Jack is a male donkey and you'd breed the Jack to the mare and the mare would have the mule and so yeah some of that. There's two or three stud services Jacks in the area and some people yeah they're trying to raise their own mules. I don't think near as active doing that as over in Missouri or some places where it was big business but they had to keep finding some mules to work the fields you know.

BEISEL: Did uh you all attend local auctions um regularly? Was there farm auctions?

GRANT: Well there was, I don't ever remember a farm auction, there was a cattle auction up out of Center on the Timpson road highway that uh I think was always there that in my lifetime and there was one in Nacogdoches so that would be where you would sell your cattle and if you wanted to buy something they would also sell horses and mules and pigs and so uh those auctions, of course, are still pretty active the one in Center and the one in Nacogdoches so uh I don't ever remember a farm auction as selling farm equipment.

BEISEL: Right. I think that's something that happens more on the east coast.

GRANT: Yeah and the mid-west some of it.

BEISEL: Right well now if people um around here in Nacogdoches, sorry Arcadia, most were farmers.

GRANT: Pretty much.

BEISEL: Were there any other businesses beside the store?

GRANT: You'd have a little logging business maybe a saw mill around and some of them would work at the saw mill some would work in the woods getting the

logs to the saw mill or the pup wood and that plus the farming that was pretty well it because there wasn't any industry there wasn't any chicken plants, there wasn't any manufacturing plants around so, if they wanted a job they couldn't make it on one of those two fields they'd go to the city go to Houston or Beaumont somewhere that they did have some industry you know.

BEISEL: When World War II and the ship making and all of that expanded, were there quite a few people that left Arcadia at that point?

GRANT: There was. In fact my dad was one of them. I was, during World War II we moved to Port Arthur and they had a big ship building factory there. He worked as a ship builder for two or three years. I remember when the war ended in '45 and people ran out in the streets and shot their guns in the air thought that was the big event I wasn't sure what it was about, but everybody was shooting their guns.

BEISEL: Well I guess if you didn't have the electricity come in until '49 then the whole stories of the Depression, of course you weren't born yet, Roosevelt and his fireside chats and things wouldn't have had much of an impact around here, without the radio.

GRANT: Not on me but I heard my mom and dad they uh they were married about '32, three along in there, early-thirties and they lived through the Depression and always heard about it. And of course the country people um because they were pretty poor and depended on subsistence and growing their own food they may have fared a hair better than the city people because they could provide for themselves but uh some land that I now own they bought, about a hundred

acres, and uh they paid for it during the Depression years with cotton that was five cents a pound which uh sounds pretty cheap but uh that was, and they paid, I think then, I have a deed that shows they paid ten dollars an acre for it but in those days that was equivalent to a thousand an acre now you know but they paid for it during the Depression years so they managed [clock chiming] even though it was hard.

BEISEL: Right did they speak much about the government policies that, you know, limited the amount of cotton did that effect your family?

GRANT: Yeah uh two or three things I heard them talk about uh that cotton allotments that uh each person could only grow so many, so much and they would send a government man out to actually measure your field. I heard them talk about that and then cattle had gotten, of course the Depression cattle was practically worthless they had a government program that actually would give you a certain amount we'll say five dollars a head of cow, they'd kill the cow, and so in doing so they were reducing the cattle herd and I guess the whole plot was eventually the economy would get better cause there were fewer of them. And so I heard them talk about that they got mixed emotions they thought it was kind of a waste to kill something that somebody could've been eating somewhere you know. And uh they also had uh dipping vats part of this government programs, its where to get rid of tick fever and things born by insects. In fact I own some land right down the road that still has the old dipping vat.

BEISEL: Does it really? [37:43]

GRANT: And uh its got concrete alley that they would pen the cattle, and it was mandatory everybody had to do it, and they'd run the cattle all through this dipping vat that had the insecticide and then they'd crawl out the other end and so that way they got rid of the ticks and flies and the mosquitoes and stuff.

BEISEL: I would love to see that. I've heard about those and that program and it seems like it was fairly effective.

GRANT: It must have been, it must have been because you didn't ever hear much about any bad things coming out of it. But everybody would have to get their horses and their dogs and round up their cattle and then have to have these little pens to crowd them into and then force them to jump in that water.

BEISEL: We did an interview with somebody else a couple years ago and he talked about the program to kill the cattle off and that they took it, but they weren't real pleased about it either.

GRANT: That's the way I got it from the parents.

BEISEL: And perhaps it was an attempt also to weed out the weaker cattle or something of that nature, who knows. Was the train much of a factor, the various railroads in you know in the way that Arcadia functioned or just not close enough?

GRANT: Well not exactly here in Arcadia, but a five miles west of here we mentioned the little community of Stockman they had a rail service from Grigsby which is over on the Nacogdoches highway that ran across through Stockman into Timpson. And I think that the purpose of this train was to haul logs to the mill we'll say, in Timpson perhaps. And you can still find the bulkheads and the

built up areas where the rail was of course its long since uh it's no longer there but other than that the main line through here that ran up here that ran from Houston and Texarkana and came through Nacogdoches and Garrison and Timpson and Tenaha and up through Carthrige and Marshall. Uh when we were living in Houston area I was a little kid and I wanted to come back to visit grandparents, my parents would put me on a train in Houston and my grandparents would pick me up at Timpson you know I was like ten years old. And so we had passenger service that we don't have anymore of course. I guess the nearest passenger service is Longview they have Amtrak so uh that's probably it. But anyway, that was about the extent of the rails. A little short line that stopped and the main line of course that ran through Tenaha, Timpson, Bobo and Blair, the four communities that the conductors would usually bark out as they were traveling through. And those communities and of course those are still there Timpson and Tenaha are fair sized little towns, you know, Bobo and Blair are little small rural communities on the other side of Timpson. There was a song by that name that Tex Ritter made famous.

BEISEL: So around here it really was, it was the roads and then that improvement from the farm-to-market coming through that made the, a difference.

GRANT: It did. The uh the hills we'll say on this road that runs from here to Garrison. Is a Bishop Hill over here about a mile it drops off severely and before this paved road came through and it came a rain it was impassable. You couldn't come up the hill. And then up the road north of here on 1645 there's another hill, the Darnell Hill we call it, that had a rock right in the middle of that road

and when it rained you not gonna get up past the rock cause it was all clay leechee soil it would kind of just pull you off in the ditch so uh farm-to-market roads made it a lot better you could get around a little bit better.

BEISEL: Well now since everybody, I'm sure, knew each other were there remarkable kinds of characters that lived in Arcadia?

GRANT: Anyway, one thing that that brings to mind the uh the uh activities and the social life we'll say what there was amounted to, now this is before electricity, we'd go to the neighbor's house and play 42 and even us little kids and wives and mothers everybody played 42. We'd have a coal oil lamps so we could see the spots on the dominos and they'd always cook a little something and have something to eat or drink you know, uh 42 is a big game around and so uh that was pretty big. Now back to characters [laughs] I think there were more characters than non characters everybody had some unusual things about them, but you'd always have some that had an alcoholism problem that you'd always see and hear about those. There was one gentleman between here and Center that we usually went to Center on Saturday to uh buy groceries and there was a gentleman that would sit on the side of the road and he was trying to catch a ride into town and so he'd be there a long time and sometimes somebody would give him a ride to town and he'd get one back and we always got amused the guy sitting under a sycamore tree waiting for someone to take him to town you know. And then uh other than that everybody the men usually were coon hunters or fox hunters and so they did that a lot at night. They'd have a big time with their dogs and their coon hounds and so uh uh.

We've had a few infamous murders in the community back, prior to my time, that we heard about from parents. One of them was my grandmother Grant's first husband whose name was Chapman uh up the road here about a mile heard some gunfire and he road across the land that I now own to the neighbor's house and uh for some reason they shot a him off his horse and killed him. And anyway she later married my grandfather Grant, but anyway heard the stories I never did know exactly why that happened. And then over this way about half a mile what we called the Bishop Hill there was some Bishop brothers that were involved in some murders over there. So uh you always heard about various things and I think we maybe we even have the weapon out there that Greg has that involved one of those he can tell us about.

BEISEL: Were there any moonshiners around here?

GRANT: Oh yes. Up the road in front of where I was raised there was a family that was notorious for uh for making homemade alcohol and uh there'd be people go up that road and get their alcohol and come back and you'd realize, oh yeah its going on. Well finally the old gentleman got found out by the law enforcement so they came and arrested him and sent him to the penitentiary. Okay the oldest son took it over and so under that same mulberry tree out in the middle of the watermelon patch where they would hide the jugs of alcohol in the ground, you know and when I was about his age I'd go out and watch them sometimes and they'd go out there and they'd know right where it was and they'd get it out and sell it to somebody. And so they finally sent him to

the penitentiary. And then the youngest son, he ran it for a while so finally took over and finally they all disappeared.

BEISEL: That was some good money.

GRANT: Yeah it was. Now I own a place over here that had some people named Burgay and the house uh was there for a good long while until recently it got struck by lightning one night and burnt up. But this house was built unusually well because in the front yard was a great big pecan tree and it had little short pieces of chain embedded in the tree, all around the tree and so you could tie up we'll say, six or eight horses and the reason cause this guy was a bootlegger. And uh inside the house, in an interior room, they had double thickness doors to keep somebody from breaking in there and stealing their hooch, I guess, and then they had uh shelves on the wall for it.

BEISEL: For the product lined up.

GRANT: Yeah so there was a place to tie your horse and a place to go in there and get your booze. So those were the two in my memory in my close neighborhood that had uh had the alcohol business going it's better than farming I think. [47:03]

BEISEL: Yeah and a little bit more social perhaps.

GRANT: I did have an activity. I had uh a sow that the 4H Club had a program they'd give you a gilt, a young sow, and you'd raise a litter of hogs and give them one back and they'd keep the program going. And so my sow got out one day and she had ten young pigs, and she went to the neighbors sty and they used corn a lot, I think and so the corn mash the sow and her pigs got into, and they

liked it really well and so to get her to come back home I had a hard time driving her away from there, but I finally got her back.

BEISEL: So now uh was there a Boy Scout troop? You mentioned 4H was there a Boy Scout troop here?

GRANT: We didn't have any boy scouts but we did have an active 4H club. The uh county agent out of Center would be and the home demonstration agent they'd come out and have monthly meetings and we'd meet in the lodge building out here and pretty active and we'd have, you know, various contests and uh go off to summer camp I was pretty active in those things.

BEISEL: Summer camp around here?

GRANT: No we'd go off usually to uh I think the last one I went to was in Palestine at Lakeview Methodist Assembly Camp just happened to be the place that the 4H club had their camp.

BEISEL: Well, do you have anything else you want to add? You've been talking a lot.

GRANT: Not particularly not particularly.

BEISEL: No I appreciate that this has been very interesting to learn.

GRANT: We dealt more of course on my early childhood and through high school age after I got my college degree and went off um practicing in the music business, as either a high school band director or I owned a store in Longview and Tyler for the last forty years and.

BEISEL: Which schools?

GRANT: Well I taught at Longview High School last and then prior to that I was at White Oak High School which was a wealthy oil field district west of

Longview and then I was at Nacogdoches High School before that. So I've been in the East Texas area primarily but anyway back in '82 I was still in the business in Longview. I wanted to come back to the community where I was raised and I built me a house accumulated lots of land I run cattle primarily now for my activity. And it's keeping me out of trouble and keeping me busy but no that's about it you been a good quizzer today.

BEISEL: Well no I appreciate you taking the time to answer it sounds like there's a lot going outside.

GRANT: Well, we were holding up pretty well. The community is not quite as big and active and we don't have a barbershop or a cotton gin or syrup mills anymore but we have a pretty good community.

BEISEL: Well I really appreciate it very much.

GRANT: It was good to meet you.

BEISEL: You too, thank you. [50:11]