

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

NOEL D. GRANT

MAY 17, 2014

ARCADIA, TEXAS

INTERVIEWED BY LINDA REYNOLDS

ORAL HISTORY #817

EAST TEXAS RESEARCH CENTER

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EDITORIAL NOTICE

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Amanda Carr transcribed this interview in June/July 2015. Kelley Snowden reviewed the draft of this transcript and added her corrections into this final transcript July 2015. Greg Grant reviewed this transcript in September 2015. Perky Beisel made final edits in January 2016.

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ABSTRACT

Noel D. Grant, native of Arcadia, Texas, talks about his early life in Arcadia, adult life working in various cities in Texas, America, and abroad, and his return to his childhood community. Special attention is given to his memories from the 1940s-1980s, including the popularity of drinking vanilla extract, his parents, childhood, community social life, hunting, smoking and curing meats, fraternal organizations, and making moonshine and beer.

People Mentioned: Alton Jones, Eddie Clifton, Jim Crawford, Lou Wheeler, Will Chapman, Ruth Smith, Ruben Smith, Mr. Samford, Willis Blackwell, Clarence Waterman, Greg Grant, Clyde Grant, Allen Reed, Lee Bishop, Van Bishop, Hoya Grant, and Walter Lane.

Places Mentioned: Houston, Timpson, Tenaha, Arcadia, Cooper, Texas City, Pasadena, Texas, Channelview, Texas, Baytown, Fritch, Texas, Amarillo, Iraq, Iran, Garrison, Center, Nacogdoches, Illinois, Indiana, Pleasant Grove, Aiken, Watermelon Hill, Arkansas, Joaquin, and Flatfork Creek.

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LINDA REYNOLDS: [unclear] Okay. This is May 17, 2014, and I'm Linda Reynolds, and we are in Arcadia doing oral history interviews and I'm talking with...

NOEL GRANT: Noel Grant.

REYNOLDS: N-O?

GRANT: E-L.

REYNOLDS: Grant. Okay, so have you lived here in Arcadia all your life?

GRANT: Since nine-, September 6, 1934 except when I got out of high school and went off to Houston to go to work, but I been I was in and out all the time.

REYNOLDS: So, what did you, where did you go to high school at? Here?

GRANT: Went to Cooper School right over on [Highway] 138 then a storm blowed it away, when I was in uh, let's see, in eighth grade I think, and then we went to Timpson, in the ninth grade. About ten miles up the road [clears throat] on 87 and Highway 59, [clears throat] Timpson.

REYNOLDS: Okay, so you said you left here for a short period of time. Where did you end up going?

GRANT: No, I was gone from here, from 1952 to 1988. But I was in I was in once or twice a month all that time. [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: So, uh, where were you living when you were gone? Were you in Houston?

GRANT: I's in, I lived in Texas City, Pasadena, Texas, Houston, Texas, Freer... and uh, Channelview, Texas, and Baytown... and, uh...Fritch, Texas, and Amarillo, and Vernon, and Iraq, Iran.

REYNOLDS: [slight chuckle] Was it work that took you to all those places?

GRANT: Yes ma'am.

REYNOLDS: Oh, what kind of work did you do?

GRANT: I was in uh, pipefitting, and electrical pipe fitting, and welding, and pipelines, and powerhouses, and gas and uh, refineries, for gasoline and oil. All that.

REYNOLDS: What were, you said you were Iraq and Iran?

GRANT: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: When were you over there?

GRANT: In uh, '70s, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Starting the Gulf War, obviously the big fall out and Hostage Crisis.

GRANT: Yeah, that's a different world. You can get an education over there.

REYNOLDS: How did you like being over there?

GRANT: I enjoyed it. It's hot. I had to quit chewing tobacco. It's so hot and so much wind it'd blister your lips. Yeah, if you got to spit much of it. And I do. Oh yeah, it's hot, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So how long were you over there?

GRANT: Long enough. For four years.

REYNOLDS: Four years. Did you take your family with you?

GRANT: No ma'am. They stayed here. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: [unclear] So okay, our focus is in Arcadia, but I like getting a little background information. It sounds like you're very well-traveled. You've been everywhere.

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So here in Arcadia, we have talked with Greg quite a bit. He's given us quite a few interesting stories about the town and a little bit of history about it. What kind of things would you like to share? 'Cause he was telling us about an uncle that used to drink vanilla?

GRANT: Extract.

REYNOLDS: Extract. [chuckles]

GRANT: Anything. Vanilla extract. That was about all you could get, all you could afford, like you make cakes out of. Depends on, a lot of it would get you drunk, or messed up, yeah, had more than one, biggest one Alton Jones. [unclear] my grandmother his sister a lot. He drank extract. Anything he could drink, but it'd work, yeah.

REYNOLDS: I just wanna...-

GRANT: We had a friend named Eddie Clifton the same way, and uh, he worked, yeah. They didn't drink any more than people does today. Ain't no difference..

REYNOLDS: I guess not, I guess not.

GRANT: ...as far as I'm concerned. [4:13]

REYNOLDS: Ah, so as a child, what kind of things did you do here for fun or as a family?

GRANT: You'd play marbles, pitch washers, and uh, work, go fishing, bear hunting, squirrel hunting, uh, ride your little old, scooter, two wheel scooter to play on or bicycle if you's lucky enough to have one, make you just work, and make your little old toys, milk cows, yeah. Feed hogs, chickens, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So milking cows for fun?

GRANT: Yeah, I guess so, you didn't know any better. Didn't know no difference.

REYNOLDS: When I was a kid I used to chase my grandma's cows.

GRANT: Yeah, yeah we'd run cows. We'd steal eggs over here from a neighbor over here, but we didn't have enough sense to keep them. We'd steal them on the way from school or early in the morning if we forgot to get them the day before, and we didn't have enough sense to sell them the next morning like we brought them from home. We'd sell them in the evenings on the way home from school. Buy soda pop or cigarettes with and we got broke from smoking, got too many butt whoopings. We quit that smoking, quit stealing eggs and then after we'd get back we'd start running the milk cows in the creek, and that didn't work either, your grandparents and him, and everybody else, they'd tear your butt up man, and we stopped that, too.
[chuckles] Yeah.

REYNOLDS: How did they know that you were the ones that did it though?

GRANT: There was eleven of us out here, there wasn't nobody else to do it.

REYNOLDS: So you couldn't blame "Well, he did it cause..."

GRANT: Naw, you couldn't blame nobody.

REYNOLDS: So the store was over here?

GRANT: Yeah. Jim Crawford and Lou Wheeler.

REYNOLDS: Who was it?

GRANT: Miss Lou Wheeler is the one that opened it up. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So what kind of things did she sell in her store?

GRANT: Oh anything from, uh, let's see, if you, some old clothes, you could buy whatever a little bit, gas, a little food, soda pops.

REYNOLDS: Vanilla extract?

GRANT: Yeah, extract, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Did she ever wonder why she was selling so much vanilla extract?

GRANT: I doubt it.

REYNOLDS: People were just doing a lot of baking?

GRANT: Yeah, yeah they did. Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So, um, uh, did you do a lot of things together as a family getting together like on Sundays or anything?

GRANT: Yeah, you'd go to church, go visiting, yeah, you did. People visited more then than they do now. Used to have a lot of big homecomings. Used to be a church right over here by the Masonic Lodge then they moved it and built this new one. And uh, they'd have the revivals. And I, I don't know, I was about thirty-year-old, twenty, about thirty years old, I guess. I always like getting involved with young kids, had a lot of fun with them. And uh, we's having a revival one winter, we caught a bunch of these house cats, there's be a lot of cats, and they's having the prayer meeting out there, and we'd done had the windows where they'd raise up real easy, [chuckles] they got

in kneeling and praying cats [chuckling] trying to [chuckling] turned all them cats loose, yeah, put highlife on ‘em, man you talk about cats trying to get out the way [unclear] [chuckling]

REYNOLDS: Did they find out it was you?

GRANT: Church house got empty, man. [unclear] We went outside, yeah, as soon as we done that, we just went back out there in the woods. [laughs] Yeah, them kids, young people do like things like that. [chuckles]

REYNOLDS: So you’ve seen the decline or watched the decline of Arcadia and people moving out...

GRANT: Yeah. [8:22]

REYNOLDS: [unclear] ...and stuff.

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: What was the main, uh, farmers?

GRANT: Yeah, that’s all it was. Farmers. And Sam Taylor, he married my daddy’s sister. [clears throat] He had a little dairy up the road up yonder, about four miles, small one, used to be a big dairy between here and Garrison, on the other side of Center, but they all gone. Then when the government started allotting you so many acres to cotton to grow, depending on how many acres you owned, so you could farm forty acres or fifty acres of cotton on a hundred acres they cut it down to about fifteen or twenty. You couldn’t make a living. That’s when people started having to leave. Government need to stay out of farmer’s business, as best they can. I realize you need regulations, but you don’t you don’t take the last drop of water from a cow

to give it to somebody else. That's what happened, that's a good example,
[clears throat] yeah.

REYNOLDS: So whenever they had to stop growing so much cotton, those who stayed,
what did they end up growing? Or doing?

GRANT: Well, that's about the time, they started, a few people, was able to start
raising a few more cattle. [clears throat] Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Okay, was about the time that um...

GRANT: That was about, in uh, that was, I don't know, I'm gonna say in the late '40s
or early '50s. I'm gonna say that, that's a rough idea, I'm not real sure.
Hadn't thought of it that way.

REYNOLDS: So people end up leaving and going to like Houston for big city jobs.

GRANT: Mmm-hmm. Yeah. My brother-in-law, you done interviewed him?

REYNOLDS: No, you and your brother were the first ones.

GRANT: Oh, hadn't got him yet?

REYNOLDS: No, we talked to Greg a couple of times.

GRANT: Oh, okay. Uh, yeah... had some killings. The Chapmans. There was, my
grandmother Grant's first husband was a Chapman. He, him, and the Princes
had problems and he actually, he finally, he got killed, right up the road
yonder about two miles. I got a picture of the old house.

REYNOLDS: How'd he die?

GRANT: Got shot. And then his brother got shot in a shootout over here, Stockman, a
few miles. That's bad country, man. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Why were they shot?

GRANT: Well, one of them was a law man [clears throat], he was sorta like a Constable, and uh, I don't know how, I don't know how his, I don't know why this other one actually got shot. Bishop twin brother got shot. Lee and Van Bishop. Right over here on this... Lilly Hill, where Allen Reed lives now. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So was there a lot of killings or was that just, just not...

GRANT: No, those two, those four was the main ones, mmm-hmm, yeah. [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: I know Greg told us about brothers, and they're buried up the road and he's got the shotgun that killed one of them.

GRANT: Yeah, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Over a woman or wife or something?

GRANT: Evident—I don't really know. I've heard different stories. I've heard so many different stories, in my past on work and just everyday life. I've got to really, I've got to know someone as well as I know my border collies that works. Them best friend you'll ever have is a four-legged dog. I don't have a dog, they're my friends. And they can tell your attitude. If you ain't the same everyday they know it, and uh, I've got to know somebody as well as I know Greg and my brother... and yeah, and my border collies, before I believe what they tell me. I don't mean to be a dictator. I been involved with too many lies and helped too many people that lie. And uh, I don't, I don't like that. I don't like a liar. I have no respect.

REYNOLDS: To me, it's very important to be truthful and...

GRANT: Truthful, even if you're wrong, be truthful about it.

REYNOLDS: Yes, admit it and...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Yes.

GRANT: Just like that trial going on in Center, started a few days ago. That man and his wife was with him, robbed some people and beat 'em up and finally killed two in Tenaha over that way, Joaquin... He admitted it. He said he did it, he didn't realize maybe what all he was doing that may be for a lawyer defense for cruelty, I mean uh, crazy, but he said he wasn't he just uh, he said he done it, he shouldn't have done it, and he was ready for his punishment. His wife didn't have nothing to do with the killings, and he's was ready to go to Huntsville and get injected, said he was through, said he didn't want to live no more. Said he was through, he done it. I'm gonna respect him for that whether it was a lie or not. He's the only one who knows if he means it or not. I don't. I respect him for that. Even if he did kill them people, rob that, steal that pickup. Yeah, that's what he ought to get.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, I have no problem with that.

GRANT: Yeah, I'm for the death penalty.

REYNOLDS: No problem.

GRANT: But I ain't for them staying on death row for thirty years.

REYNOLDS: That's just cruel and unusual punishment. [14:19]

GRANT: Give 'em a pill, a couple of pills, and if they lose, let 'em go. One of the things I remember from down here is the dippin' vat down for cattle. I

remember that, all them pictures. Put a lot of thought in it, I take a lot more, yeah.

REYNOLDS: That's good. Uh, can you tell me a little bit about your parents? Kind what they were like?

GRANT: All they was hard workers. Went to church, right down here to walk to church. It was a mile and a half, to church, it was two miles for us to walk to school in the wintertime. About a mile every day. Anytime we walked to school, we didn't stay at the house. And uh, farmed, and uh when they started allotting cotton Daddy finally went off and went to work. Be in and out about every two weeks or whatever. Momma made a nurse, RN, and uh, [clears throat], they'd bust your butt and slap you down if you didn't listen. It didn't take long. Momma would take two fingers, you'd go get the peach tree limb or weeping willow, my grandparents Smith were the same way, you go get it and bring it to them, and when you didn't, when you kept your feet on the ground and no tears, you's through. [unclear] I've got scars on me now from Momma. The best education I ever got. And uh, [clears throat] Daddy got nephritis; I ain't even sure how old Daddy was when he died. In his 40s, I'm assuming. I don't even remember the day he died. I remember when he died, but I don't remember a date. Didn't live long, but uh, he lived uh, I think he lived a more... uh, easier-type life than I did. In other words, I didn't mind getting in trouble, having fun. They didn't have times, then. Yeah. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: What was your parent's names?

GRANT: My daddy's name Hoya, H-O-Y-A with an initial "D," G-R-A-N-T. Yeah, some people names call it "Hawyer" but I called him "Hooyer" I don't know how you pronounce it. Mama's name was Ruth, R-U-T-H. Ruth Smith. I don't guess she had a middle name. If she did I never knew it. If I did I forgot it.

REYNOLDS: Was she popular because she was an RN here in the area?

GRANT: Aw yeah. Yeah. She'd help a lot of people for nothing, [clears throat] yeah. She nursed the people that founded the Lone Star Feed in Nacogdoches. I forget his first name, but the man that founded it. She was his nurse, private. She lived there, that was after my dad died. She lived there with him and his people of his house and took care of him, twenty-four hours a day, except go to church, [clears throat] a long time, yeah. I forget his name. Wright? But anyway, whatever, that's what she done that until he died. Then she opened up a fish market in Nacogdoches. She remarried a man named Andrew Mena. I had a lot of respect for him for not working. He didn't know what work was. Not like we knew. Very nice, polite person. Real nice, polite, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So did she...

GRANT: 100% different from my daddy... yeah.

REYNOLDS: Did she get her RN before or after she was married?

GRANT: Oh, after, yeah, [clears throat] after she was married. She stayed at home and farmed until my dad died and uh... yeah, picked cotton, pulled corn,

milked crows, yeah she stayed home. [clears throat] She done that after my daddy died, best I, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Did she go to SFA to do [unclear]?

GRANT: Yeah. Far as I know, yeah she went to Nacogdoches. Mmm-hmm, yeah.

REYNOLDS: I have a lot of respect for that.

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: That's not easy to do.

GRANT: No, yeah, that's what she done. She liked to fish. She liked to grow a garden. She was good at it. Little lady. [unclear] She never did weigh over 115, 20, 18 pounds, I don't imagine. [clears throat] About 5'2" about my height. Well, I'm taller than that, but she, she mighta been 5'5" 5' 6," about the same size as my wife. Uh...

REYNOLDS: She was kind of a force to be reckoned with and everybody respected her.

GRANT: You bet. Yeah. I tell you what, she could look at me, after we got all through with them bad whoopings you'd get whoopings from your neighbors in the community. It didn't have to just be your parents. I'm for that. But then we had people with some common sense. We ain't got many no more, in my opinion, and I don't care who hears what I'm saying. If you face facts, it's a proven fact, and uh, I hate that. I feel sorry for our young people. From childbirth through, I'd even go up to, I'm gonna say, well I'm sure gonna go to twelve, and I can even go from twelve to twenty, they get twelve, they ought to have a mind to do something besides sit on nothing. I feel sorry for them. In my opinion, they've never own nothing and won't be

raised enough with common sense to take care of something that their parents or grandparents can leave them. It takes training and appreciation and respect, and I think, y'all may not agree, but I do, I believe it. [21:04]

REYNOLDS: I do. I sent my kids up to Illinois. I used to work the bean fields when I lived in Central Illinois, and we had to walk the bean fields, detassel some corn...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...I was twelve, so I mean I've worked on a farm...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...and that's something I had to do in the summertime.

GRANT: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: And so I actually sent my kids to Illinois.

GRANT: Well that's good. You know.

REYNOLDS: It's a worth ethic. They need to learn the work ethic.

GRANT: I even lived in Indiana. I got sent on a job in Indiana. It's hot up there, takes a lot of water. It reminded me of Iran and Iraq but it's a different heat.

[clears throat]

REYNOLDS: Yes.

GRANT: I forgot about that, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So with your dad, uhm, he was basically a farmer, [unclear]

GRANT: Yeah, raised cattle. People talk about cattle and ranches. You ain't got a ranch if you ain't got, you've just got twelve or fifteen or twenty-five cattle, that's a hobby. When you get up around 150-500 and a lot of land, that's what I call a ranch. Uh... well that's what I call one.

REYNOLDS: Did they ever raise chickens or hogs or anything?

GRANT: Oh, yeah, they raised hogs, [clears throat] yeah.

REYNOLDS: Just for personal use?

GRANT: Yeah, personal use. Yeah, used to kill 'em. You hit them behind the head with a hammer and kill 'em. Yeah, knock 'em down, take your nigh long butcher knife and stick them in throat for them to bleed. Yeah, drag 'em out. Put them in the barrel. Didn't have [unclear] put them in the barrel in a hole down in the ground where you can slide them in on a forty-five and don't leave 'em too long, that hair you can scrape it off, but if you leave them in there and you don't know how to do it too long that hair will set up and you just about got to skin 'em then, and you, yeah, that's a trick to it. Mmm-hmm, yeah.

REYNOLDS: With cattle, did you send them out or did you slaughter your own cattle?

GRANT: You, you slaughtered your own cattle, and then you sell some at the sale barn. Wasn't many, most of it was farmland. [clears throat] Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So what kind of things, to supplement that, you said you were hunting, did you hunt squirrels or birds?

GRANT: Yeah, squirrels, used to have a lot of mink. Their price, back in the '40s would bring anywhere from twenty-five or fifty dollars a hide. Ruben Smith done a lot of mink hunting. He didn't have no land, but he hunted, trapped. He's good at it. He didn't... [unclear]

REYNOLDS: Where did you sell the mink to?

GRANT: I don't know where he sold them to. We never did mess with them.

REYNOLDS: Did you have like foxes?

GRANT: Yeah, had a lot of fox, had a lot of coyote, had a lot of timber wolves. Yeah, we ain't got no more of them. They might...some people thinks we got a couple timber wolves running around. We might have. They ain'tout in all this country on all this land like I am. I seen two, twelve, fifteen year ago. We ain't got the coyotes like we used to have. We shot them. They too bad on the chickens.

REYNOLDS: Did you ever see bears around here?

GRANT: No.

REYNOLDS: Black bears or anything?

GRANT: No. Coyotes. We got, we got a few. I saw one yesterday all the hair was all off of him, with the mange, and uh, didn't get a chance to shoot him. Daddy, he belonged to the Masonic Lodge out here, and I joined it when I was twenty-one, I think you had to be twenty-one to join it, yeah. Got my fifty-year masonic pin out there last year.

REYNOLDS: Oh?

GRANT: Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: [unclear] ...so you with the Masons.

GRANT: Here and other places, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So are a lot of the men in the community Masons here?

GRANT: Yeah. Well, not right now, there not any right here. I'm the only one right out here. There's some when you get three or four miles from here. Used to be a lot of Masons.

REYNOLDS: So it was pretty common...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...fifty years ago?

GRANT: Oh, it was, you bet. I tell you what, just anybody don't get in them. It's just like a jury, when you go to trial. You've got to be recommended *by* one, and then there's committees appointed to check you out, your parents out. You're checked out, and if you ain't right you don't get in.

REYNOLDS: So it's a good way to I'll say socialize - but then...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Did you do community service or anything like that in the early days when you were here, as a Mason, or did you just kind meet together and—have ...
[unclear]

GRANT: You'd meeting over here once a month. You'd have special meetings, and you'd meet, yeah. Mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: So it was just basically kinda get together, hang out without the wives
[slight chuckle]

GRANT: Yeah, and you'd go through all your procedures. You don't just [unclear] sit down a visit.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

GRANT: Well, you might visit a little, but you go in there for your business and take care of that.

REYNOLDS: Was there only one church out here?

GRANT: Yeah, they was one right here and there was one up the road built. Church of Christ was built right up yonder. One at Aiken. One up there at Pleasant Grove, one at Aiken, yeah there's a lot of churches, within three to five miles, yeah. [26:45]

REYNOLDS: Can you tell me anything about that building that is up the road that used to be, the Masons were upstairs?

GRANT: It was right here. That's where it came from, right here. That was [unclear], that was the old church house on the bottom and the Masonic Lodge is upstairs. It was moved from right here. We trying to get it back [clears throat] from some relatives that got it. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [available in 2026]

REYNOLDS: But she's from here?

GRANT: Yeah, her daddy belonged, he was secretary out here for years. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [available

in 2026]

REYNOLDS: So did you used to meet in that building when you were here?

GRANT: Yeah, oh yeah.

REYNOLDS: Did you go to school in there or [unclear]?

GRANT: No. I don't know that anybody ever went to school in it.

REYNOLDS: So it was mostly just a church?

GRANT: Yeah, it was a church. It might of been, it might have been a schoolhouse before that but I ain't ever heard nobody mention that. I don't really know. Sure don't.

REYNOLDS: That's okay. So were people allowed, were only Masons allowed on the second floor?

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: No one else?

GRANT: No one else. And the Eastern Star for women, yeah, they'd meet right over here, too. No, that Eastern Star, they couldn't meet upstairs, yeah. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So there was actually the women organizations here for the women?

GRANT: Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Okay. So Rainbow Girls?

GRANT: Rainbow Girls, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Was that also here?

GRANT: You know, no, probably no. I don't know nothing about the Rainbow Girls, really don't. I don't know if they are associated with uh, women.

REYNOLDS: The Eastern Star?

GRANT: I don't know Eastern Star. I don't know nothing about that. I've heard of it but don't know nothing.

REYNOLDS: So when you were first being a Mason, was the Eastern Star was also started.

GRANT: Yeah, mmm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: It was also here at the same time. So they had a different night to meet?

GRANT: Yeah. Momma belonged to Eastern Star, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Was your daddy a Mason?

GRANT: Yeah. Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: That's real cool.

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Greg has shown me quite a bit, back to your mom, Greg has shown me quite a few quilts here that he has.

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: And I think some of them, quilt frame in the dog trot.

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So do you remember your momma quilting?

GRANT: Yeah, take our old britches and shirts, if you had any good things left, you'd cut the good ones off to make a quilt. Take a year or two to make them. Older women that wasn't able to work, they'd make quilts. Yeah, sew 'em by hand. Crocheted by hand. People stayed busy then, they didn't have all these modern conveniences. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: I really enjoyed when he showed me the quilting frame. Cause I'm a quilter. I love quilts.

GRANT: You do?

REYNOLDS: And I can quilt, and I can piece, and then I can quilt because I have a frame.
It's made of PVC, but...

GRANT: Don't make no difference.

REYNOLDS: It's hand frame. And, uhm, when I go through I was getting some
background information on some of the quilts like this is carded with cotton
or this is, something like that, and it's just, when you're carding, that's a lot
of work.

GRANT: Yeah, it is. She's make shirts, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So I know she had you as kids carding cotton for her.

GRANT: Yeah. We'd have to cut big old patches out of your britches, yeah. I tell you
what, a pair of britches or boots, a hat or a cap ain't comfortable to me until
you've got holes in the knees, and you cut your shirt sleeves off, and you get
cool in the summer. These new britches, I bet I wash 'em [unclear] I do, I
wanna 'em washed at least six or eight times, before I wear 'em. Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So, um, uh, I'm still stuck on quilts cause I really love quilts.

GRANT: I tell you what—

REYNOLDS: They're great. They're hard work. The way [unclear] that they did them,
some of the pieces are so little.

GRANT: Yeah, I don't see how, I don't see how they get the patience. It's sorta like a
man that redoes all these old houses. And you know they crochet uh, not a
jacket, what do they call 'em, not a coat but they crochet something you
wear over your clothes, shirts and sleeves, yeah women.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, crochet. I'm noticing that it's a lost art.

GRANT: And knit.

REYNOLDS: That's what I used to do is crochet.

GRANT: Knit. I don't know if a person or a lady made a quilt, size of this rug if she couldn't get, I don't know what they were for sale for her, one you buy today is gonna be out of a machine.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

GRANT: But I'll betcha if she got minimum wage. Yeah, I don't know, I'm gonna say they're gonna say it'd be worth \$2,000 or better. You know more about that.

[32:32]

REYNOLDS: They go for a lot of money especially if they are made by hand.

GRANT: By hand. I bet \$2,000 wouldn't buy minimum wage.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, the fabric and the construction. And to me, I love the ones that he has 'cause they've been used, and, they just, they have a history to them.

GRANT: Yeah. That's right.

REYNOLDS: I just get excited. I think everybody should be excited about quilts [chuckles].

GRANT: Really do, you hang them out, yeah.

REYNOLDS: And some people, I mean, they buy these old ones and put them up as artwork. But I'm like, I threw mine on my bed. I've got a piece of history and love and care.

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: They had purpose.

GRANT: Yeah. Grow your own cotton to put in them?

REYNOLDS: Yeah. So whenever you picked cotton...

GRANT: A comfort. What's the difference between a quilt and a comfort? It's bigger.

REYNOLDS: A comforter is just one piece of material.

GRANT: Oh, is that what that is?

REYNOLDS: ...and a quilt is you're putting a lot of pieces together, so uh.

GRANT: Yeah. I thought about that a lot of times cutting hay and ain't never asked nobody. [Reynolds chuckles] I ain't never around nobody to ask to find out nothing.

REYNOLDS: But that's kind of what the difference is.

GRANT: Yeah. One piece. [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: Yeah, you notice comforters are usually just one piece of fabric. Now it's just a machine...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...stitched it all together or its tied or something like that.

GRANT: Yeah, if I had my life to re-live over, [clears throat] and everything was like it is, was then, I'd never left the country, 'cause I could have made a living and stayed here. I'd have never left it, if it was to live over.

REYNOLDS: Here in Arcadia?

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: What is—

GRANT: Uh, uh, in the country, I would have never went off on construction. [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: What is it about Arcadia that you really love or that you just feel connected to? [unclear]

GRANT: Well I guess a lot of hard work. Just memories good memories and bad memories and just memories and hard work in a place you feel comfortable and relaxed at. We got a good community. There ain't nothing, there ain't no bullshit that goes on around here much. If it is, it ain't gonna last long. Good community, I wish every community was as safe as this one for people to raise their children in. I'd like to see that done. [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: Yeah, this is the kind of community my grandma and grandpa lived in.

GRANT: We don't put up with it.

REYNOLDS: It was small, we were also related to half the people, and the other half was related by marriage. [chuckles]

GRANT: Yeah, we don't, we don't have no, we don't need no law.

REYNOLDS: You know everybody and everybody knows you. And you're like, there's something fishy going on, or why is there a U-Haul parked in front of somebody's house?

GRANT: Believe me, I'll find out. I've stopped a lot of people. I ain't no constable. I don't want none of that mess. I could a done been one. I do the same thing, just where I am. I stop people for, not doing right. Not the first time, took their driving license, and make them walk... and I meant, I meant just what I told them was gonna happen cause I've been there.. And as soon as I do that, I just call the Sheriff's Department or Constable and tell them what I've done. Tell them you can come by and get whatever I got, but don't let

them come back tonight or tomorrow, tell them, unless somebody's with them to get an apology. And they say they ain't gotta do to me, if they stop out there and apologize to the community [unclear]. I started doing that when I was coming home. I thought of doing that we ain't got no trouble no more. I ain't gonna put up with it.

REYNOLDS: It's a nice small, safe community.

GRANT: It's a good one.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm. It really is.

GRANT: I don't mean to be a dictator.

REYNOLDS: No, you're not. [chuckles] You're just trying to keep the community safe.

GRANT: I'm going, we going to.

REYNOLDS: Yeah.

GRANT: [clears throat] Yeah, let everybody else take care of theirs.

REYNOLDS: With that, was there any problems, I don't want to say problems, were there people around here who were doing moonshine?

GRANT: Yeah, I made it. I love making it. Hell, I know how to make, yeah I learned how from old man Samford, I made, I made beer in the '80s, '70s. Yeah, I made beer. You run beer two times, you can run it three times it won't freeze in your freezer, you can't drink three bottles, if you drink three bottles its gonna treat you just like that vanilla extract. [chuckles] It'd make you wobble. [laughs] Yeah, I made it. I still got a whiskey coil.

REYNOLDS: Oh my God.

GRANT: Before I got out I had a 4H project doing with hogs, Duroc Jerseys and they'd get out. They get out and go over there to Samford's about two miles back over there in the woods, I was in the hospital, me and Neil, polio, and I's about, I don't remember how old I was, anyways, I might remember, before I got out of high school and they got out and I'd come home and I couldn't hardly walk, rode a horse over there and I got over there and there was whiskey stills and the hogs were crazy man, [chuckles], I took my horse and took a lariat rope and run off with his coil. [chuckles], Made out of copper. [laughs] And I still got it. Yeah man, I know how to make it. And beer.

REYNOLDS: So when did you start, doing, making whiskey?

GRANT: I started helping make whiskey when I was in uh, high school, yeah.

REYNOLDS: And you said, who was...?

GRANT: Mr. Samford.

REYNOLDS: Mr. Samford.

GRANT: Mmm-hmm. Yeah. I don't remember his first name.

REYNOLDS: So where was this still located at?

GRANT: It was back over there, on in on the Old Peace Place, we called it, about two miles from here, right straight due northeast, yeah. [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: So what ingredients were, did you use to make this whiskey?

GRANT: Huh?

REYNOLDS: What ingredients?

GRANT: Used corn, yeah, that's the way you make corn. Corn, sugar, yeah.

REYNOLDS: People have heard of corn mash.

GRANT: Yeah, that's what it is. That's where it starts. [clears throat] You gotta know how, if you don't you'll make it, make some, a lot of people used to make some sorry whiskey or something, and they say it would cripple people. I don't know about that. Jake, they call it. [unclear] they call, I don't know, but like you make the good homemade beer, boy, you have to keep it cool, bust the, pop the top off the bottle, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So did you also make beer?

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: When you were in high school?

GRANT: Naw, I didn't make no beer back then. Oh I made beer since I was twenty-five or thirty year old. Made a lot of beer up here in the '70s, yeah. Made about twenty gallons a week, yeah.

REYNOLDS: What kind of beer di, did you make?

GRANT: Just uh, just regular beer.

REYNOLDS: Just regular ole lager?

GRANT: Yeah, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Okay. 'Cause some people, I mean now they have gotten all fancy.
[chuckles]

GRANT: Aw, naw, just make it in them big crocks, and rerun it, rerun it, top it, cap it, keep it in a spring branch kept it cool, if you don't sometimes, if you run it three times it's got too lot of alcohol in it, make you drunk, three bottles can

make anybody drunk nearly, yeah get more for that, yeah. I enjoyed it. It's something different.

REYNOLDS: Mmm-hmm.

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So when you were making the whiskey, were you just giving it to people...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...or...

GRANT: I'd give a lot of it away. Sell it. Sell enough to make, pay for, sell enough to pay for your expenses.

REYNOLDS: So it was just people you knew and uh...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Also [unclear] How much did you sell a bottle for?

GRANT: Bottle [clears throat] of whiskey then, aww we'd get about five dollars a quart. Yeah, now it costs you fifty I imagine, yeah, about five dollars a quart. [40:44]

REYNOLDS: [unclear] [chuckles]

GRANT: Yeah, yeah. I remember that. [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: So did you just sell to the people in this area or did you go to Center?

GRANT: Naw, I didn't go nowhere. They came out here.

REYNOLDS: [unclear]

GRANT: Clarence Waterman, lives at Aiken, [unclear] Watermelon Hill on the left, you go back up that road, and if you wanted whiskey he can make you whiskey. He'd wear, very seldom he had to wear a shirt in the wintertime

much. Barefooted, and no shirt most all the time, since I was, was fall. He started making them out of half gallons and gallons, they'd ride a horse down there my grandpa and get some before we got an automobile. We went down there back in before he passed away, long about 19 and I don't know, '45, something, I don't remember. No, it was later than that. But anyway, during the wintertime, and he'd hide in that pine straw under them old bull pine trees. They ain't like a lot of pines, lot of straw and short and uh, walked out there, and that's when we used to have a lot of armadillos...

REYNOLDS: Uh-huh.

GRANT: ...and they'd scratched out there in the moon full moon shining through them limbs up there that's when whiskey [chuckles] when gallons and half gallons of whiskey shining like a light, you could just see them the jugs laying out there, yeah. Law never did bother him.

REYNOLDS: So did you ever have people come out here and bust y'all?

GRANT: Naw,

REYNOLDS: Or arrest or?

GRANT: No, we didn't have no trouble.

REYNOLDS: Too much trouble for them to even come out here.

GRANT: Yeah, they never did bother us, naw. [unclear] Anyhow, we didn't have too much trouble with them.

REYNOLDS: Uh, it was a dry county...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So...

GRANT: Liked to never got voted wet up til they did, and I don't remember when it got voted wet, probably a few year ago now, yeah.

REYNOLDS: [slight chuckle] I'm still chuckling, you're like, "Yep, I did it, okay."

GRANT: Yeah. Shoot yeah.

REYNOLDS: [unclear] That kind of thing. So did you, where did you, did you grow the corn...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...or did you buy...

GRANT: Naw, I bought that to make that whiskey. Back when they, Sanford and and all them others, they grew it. Didn't have no money to buy none. [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: Was it just like field corn?

GRANT: Field corn. That's all it is. Good and clean.

REYNOLDS: Okay. 'Cause there's a difference between the field corn and the sweet corn.

GRANT: Aw, yeah. Naw, you don't want sweet corn. You want that regular old field corn.

GRANT: Mmm-hmm, yeah. [chuckling]

REYNOLDS: I don't know why.

GRANT: [chuckling] Well, it's interesting to people.

REYNOLDS: It is! It's something that I try to and ask a lot because I know we've had people that are interested in, there's people in the area, there have been, but I haven't really found anybody that knows somebody...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...that has actually done it...

GRANT: Yeah, I have.

REYNOLDS: ...and everything.

GRANT: I'm proud of it. In fact, if I had some time. It takes time, I'd make some more homemade beer and give it to people, yeah. I done gone make me a smokehouse like we used to have, to cure your pork, or hog or pork with. You can smoke that right. I made one back in the '70s then my house all got burnt up and it and a bunch of stuff. You cure it right, smoke it, do it right, you'd have a box, meat box, made sort of like that, only a little bigger about that size, top, you salt that meat down in that salt, and you don't have to freeze it, you done cured it nearly out there smoking, you just salt it with just regular old salt, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So that would mean your salt house, your uh, I mean smokehouse would be about that size? [44:38]

GRANT: Oh no, make one about quarter full, make about four out of...

REYNOLDS: Out of this room?

GRANT: Yeah, but your meat box would be about that size where you put your meat up from the hogs. Depends on how many you kill, and then when you get through salting it on there you just hang it up outside in your meat house.

REYNOLDS: What kind of wood would you use to smoke it?

GRANT: Uh, hickory. Yeah, mostly hickory, pecan. Whatever you want to season it with, yeah. I always used hickory. It takes a long time to smoke it. Then you put you something down on the ground, some tubs or tin or something,

when that emulsion comes out of your meat, and you go down there and you have [clears throat] some ashes or something where they can stay hot, and it makes a good odor to it, that's where you get, in other words, its grease coming out see, and it'll smoke, there's lots of ways to do it. Takes time. It's a challenge. It is a bigger challenge to that than making beer and whiskey. It is. And you leave it out there all winter and the summer and spring and you don't have to hang it out you hang it out, you go out there and there'd be mildew on it...

REYNOLDS: Uh-huh. Yeah.

GRANT: ...mold or whatever you want or mildew. You can just take your knife, and rake it off, cut you a piece and eat it, it's done cured. Yeah, you can eat it. Not the frying bacon, I'm talking about on the lean part. Yeah, you bet. That dinner bell right out here...

REYNOLDS: Yeah.

GRANT: ...was hung, mounted on the front of the smokehouse down there at my grandma and grandpa Grant's. Yeah, that's where the dinner bell came from.

REYNOLDS: That sounds good! [laughs]

GRANT: You can ring that bell and if the wind was right you can hear it about half or a quarter mile down there and know she had dinner cooked. Eat, come eat, yeah.

REYNOLDS: That's, just, wow. [chuckles]

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: So, uh, what uh, when you were hunting, did you ever hunt deer or anything like that?

GRANT: Didn't have no deer much then, naw. We bought deer back in, naw, we didn't have no deer. We didn't get deer til, long, I'm gonna say, in uh, I got in a lot of trouble over it. I didn't get in trouble, but I was involved in a lot of trouble that was going on, I got in trouble with some people, paid thirty dollars apiece for deer turned loose out here with Parks and Wildlife, I'm gonna say... '60s, late '60s. I don't know, hadn't thought of that. Turned 'em loose. It started multiplying the world of deer and then a lot of people that uh, had relatives all them people from everywhere come in and they'd bring and killed 'em all out nearly and running the dogs and run them slap off. I got tired of that, and we'd have meetings over how to control it, and even went through the District Court Walter Lane was the Judge, and he'd tell them "Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it" and I didn't. I was in and out of with the Sheriff a bunch of times. They keep telling them and telling them if you keep bringing your dogs to Arcadia turning 'em loose and running deer, I'm gonna kill 'em and I did, I killed eighty-six... And it finally got stopped. Eighty-six. By myself, yeah. That's when my home got burnt up, and my smokehouse and all got burnt up, my car all shot up to pieces. But we don't have no trouble with it no more. But our deer is coming back.

REYNOLDS: So you didn't really have deer back like in the '40s?

GRANT: No ma'am. Too much farming.

REYNOLDS: Oh..

GRANT: Yeah, we bought 'em. A lot of 'em bought 'em. Thirty dollars a piece is what they cost.

REYNOLDS: So but you're saying...the population...

GRANT: Yeah, they come, they beginning to, I know we got five. Used to, they'd be fifty. The game wardens lived out here, and put up dummy deer down there in that hay bottom and park behind the hay store and people'd shoot that dummy deer, and we'd watch the road and block the road and the game warden would catch them. Our sheriff up here, Neal [Willis] Blackwell, he was the Game Warden at that time, and I guarantee you he lived in Arcadia, and we was the only place who done it. Cause down around Jasper, Nacogdoches, and Angelina County, they had deer, back in up in there. We didn't have any. I don't know why we didn't.

REYNOLDS: Did you shoot raccoon?

GRANT: Naw.

REYNOLDS: No.

GRANT: Naw, we'd eat 'em. We'd kill them and eat them. You can't beat, I'd rather have coon than I had deer. I don't care nothing about deer much.

REYNOLDS: I've only had coon once, and I don't think it was cooked right. [chuckles]

GRANT: Naw, you gotta cook, you can cook 'em anyway, yeah I like 'em.

REYNOLDS: It was just kinda "aar" "aar" "aar." [makes chewing noises]

GRANT: Yeah, I like them. I don't mess with them no more. Used to trap 'em. They used to bring up to fifteen dollars. Ruben Smith, he used to track a lot of coons. He had his own tracking license, got it from the state. Mmm-hmm.

He lived over there, he died in that little house right over yonder. Used to live way up yonder in the woods.

REYNOLDS: So they would pay for skins from minks and raccoons?

GRANT: Mmm-hmm, yeah. Fox.

REYNOLDS: Oh, and fox. Did you see any fox now?

GRANT: Don't have no fox. Since, I ain't seen a fox, within three miles of here. I ain't seen a fox, I ain't seen a fox in the last ten, five, seven years. Used to have a lot of them, yeah. We ain't got no more fox. I don't know where they went.

REYNOLDS: Did you have feral hogs or...? [50:30]

GRANT: Oh yeah, we got worlds of them.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

GRANT: Ain't got as many as we used to have. We built some traps, round traps, or shoot some. We've caught, I'm gonna say, when we first started, something like a couple hundred the first year. We caught almost in the neighborhood of six hundred. My brother keeps up with it better than I do.

REYNOLDS: Did you keep them and uh, eat 'em?

GRANT: Naw, we ain't never eat one. They all, hey, some of them, some of them, you can't put in a hog pen can't make any fatter or any slicker.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

GRANT: Some of them ain't worth it. Most of them all is in good shape though. Yeah, aw yeah. We got some problems right now, but they travel. We ain't got none that stay here. What we get is ones coming from somewhere.

REYNOLDS: They are just passing through...

GRANT: Yeah, that's all.

REYNOLDS: ...on the way to somewhere else.

GRANT: And we bait our traps, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So were there any birds that you used to?

GRANT: Doves. Used to have a world of doves, and they got shot out. They ain't enough farmland. But there's enough to survive. They got shy—they just kill them off the highline wires, shoot them with shotguns all the time. Quail, used to have a lot of quail. I think the fire ants has messed a lot of the quail and doves up, or quail, and uh, we ain't got many feral hogs. But it don't take many to mess up hay meadows [clears throat]

REYNOLDS: Did you used to go down here to picnic?

GRANT: Yeah

REYNOLDS: And that big rock that is down there.

GRANT: Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah...

REYNOLDS: Was it like...

GRANT: I remember it. That old road used to be down there on the left,

REYNOLDS: Uh-huh.

GRANT: Where the highline is, yeah.

REYNOLDS: So did you, was there a trail that took you down there?

GRANT: Yeah, road went right by.

REYNOLDS: 'Cause I walked down there with two students and it was like...

GRANT: Yeah, it's growed up.

REYNOLDS: It's all overgrown. We could see where the rocks were at...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...and uh, trying to imagine what it looked like...

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: ...during the day

GRANT: Yeah.

REYNOLDS: Have you been there for family reunions or just for picnics?

GRANT: Just picnics, and I don't know what all they done down there, I guess whatever they wanted to really.

REYNOLDS: That's great. Okay, I don't want to keep you longer than an hour ' cause...

GRANT: That's all right. Don't let it interfere with your schedule.

REYNOLDS: Oh, I don't know what my schedule is. [chuckles] It's just whatever Greg tells me do.

GRANT: Well. Boy, he's involved in that history.

REYNOLDS: Yes.

GRANT He's traced our ancestry back for years. Yeah, we had a couple of uh, his, uh, I'm not sure I ain't lying, but I don't know if I'm right for sure I'm right or not but I do know they was two Grants that wound up and got shot over here on Flatfork Creek for some reason. I don't know why. Clyde Grant, I remember him, but I don't remem--I think he had a brother. I don't know, I ain't gonna get on to that. He got shot or something. I don't know.

REYNOLDS: Hmm. Do you know much about your mom or dad's people? Or where they came from or anything like that? [53:34]

GRANT: They were raised here.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

GRANT: Mmm-hmm. But I don't know where they come from I sure don't.

REYNOLDS: Okay. Do you know how they ended up here in the middle of nowhere?

GRANT: No. I bet Greg does.

REYNOLDS: Oh.

GRANT: I bet he does.

REYNOLDS: He probably, he probably does. It's just something I just thought of.

GRANT: I don't.

REYNOLDS: It's just like, "Oh, we're just going to stop right here in the middle of nowhere."

GRANT: Yeah, yeah. Hey, I thought of that, too. Yeah, grandpa came from Arkansas and settled in Joaquin over here, and Grant, I don't know. I don't know, I don't know—Greg knows about it. I don't know how he got the money to come from Arkansas and come down here and started buying land. I don't know.

REYNOLDS: Yeah. It's almost just one of those things

GRANT: How did he do it?

REYNOLDS: Yeah. Why? How?

GRANT: Yeah, why? How? Unless he was in trouble and the law told you to leave or go to the penitentiary or death row. Now that what, that's what I live with.

REYNOLDS: [unclear]

GRANT: [unclear] Preachers leave and get run off and have to go somewhere else.
[chuckles]

REYNOLDS: Yees. [chuckles]

GRANT: Well, it's the truth, maybe not all of them I don't know, I know some of them like that. Maybe not all of them.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, that's okay. It sounds like a neat story.

GRANT: Yeah, I don't know.

REYNOLDS: Okay. Would it be okay if I contact you later about--

GRANT: It don't, yeah, anytime.

REYNOLDS: [unclear]

GRANT: If I don't answer my telephone leave a message and I'll call you back, yeah.

REYNOLDS: Okay.

GRANT: Yeah, anytime.

REYNOLDS: I'll give you messages. [unclear] I'm a message leaver. [55:14]