

THE INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: Thomas Earle and Iola Gentry (G, IG) (Nancy Olson - NC)

PLACE: Conroe, Texas

DATE: December 8, 1986

INTERVIEWERS: Janie and Walter Sargeant

JS: I'm going to ask you some things that you've already told me but we wanted it on tape. Mr. Gentry, what is your first name?

G: Thomas Earle.

JS: And when were you born?

G. May 9, 1896.

JS: That makes you 90 years old. You're going into your 91st year. That's great. Were you born here in Conroe?

G: I was born about eight miles north of Montgomery on an old road that's now designated 149.

JS: Had your parents lived here long before you were born?

G: No, not too long. My mother was educated in South Carolina and came to Texas to visit two aunts. They had moved out here prior to the war. And met my father and married him. My grandfather was a captain of...

WS: What was this, Confederate forces or something?

G: Confederate forces. Captain of Troop F, fifth South Carolina cavalry. And he was wounded badly and died shortly

after the war and left three daughters. And her uncle was a Supreme Court \_\_\_\_\_ in the state of South Carolina. He educated her and after she was educated, she came to Texas to visit these two aunts and met my father.

WS: What was her maiden name?

G: Her name was Caughman, Antoinette Boozer Caughman. Her father was Captain Augustus Caughman and he's buried on the cemetery grounds of the Lutheran church in Lexington, South Carolina.

JS: And how about your father?

G: My grandfather came to Texas along with his brother, Uncle Fred (Frederick Browder Gentry), out here and was a boy fifteen years old. He caught up with Uncle Fred over at old Montgomery. They caught up with Sam Houston's army, the battle of San Jacinto.

My grandfather and two white slaves, two white boys, and five negro slaves guarded all the livestock animals and stock --(mules, oxen, horses) during the battle. You know that was all black powder and within a few minutes of the battle you could see nothing. But they knew that, so they put all of the animals and herds in circles to save them until the battle was over. Then he swam his little mule (he rode a mule there from Tennessee), he swam across there and saw Sam Houston layin' under a tree. My grandpa wasn't a great admirer of Sam Houston. (laughter)

JS: I guess history books paint them a little better sometime than people that knew them.

G: Yes, he did. And later on in years, I joined a Masonic

lodge, and he was a Mason then and held the lodge in the old Montgomery building, which I later became a member of.

JS: Did he see Santa Anna? Did he ever say anything about that?

G: No. Right shortly after the battle, he and Uncle Fred left and went back to Tennessee for a very short time and then they came back. My grandpa built his home in 1853. It's in Washington county between Brenham and Burton. The old home is still standing that he built; big two story home.

JS: You said between Brenham and what?

G: Burton; the town of Burton. They're off about a half-mile south of the new highway between Brenham and Burton. It was eight miles out of Brenham.

JS: So you grew up on a farm outside of Conroe.

G: I grew up on a farm on 149. Papa was a road overseer. Back in that day, they had no way of keeping roads up except to assess five days of work on every man that lived on a road. They appointed an overseer who had the right to summons them. It was right out through the piney woods, you know, where trees and things would fall across and have to be cut out.

JS: What would that be...five days a year?

G: They had to do five days a year of service. Of course most of them did a lot more than that because a wind'd come up and blow pine trees across. That all had to be cleared out. But my father was the road overseer.

JS: Did he do any farming?

G: Yes. We had a little one-horse farm. Raised cattle, hogs.

JS: And then how about your schooling? Did you have a one-room school?

G: My mother was an educated woman and she had a sister just younger than she that stayed in South Carolina and married and had a son just a year older than I am. And in those days you had to buy your books, you know. When he finished a book, he sent it to mama. And mama taught me until I was 20 years old. In 1916, I went up to Huntsville, rode horseback across from my old place up there to Huntsville, which is about 25 miles. And got a place workin' for a professor for my room and board. I slept on a cot on the back porch. I did the milking and taking care of everything. Of course, I had no credits as far as gettin' into college was concerned. Professor Estill, who was head of the college at that time, lived just above us, and I brought his cow back to be milked...back and forth with my ... I talked to him about it and he gave me all the questions that would need to be answered in order to get into the college. He gave me the books, and gave me the books that had the answers in it to be sure that I made it. But I, fortunately, didn't need 'em.

Then in 1917 the war came along and I went out. Well, a short time, I had hurt my ankle and some of the boys went on in and I taught a little school in Williams County. I

taught up there and right after that, why, the draft was comin' up, and I reported back here and went into the service in 1918. And I was in the service until 1919. And was commissioned a second lieutenant during that time.

WS: What outfit were you with?

G: I was with the infantry; \_\_\_\_\_ 40th Infantry.

JS: It's amazing that you can remember all these things. And then when you came back from the war, did you go back to teaching?

G: No. Came back and my father's health had failed and I taught one school; a little country school out there and went to work. My father's health had failed. So I worked and supported him. Then in 19\_\_ I was working for a big sawmill company. In 1923, I met my wife and we were married here in Conroe.

NO: What sawmill company? What was the name of the sawmill company?

G: Delta Land and Timber Company.

JS: Had they been in lumbering a long time or was that something that started up?

G: The lumber company was headquartered in Kansas City and they came down here and bought a lot of timbered land, you see, and was cuttin' that off.

JS: Had that been a long time before you joined the company?

G: Well, yes, I joined the company about 1919, I believe.

WS: Did they buy the land or just the timber rights?

G: They bought the land and later sold the land to the government.

WS: Is that where the parks are now?

G: Yes. The ...

WS: I mean the federal parks.

G: It's where the big companies that owned... The government bought it.

WS: The Forest Service bought it.

JS: When did you start your business? I understand that you had a business.

G: Iola and I were married in 1923. I was workin' at the sawmill at that time. And her father was old and wanted to retire. And they were in business, so they took me in down there; workin' for them. We were married in 1923. In 1924, I went to work for Everett and Sons. And I stayed there until I retired and went into business for myself.

JS: What kind of business was it, a clothing .....?

G: Yes. They had a general store but when I opened it up, right on the corner next to the Crighton Theater. I later bought that building on the corner. I had a men's clothing store. All the men's merchandise. (Called Gentry's Store.)

JS: Did you have employees? I'm sure you must have had some.

G: Yes'm. Shortly after I went into business, World War II came along. I volunteered and went back in the army. And was commissioned a captain. Commanded a company and went overseas with 'em. This company was 491 First Military

Police Escort Guard Company. We guarded and transported prisoners of war. I was there until, for 46 months, when I got home. And Iola, my wife, took care of my business for me.

JS: I was going to ask you who took care of your business.

G: She put a big sign at the store "Credit and her husband had gone to the war". (laughter)

G: And when I got back she didn't have much merchandise, but she had merchandise around and that's \_\_\_\_\_, you know. (laughter) She certainly did do it.

JS: And so you came back from the war and ....

G: Came back from the war and went back into my business. When we first were married, I joined the Conroe fire department. And we didn't have anything but an old push cart with two big wheels with the hose on. I got hold of the City Council, one at a time, and sold 'em on buying a fire truck. After they made me fire chief in 1925, I got 'em sold on the idea of buying a truck and they bought a good one. It was a big American LeFrance pumper and cost at that time, I believe, about \$12,000. Now they'd cost about 80 or 90.

And then the next year I was elected on the city council, on the board of the council. That was in 1926, I believe. Then the next year I was elected mayor, and I was mayor then until I went into the army. And Bob Carter, who owned Carter's Drug Store was mayor pro-tem and served 'til I come back. And when I came back out of the army, we needed another well and some small paving done. We asked

for a bond issue to be passed, and we passed a bond issue. One of the last big wells we drilled is one up the I G & N railroad, side of the road. It's a big water tower up there.

WS: What was the population of Conroe at World War I time? Roughly, I mean.

G: About 22 or 2300, I guess.

WS: It's about ten times that now, isn't it?

G: Yes.

JS: What was the main industry here then?

G: We depended on the lumbering business, yes'm. And then the oil business came here. But just before the oil hit, we didn't have any Chamber of Commerce. And I was very active in it at that time. Myself and two other boys got up a petition and went around and got enough men together to petition it and we got a charter to the Chamber of Commerce. And I just can't remember the date of that. I was elected secretary-treasurer. The first meeting we had, we elected a man named Patterson to manage it. And we hired a girl named...her name has slipped me...for \$12.50 a week to do our stenographic work. I was elected, the third man. They elected Mr. Simonton and then Mr. Hickerson and I was the third president of the Chamber of Commerce.

JS: You were real active in the community.

G: ...my life...

JS: You've dedicated it to the community. That's great. I just can't get over your memory; how you can remember dates and names.



G: I've always heard an uneducated man is \_\_\_\_\_  
(laughter) We had an old gentleman moved in here from  
Arkansas; bought a place right next to ours. He couldn't  
read and write. But he could tell you everything that had  
ever happened in his life. He settled in his mind \_\_\_\_\_.

JS: He depended on that because he couldn't read, I  
suppose.

IG: Tell 'em how you got into college.

G: Yes, I told 'em that.

JS: Yes, he told how he worked for the professor and got the  
book...

G: Didn't need it.

WS: You had something to do...your uncle was in the Texas  
Rangers. Who was that?

G: My father. My father was born over here in the home that  
Grandpa built when he took Grandma in, in 1853. And Papa  
was born there. As a young man he got up...of course,  
Washington county was getting pretty far out at that time,  
although it's only about 70 or 75 miles from here. I  
believe I said they went back to Tennessee but came back  
very shortly. My grandfather met my grandmother, who was a  
Shannon and the Shannons founded the towns of Montgomery and  
Dobbin. He had a league of land in Washington and  
Williamson counties. My grandpa died early and left my  
grandmother, and she was only about 15 or 16 years old.  
Grandpa was 19 years older than she was when they married  
and he took her in there.

And Uncle Fred then moved on out to Bosque county close to Hamilton. And the Indians were pretty bad out there at that time. The government wanted him as a kind of lieutenant to raise a little bunch to defend themselves from the Indians. The Indians weren't too bad; they were more interested in stealing horses. Horses was the deal and guns, if they could get them. But they lay around in the woods in the daytime, and at night they'd run in and try to steal horses and things like that.

As my father grew up, he joined the Ranger Company. One of the first episodes that came up, they sent him out in the Panhandle somewhere, and it was snowing. Said there'd been a killin' out there and to investigate it. He went out there and all the direction they had was it was an old road. There was no road in that country at all. All the direction they had was to let the snow hit his, the side of his face, and carried him to this little place where these men had killed each other. Over a card game, just the two of 'em. Evidently shot at the same time. And he came back and said that he tried to protect Texas \_\_\_\_\_. Had a lot of ruffraff; people that were stealing and trading; stealing and dealing with the Indians. And some of his neighbors around there, they caught 'em one day and hung 'em in a little place called Carmine. Carmine is west of Brenham.

JS: Is that a little town today?

G: It happens to be the town that Raymond Hamilton first robbed that bank; the first one he ever robbed.

But anyways, later on, they caught a bunch of these fellows that were riffraff around there and hung about a half a dozen or more of 'em. My father was in on it. They were boys, sons, that he had gone in swimming with on Saturday when they went to the grist mill. And he didn't like that. Saturdays were the days that..... My Uncle Fred built his mill around a little stream of water, the Bosque river was in there; a little stream of water. Put a water wheel on it to run his grist mill. It's a little place, Norris; Gentry's mill site is still there.

JS: Is that right?

G: Uncle Fred and them. Anne and them were up through there. I never have been to the place, but they were not able to find Uncle Fred's grave.

IG: There's a Gentry's Mill cemetery there but we could not find his grave. I imagine he's buried on his own home place.

G: That's what they used to do; were buried on their own home place.

IG: Why don't you tell them about when Grandad was a Texas Ranger and Temple Houston came through Amarillo and he had to get him off the train?

G: That's right. I don't remember what town it was up there. Temple Houston\* came up there on the train for something.

IG: He was trying cases in Denver and came back through Amarillo and was drunk. And Grandfather had to take him

\*Sam Houston's youngest son.

off the train. They wired him to meet the train and get Temple Houston off the train. And he was drunker than Cooter Brown. Temple Houston gave my grandfather a beautiful buffalo robe for taking care of him.

JS: For goodness sake! Isn't that interesting?

I'd like to get back to your memories of Conroe when you were in business; first started business. I'm sure it has changed now.

G: Well, you know Conroe has been close to my heart almost from the beginning. It was the first county seat and that was the head of our government. I've loved our government always. I had an uncle that had married, Yeager(?) Williams, had married my aunt Louise. And she had two sons, one about a year and a half or two years older than me, and one about four years older, I guess. They lived in Montgomery. They were both school teachers. Graduated from Blinn college over in Brenham, which is still there. Aunt Louise died in 1900; died from slow fever, which was typhoid fever at that time. These two boys moved in with my grandfather and grandmother and they lived on a section of what's known as the old Stewart place, outside of Montgomery. Captain Stewart was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. In fact, the draft for the Independence was drawn in a little log cabin on his place. And they all gathered together over at Washington-on-the-Brazos to ratify it. But it was drafted there at Captain Stewart's.

My grandfather bought a place in 1889 or 1890, I just

forgot, he bought a place and moved from Washington county over here. He loved to hunt and there was a lot of deer here at the time. He first bought the place out where we were living, about eight or nine miles north of Montgomery. And then he moved down there to this place which is--they've got a regular little shopping center on part of it across the road down from the old home place.

JS: When you owned your business, I would like to know what was your typical working day then?

G: I got up at six o'clock in the morning. We opened up the store about seven o'clock. That was before, when I first went to work at Everett's. I swept out and cleaned the fruit up and got the cheeses out, sacked up some sugar. Sugar was all -- beans and rice and everything were in big bins, you know. We'd sell anybody a dime's worth or a dollar's worth. Then I stayed there 'til 1929. In 1929, I sold out to my brother-in-law. He had a son who was comin' into the business. And so I sold out and rented this building on the corner and put in this men's clothing store.

I did the same thing. We got up about 5:30, 6:00 o'clock. I always fixed my breakfast and I went down there and opened up; cleaned up. Washed the windows and re-decorated. I did most of it myself. I had one extra man with me.

JS: What time would you open up for business?

G: When I went down there to work.

JS: Early in the morning.

G: Yes, ma'am. And we closed up about six o'clock.

WS: Was Saturday night your big night then?

G: Yes. Saturday all day was our...we looked for Saturdays. And I have lived to see the day it was the quietest day in the week.

JS: It changed, completely.

G: Yes. People just...they used to come to town. People that had cars would come to town and park and watch the people parade up and down the streets. It was a great get-together.

WS: Did you have band concerts or anything, Saturday night?

G: Yeah. The way you could get together. We always had our decorations. I remember I was in the Chamber of Commerce, working my head off, and you know, we didn't have any police department. We hired a patrolman. Every merchant put in five or ten dollars a month. There was a boy named Reagan Smith, they was in the business here, too, and myself and one or two other boys. The first of the month, we'd go around and collect our police money. So we could pay the night watchman.

JS: Did you have many problems of robberies and that sort of thing?

G: We had a good many problems.

JS: Is that right? I'm surprised. I thought back then..

G: Well, it was just a sawmill town and people would come in there broke. We'd catch most of 'em.

WS: Did you have a jail?

G: Yes sir, we had a jail sittin' right where the First

National Bank is settin' now. The jail was on that.. and the library.

WS: Is this the county seat? This is not the county seat, is it?

IG: Not now. It was.

G: Yes sir. Before my time. The county seat was in Montgomery. Conroe was a new town. This man that owned all this land in here and they decided that Montgomery was too far out of the center of the county. So they got up an election. He went up there...and Willis was a town, too. The railroad had come through, it come through early. The I G and N railroad had come through. They advertised that they were going to put the county seat at Willis and so Willis voted with Conroe on it and they voted away from Montgomery. And the next day they started to build a courthouse in Conroe. (Laughter)

JS: Didn't waste any time.

G: That's exactly the way it is. They stole it away from.. I remember it very well. They later moved the post office in the old courthouse building in Montgomery. And later it burned.

JS: Thinking back over your terms as mayor, what would you say was your greatest accomplishment? Getting the water tower built and the water...? How do you feel about it?

G: Well, I'll tell you. There's so many things that so few people were interested in at that time. I remember about getting the light system. We had a man that had a big



generator here and you had to use little drop lights with a pull on it or on the wall, you know. We finally got this big company to buy it out and put in the modern electricity as it is today.

It's a sad thing; it was a Louisiana company and they give Louisiana one price and Texas another one. They're having a lot of trouble now about it. But I think they'll raise the price eventually and get 'em out of this trouble.

JS: About what year did they get electricity in?

G: Well, we had electricity when we married in 1923 but it was just those drop lights. It was just a little one-horse outfit. The man had bought a big generator, you know. When I built my house in 1925, he had...they'd run two wires along and drop down, you know, on your ceiling and drop down. And they're still just like they were at home on the corner, right on the corner of Nugent and Thompson, just a block down from the First National Bank. Big pecan trees all around the...

IG: It is just gorgeous.

JS: Someone still lives in the house?

G: Yes ma'am. I have an old man and his wife I think an awful lot of. I made him a special price and he takes good care of it. Raises him a little garden right there on the corner, across from the Baptist church.

(WS: We don't want to tire you out.)

JS: We kind of wanted to talk with your wife, the fire...

Oh, I wanted to ask you about the fire here.



G: That was before we married. Her father was here. I wonder if you can get her in here?

JS: How about this fire in 1930? Did that involve your building?

G: 1930? The fire that burned the town was in 1911.

JS: Oh, was it? 1911. Then you weren't in business then.

G: No. But Everett was; her father had a grocery business in there and it burned out. Yes, it did. And one of the insurance companies.....(Tape turned off)

(Effort to get highway 105 built) Three engineers... (laughter) wanted to pay us for it. So we go up there to Austin on highway 105, we'd go up there, ride up there, and they'd call us up. Why they'd -- we had to sit there and we'd have to wait and let Houston confab. We'd talk to Houston about it and they said, "No, we want to have a town of a million people." We just said, "You help us, we'll help you." Oh, they wouldn't hear to it at all. But we finally got up a little more pressure, pretend to come over from Beaumont and down that way and through here, through Navasota, to get them to hire an engineer to at least make a draft of it. We kept after 'em. They'd promise us they'd make a draft and eventually did. A little at a time, they'd... And finally, we went over there one day and this man who later became president of A and M college said, "You know". Houston was at that time beginning to feel some growin', you see and they were trying to build roads around. They saw that had to be, of course. But to keep 'em out of

Houston, a lot of through traffic, was what they wanted.

So they told us to go and make a survey of the road from...we had it from Conroe to Cleveland. And they had it from Cleveland to Dayton. Well, that was a road at that time. So we had an engineer start in Conroe and straighten it out like it is now. And one from Montgomery needed to come this way. The people were giving the right of way, tickled to death to get it to open it up. We had no trouble to get a man's land, yes sir. The point is, they finally got ready to come down here, survey it. Over here across the river, we missed it by about 300 yards. (Laughter) So we had to go back in there and let 'em re-route it and get more right of way. And some of the Board didn't like it 'cause it missed the places, see....

Things like that, you're helpless. Come on in, Iola.

(Tape off. Iola Everett Gentry is Earle's wife. Her mother was Iola Boynton Everett.)

IG: ...when the Civil War was over and she had her own slave, her own little body servant. She and her brother, too. Isn't that interesting, so close to....

JS: You mean your mother had her own body slave?

IG: No, her mother.

G: Her mother was about four years old. (Unintelligible, tape trouble)

JS: When what came out?

IG: Gone with the Wind. There was a little boy named Wade....."The Yankees are coming, the Yankees are coming." Everyone had their own little hide hole. She said hers was

behind a big chair. And the silverware was buried in the back yard. Some of the darkies, it was much more genteel to say "darkies" than to say "nigger" and they thought so too then, but not now..... Must have been about her age, about four years old. She didn't get much of an education because after the war, a lot of the fine old mansions that weren't burned down, were taken over for young ladies' schools. Private schools. It wasn't much more than a high school diploma. She had to write a little speech for graduation.....After the war all the mansions were turned into sorority houses. The different colleges just grabbed them up.

WS: What town was this again? I forgot.

IG: Georgia.

WS: What area in Georgia?

IG: South Georgia. I don't know the nearest town, big town.

M: Cuthbert and Americus, and right around there.

IG: Small town. Cuthbert.

JS: We were talking with your husband about this flu epidemic and he said that you would know about that in Conroe.

IG: Yes ma'am. I don't know if my son had a mortuary here then. I remember seeing bodies being carried through the town on wagons. And there were lots of people died.

END OF TAPE 1, side 1, about 43 minutes.

Tape I, side 2

JS: About this flu epidemic, what kind of treatment did they have for it?

IG:.....The statistics said the flu killed more people in 1918 than our people were lost in the war.

JS: Is that right?

IG: ....., ether,.....kerosene.....put a rag over their mouth. We took one of the grandchildren \_\_\_\_\_ of course we were not sick at the time. Kerosene was always the disinfectant, they knew about it.....around our nose and face.

WS: How about sulphur? Seems like my folks used to talk about sulphur. Did you ever hear of that?

IG: .....We got a big dose of sulphur and molasses every spring. (Laughter)

?: Whether you needed it or not, you got that.

WS: I was born in 1917 so my folks told us about the....Up in the New England area, up in New York state.

JS: That must have been nationwide then.

WS: Oh yeah.

JS: Strange that it would go like that.

IG: My father (tape noise) at the end of the war.

JS: How about the fire that burned the center of town? Was that about the same time?

IG: That was in 1911. I was quite a young girl then. It burned nearly everything in town. I had a lot of curiosity, I wanted to go to the ....but they made me stay on the courthouse square. I took off my cape, I had a lovely new cape, was so proud of..... They brought all the sales slips out of every store to save them, you know. (Accounts receivable)

I couldn't get excited about the fire.

G: Her father owned the Everett store. And if they'd lost their accounts receivable they'd have been out of business.

JS: What started the fire? Does anybody know?

IG: Started in Dr. Hooper's office.

G: Dr. Hooper had... people were sick, and he was up late at night and they had a wood stove, that's before we had gas, had a wood stove, and the wind was blowin' hard from the north and that's where it started, I believe.

WS: You said they burned wood. They didn't burn this pine, did they?

G: No, they have oak wood, you know.

WS: That's right.

JS: And did they start rebuilding..?

G: Some tractors come in there and they went to buildin' brick buildings right away.

?: What is now known as the Gentry building was the first one built after that fire.

IG: That was 1911.

G: It belonged to A. L. Koonce.

IG: It was just like phoenix rising from the ashes. The whole town would be built pretty soon. Had to, you know..nothing else to do.

JS: I wonder how long it took them to rebuild so they could get back into business? A matter of months or a year or..?

IG: I don't know how long it was.

G: It'd surprise you how fast the buildings went up. I guess the building where your father moved back in...He

built a building around on Main Street out of wood. Right around there where the Ferguson building was, is. And Randolph, a Huntsville man, who had some money...he built the building where Everett is now...on one part of it. I was with them the time they paid the last note on that building.

IG: My father was the original Everett. I'm the last one that is left of the whole Everett family.

WS: Would they have insurance coverage back in those days?

G: Yes, sir, they had some but a lot of the insurance companies went broke. They didn't get it but they had....I don't remember what insurance company it was but they paid off on most of the buildings.

WS: How about hurricanes? Do you ever get hurricanes up this far from the coast?

G: No.

? or M: She remembers the storm of 1915.

IG: The storm of 1915, my brother and I were staying at home. My mother and father had gone back to Georgia for a visit. And it was storming so bad, he got up on the bed, I think, to nail the windows shut and I had to hold something. And I got to laughing, he was on the bed. He threatened to throw me out in the rain.

M?: The wallpaper was saggin' and just festooned all over because the water was comin' in and she took an umbrella and poked holes in it. He threatened to spank her.

IG: When I was going to get married, I did the same thing

to him. He was driving me to Houston but the river was flooding out of the river bottom. There wasn't any good road to Houston then; dirt roads. On a Sunday I was going down to Houston, getting ready to get married, or arrangements...I was going to shop, you know. I had to go, I thought...He was kind of just doing everything wrong..... not meaning to. So he drove right into the river. The water came up on my legs. He carried me out over his shoulder just like a sack of flour. (Laughter) And I got to laughing. I knew if he could see me laughing he'd say, "I'll throw you in this river."

After we got home, dried my clothes off as best I could. There was a train that would go down to Houston in just a little bit if I hurried. So I dried my shoes off in the cook stove oven.....crack, right away....wore my cracked shoes to Houston...hat with red cherries on it dribbling down on me. I got to Houston. I got my wedding clothes-- that minister we were married. I've been a member of that church longer than any other person living in that church. There's old ladies in that church, but they haven't been members as long as I have.

M: I have to tell you what my uncle said. He went to Houston with her and when they were on the trestle overlooking the flood, going to Houston now on the train, they looked down in the river and there was his car in the flood. And somebody said, "Look, some damn fool drove off in that flood!" (Laughter) He was the cutest damn fool.

JS: I'd like to know what the social life was like here in Conroe about the time you all were married.

IG: Tea parties and showers and literary clubs.

JS: Literary clubs?

IG: Yes ma'am. I was a member of the old 20th Century Literary Club. Married an old country boy. One day we were supposed to bring an original piece or be fined a dollar. I couldn't stand that dollar. Couldn't afford that dollar. Fine clothes, fine food, money right then. So I had to write a poem, an original, to save the dollar. That was the old 20th Century Club. It lasted a long time. We had good clubs then; really, the clubs were better than you'd think. Because we depended on the members.

M: Tell about your theater group.

IG: (Noise on tape...unintelligible)

M: Fosteria, Cleveland, Waukegan...(confusion of several voices)

M: I read something about a Molly(?) Bailey circus.

G: Dog and pony show.

IG: I thought Gentry was a dog and pony show.

M: It was.

G: Gentry Brothers had a dog and pony show. They had a few elephants and monkeys and that. Barnum and Bailey Circus was....

M: There was Monroe Hopkins Family tent show.

IG: And they were marvelous. ....and they went to church on Sunday and they wore yellow pants. And they



looked so funny.

M: Because times were hard. And they wore their costumes to church. Because that's all they had. And they would also get out and sell candy during the acts, run up and down the aisles selling candy. Sure did. Set up the tent and helped do it all.

G: Remember this old fella that owned the show ? every Friday night? What's the name where this Grandpa Jones.... Hee Haw. Grandpa Jones was born, his mother and father were playing in one of those circuses. Never knowed anything else all his life.

M: Chautauqua.

WS: Oh, I've heard of that.

IG: Chautauqua used to come here and that was great entertainment, too. Held outdoors on the courthouse lawn. Old hard benches without any backs to them. .... was so cute. He taught us to sing, you know. And I could recite. Now I want another of those Dutch ? (Noisy tape, unable to understand the words.)

JS: I hate to end this interview, but I think we've taken up a lot of your time.

IG: ..... ? said, "I bet you old timers knew everybody in town." I said, "Sure we did. More than that, we knew something on everybody."

JS: We thank you for your time.

G: You're more than welcome.

IG: I don't think we've done anything.

WS: Well, you have. You've done very well.

(End of tape I, side 2, about 17 minutes.)