

LYNDAL HARRIS

Interview 190a

March 16, 2010, at his home in Burke, Texas

Patsy Colbert, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Patsy Colbert, Lyndal Harris reminisces about growing up in Burke, Texas. He recalls the Burke School and teachers Tennie Havard, Gladys Dubose, Flossie Thigpen, and Mrs. Pigford, as well as several of the stores and businesses located in the town. Mr. Harris also discusses farming and surviving the Depression, Arrington and Conner family history, picking cotton, and Mrs. Ina McCall.

Patsy Colbert (hereafter PC): Today's date is Tuesday March 16, 2010 and I'm in the home of Lyndal Harris at Burke. I'm going to be interviewing him today about the history of Burke. Also with us today is his niece, Paula Christenson and her husband Don from Alpena Michigan. So Mr. Harris I just want to start off by asking you when and where you were born?

Lyndal Harris (hereafter LH): I was born in Burke, Texas, December 25, 1921.

PC: Okay and who were your parents name?

LH: My parents were Wes Harris and Etta Warner.

PC: Okay, and your grandparents?

LH: Well everybody called him Uncle Bill Warner but his name was William George Washington Warner. He come here from Mississippi and he was married to Ann Ryan and I guess she was originally from here, I don't know.

PC: Okay so that is how your family came to Burke was from the Warner side?

LH: Yes.

PC: Okay, and that is the Ryan's from Ryan Chapel, the Ryan family?

LH: Yes, right.

PC: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

LH: I have three brothers. One of them, Wilbur, just passed away, Jim lives in Diboll and Bob lives in Mountain View, Arkansas.

PC: Okay. Tell me about going to school at Burke. Did you start the first grade in Burke?

LH: Yes, I started first grade in Burke in 1927 and at that time Burke was a high school.

PC: Okay, we have a certificate at The History Center that someone donated. It was their high school certificate and that is how we knew that at one time Burke was a high school. I believe that certificate is dated 1917.

LH: I have been told that at one time Burke had the only high school in the county. I don't know if that is true or not.

PC: I'm not sure of that.

LH: I asked Bob Bowman one time about it and he said he was under that impression too but he didn't know for sure.

PC: It might have been for just a few short years in the early years because Burke was before Lufkin a few years, a year or two. So that is possible. I'm not sure. That will be something to check into and see. So you were born and raised right here in Burke and went to school at Burke. Did you graduate from Burke?

LH: Yes, somewhere along the line they moved the high school to Lufkin. I don't remember what year that was. I remember the first bus, the school bus that they had that they took kids to Lufkin but I don't remember what year that was. But, I finished school at Burke and then went to Lufkin.

PC: Okay, you finished grade school at Burke or you finished high school at Burke?

LH: Grade school at Burke and high school at Lufkin.

PC: Grade school, okay. So by the time you were in high school they no longer had high school you had to go to Lufkin to graduate?

LH: Yes.

PC: Okay and what year did you graduate?

LH: In '42.

PC: Do you remember some of your teachers at Burke?

LH: Oh yes, I remember all of them. (laughter)

PC: Well name a few of them and tell me a little bit about maybe a favorite teacher or a particular teacher.

LH: Well my first grade teacher was Mrs. Gladys Dubose and she was born and raised here at Burke and of course her being my first teacher I thought she was the greatest thing in the world. (laughter) After that I had Mrs. Tennie Thompson at the time and she married Fayette Havard and later I had Mrs. Pigford who was Uncle Tom Treadwell's daughter. And at one time I had your dear Aunt Flossie [Thigpen].

PC: Okay. We have a photograph up right now of Burke school and she is the teacher in the photograph. Earline [Thigpen] donated the photo. It's our new exhibit. You'd have to come down and see the exhibit and everything. Mrs. Tennie Havard seems to be a favorite of everybody's.

LH: Well she was there a long, long time. She started there I think about the time I was in the second grade maybe because I know I had her a long there. And then she taught our kids even, you know, so she was there a long, long time.

PC: Yes sir. Now I know from the records that somewhere around 1934 or 1935 they tore the two story brick school down. Do you remember that?

LH: Yes, I think that was '35. They tore the old building down and built a new building and during that time we went to school all over Burke. We had some of the classes went in the Baptist Church and some at the Methodist Church, some in what used to be the drugstore at Burke.

PC: I knew about the classes at the Baptist Church I didn't know they went to the Methodist Church. So, they pretty much had classes anywhere they could hold classes for that short time.

LH: Right.

PC: Do you know why they tore the two story building down? Was it in bad shape or is it ?

LH: I don't know whether it was in bad shape or not but this was a bigger building. It was a small, small building.

PC: Oh, okay.

LH: They built the new school and then built the auditorium at the school.

PC: Do you know what year they built the auditorium?

LH: No I don't. It was sometime after 1936 though, but I don't know exactly what year it was.

PC: We haven't quite been able to narrow that date down of when they built the auditorium. We know when they tore it down. I was living here then and remember that well, but not sure when the auditorium was built.

LH: I don't know. I can't. I don't know.

PC: I was told yesterday that they had classes also in the old cannery.

LH: Yes they did.

PC: They did?

LH: They sure did.

PC: Did they just separate up grades or how did they go about that?

LH: Yes they. I remember like I was in the sixth grade and I went to school in what used to be the drugstore, Dr. Woods drugstore. Some of them went to the Methodist Church, some in the old cannery and some in the Baptist Church. I guess that was about all.

PC: Okay.

LH: I was in the sixth grade and the sixth and seventh was going there in the doctor's office. I was in the seventh that is what I was in because that was Mr. Copeland's first year to be teaching there.

PC: Well that would be like I say around '35 because you were born in '21 so you would have been in first grade in 1927.

LH: I remember it was before my mother died and she died in '36.

PC: Okay. Those things in life certainly enable us to remember specific dates don't they?

LH: Right, right, right.

PC: That is why these interviews are important. You never know what somebody is going to specifically remember.

LH: I remember one thing that happened there just off the record. Turn that thing off and let me tell you.

PC: Okay, we are picking back up on our interview with Mr. Harris. You mentioned the school auditorium being torn down and then different places that they held school and you

mentioned the drugstore of Dr. Woods. Tell me about that and where it was located and anything about Dr. Woods that you remember.

LH: Well Dr. Woods had the drugstore and it was located right there whereí there's a little house right there in the corner where the roads fork. One goes to Ryan Chapel and one goes down by the Baptist church right in that corner.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: That is where the drugstore was located.

PC: Okay, between Tidwell Road and Felix Weeks now, what we know as those streets. But he was just the druggist?

LH: He was a doctor.

PC: And a doctor okay.

LH: He had the drugstore and a doctor.

PC: So that would have been in '35, in that time frame.

LH: Well he was dead by that time and there was nothing there. It was just a vacant building.

PC: Oh, so that is why they were using the location. You just remember him as a kid, him being there before his death.

LH: Yes.

PC: Okay. Did they get another doctor after him?

LH: No.

PC: I believe he was the last doctor in Burke. Okay. Is there any specific school memory you know, anything that stands out that happened at school good or bad?

LH: No I don't guess so. I remember they run the principal off one time but we had moved to California and that happened while we were gone.

PC: Okay.

LH: A bunch of old mean boys there you know and they run Mr. Odom off.

PC: Mr. Odom. Well do you remember anything about the heating? Did ya~~ll~~ have wood heaters?

LH: They had wood heaters in the school and somebody in the community would usually get the contract to cut wood for them and haul it in. Then the kids brought the wood in and fired the heaters everyday.

PC: Okay, so you remember doing that as a kid.

LH: Oh yes, it was great to be able to go out and bring in the wood you know. You got out of the school house. (laughter)

Don Christenson {hereafter DC}: He is still doing that today.

PC: You liked that didn~~t~~ you, getting to go out. Well that is good.

LH: At that time the kids did the cleaning of the school. We swept the place out. We had no janitors. The kids done all of that; we did the yard work. You had weeds that grew on the campus during the summer so in the fall when the school started the kids got out and pulled up all the weeds. That was great to get out of school you know.

PC: Yes. Well tell me about going back when the new school was finished and ya~~ll~~ got to go back to school at the new school, what grade were you in then or did you get to attend the new school?

LH: I was in the seventh grade. It was just the one year that they took that job to build the school.

PC: So your seventh grade year you got to go into the new school building which is actually the building that still stands today.

LH: Still there now.

PC: I guess it was pretty nice.

LH: Oh it was wonderful, yes, yes! It had electric lights in it. Switches on the wall, you know. The old school didn~~t~~ have anything like that, you know. (laughter) It was a great improvement.

PC: That is interesting. I never thought about that aspect of the electricity and things in the new building. That is something you vividly remember having an actual light switch.

LH: Yes, I remember the light switches. I remember a little joke that came along about that time. The little boy asked his sister, they turned the lights on and then they turned the lights off and the little boy said, "Did you see that?" They punched that button and it lit

them lamps and they punched it again and it blew them all out.ö So that is what happened at Burke they had the electric lights that they never had before.

PC: Do you remember anything specific about the cafeteria? I know my Aunt Catherine Lee wasí I believe worked in the cafeteria sometime.

LH: They didn't have the cafeteria at the time while I went there, they didn't have a cafeteria.

PC: Even in the new school, okay. What did ya'll do for lunch?

LH: We brought our lunch from home.

PC: Okay, had to bring your lunch still, even in...

LH: I don't remember when they put the cafeteria in but they did put the lunch room in there somewhere along the line.

PC: I just thought maybe with the new building maybe that was part of the upgrade, they did the cafeteria then.

LH: They had an extra room in the new building so I guess that is where the cafeteria went in, I don't know.

PC: Okay.

LH: Another thing we had along about that time we had drinking fountains outside to get water out of. Before that we had to draw the water out of the well. So that was a great improvement.

PC: Yes, had the dipper, everybody drank out of the dipper before that.

LH: Yes, we lined up before going back in from recess to get a drink of water. The big boys would run the kids off to start with but there was a few parents that got into that and stopped the boys from doing it.

PC: Okay. Tell me about your father's occupation living here at Burke. What did your father do?

LH: Well he was an automobile mechanic and he worked in various shops all over the place and part of the time he done his work at home. I guess this day and time you would refer to him as a shade tree mechanic.

PC: Now after you graduated from Lufkin High School in 1942 what did you do then?

LH: I went in the army.

PC: Went in the military. Tell me just briefly about your service in World War II.

LH: I went in the army in '42 and got out in '45. I served in Europe. I started in Africa and wound up in Germany 30 months later.

PC: You came home in '45?

LH: I came home in November of '45.

PC: Okay and what did you do then?

LH: I went to work at Lufkin Foundry, and I worked there until '51. Then I went to Houston and went to work.

PC: Okay.

LH: I retired in '80 and moved back up here.

PC: Okay, now this house place we are at today, is this something you acquired later or is this where your family lived?

LH: No this place belonged to J. J. Ivy and this house was built somewhere in the late 1800s. The cistern out there had the date on it for July 1900. So I know the house had to be built before the cistern.

PC: Okay, tell me about, if you remember anything about the sawmills at Burke. I know they were already out of business you know, when you were a young child but, did your grandparents or parents ever say anything about the sawmill?

LH: No I never did hear anything about the sawmill at Burke. Now they had what they call jerkwater sawmills that moved place to place in my growing up.

PC: Okay, do you remember anything about the cotton gin at Burke?

LH: Oh yes I remember the cotton gin. There was a gin at Burke. At the time it belonged to old man Bill Havard.

PC: Do you remember the location?

LH: Yes, it was right across the road from where your Aunt Flossie and them lived.

PC: The Thigpen house?

LH: Right, it was right across the road. I don't know who lives there now, but I know who built the house. Grover Vinson built the house, so that is the place. That is where the gin was.

PC: My cousin Earline still lives there. Do you remember anything about the mattress factory where people could go and get their mattresses stuffed at the cotton gin?

LH: That was the W.P.A days when they had the mattress thing. I don't remember exactly where it was but I remember people getting their mattresses remade and making new mattresses but I don't remember where it was.

PC: Okay. My reason for asking we had a lady to come into the History Center and asked me about the mattress factory at Burke and I was not aware of one. I believe it was associated with the cotton gin in some way of the left over cotton and cleaning out the bins and they could bring their mattresses and what have you.

LH: Well back in them days people made their own mattresses, you know. They would have scrap cotton, not enough for a bale and they would get it ginned and sew a tick together and make their own mattress.

PC: Yes sir, okay. Tell me about anything you remember about the cannery.

LH: The Cannery?

PC: Yes sir.

LH: One thing I remember about the cannery is that my daddy and A. J. McCarty dug the well at the cannery so they had plenty of water. Then the cannery was a log building, I remember that when they built that. I thought a pretty little building because it was made out of logs, you know.

PC: Yes sir. Now you were just a kid and you remember that?

LH: Yes, at that time I don't remember just how old I was. I don't remember the year that it was put in there but it was sometime I guess after '36 because that is when the WPA got started and that is what built all that kind of stuff, the W.P.A.

PC: Yes sir. Well what are your memories about the Depression? I'm sure you remember it.

LH: Well yes I remember it, my mother died during the Depression and people just didn't have any money. There was no money around. You could get work to do but who ever you worked for didn't have any money to pay you. When you did get a little work to do it

was on somebody's farm and you would draw a dollar a day. It was tough times for everybody.

PC: Yes sir. You were just a kid in school?

LH: Yes.

PC: Did your mother go to the cannery before she passed? Did she participate in that?

LH: No, she died before the cannery was built.

PC: Oh okay she died before that, okay.

LH: She died in '36.

PC: And it was built after '36.

LH: It was built sometime after that.

PC: Okay. What about the McCall Store and Mrs. Ina and the post office?

LH: Everybody knew Mrs. Ina McCall. She was a great old lady. She ran the post office and many years ago there was just a store. They had a grocery store, dry goods store and you could buy overalls and shirts and anything like that in there, but in later years it was just a post office.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: Mrs. Ina knew everybody and everything. She knew the cures to everything but she was fine old lady. (laughter)

PC: She was in the post office then when your mother died. I am sure she was. I heard she had a heart of gold and would just do anything for everybody.

LH: Oh yes, she was a wonderful old lady.

PC: I guess in my, what I know about Mrs. Ina and with your situation as a young child, I could just see Mrs. Ina, you know, stepping in and really being very motherly to you with your situation. I just wondered if you had any specific memory.

LH: Well I remember her taking the mail out to the. when the train stopped stopping to pick up the mail and deliver the mail they had a deal where they could pick it up. They put it in a bag and hang it up on this rig and as the train come threw this hook reached out and grabbed that bag and then they threw the bag off for Burke. Us kids a lot of times would

get the bags and take them into the post office you know. Mrs. Ina always went out there and hung it up, you know.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: Let me tell you one thing she done one time. She told me after I come back from the service she saidí she saidí she would open the post office on Sunday you know. All during the war all the young wives and girlfriends were always there on Sunday to see if they got a letter from their husbands, you know. And she said most of the girls if they got a letter that was wonderful, if they didnø get a letter that was okay too, you know. But she said one girl, said if she didnø get a letter she said she was sick. She said, òI mean sick.ö She said, òIøm going to tell you what, Lynda.lö She said, òThat was true love.ö Well I guess it was because that girl and this guy married after the war and raised a family at Burke.

PC: Oh that is sweet, what a sweet story.

LH: I always remembered that ,you know her being an old maid and never having been married or anything like that, she knew what love was.

PC: Oh that is wonderful. Well that is quite a testament to your marriage then. So, tell me about that. Tell me your wifeø's name and how you met her and when you got married.

LH: Well I knew her way back a long time before the war and she was married then and then when I came back from the war, her and her husband had separated and divorced and I bumped into her and we talked and we become good friends. She chased me until I finally caught her. (laughter)

PC: When did you get married?

LH: We got married in '46 and we were married 62 years when she passed away.

PC: Wow that is wonderful. And that is Mrs. Clarcie.

LH: Clarcie.

PC: And what was her maiden name?

LH: Conner.

PC: Conner okay, Clarcie Conner. And she was from Burke?

LH: Well mostly she grew up in Lufkin. Her daddy had a grocery store up there. At one time they lived in Diboll but mostly in Lufkin.

PC: And how many children did ya'll have?

LH: Well she had been married and she had three daughters and then after me and her married we just had the one boy Tommie.

PC: Okay, and tell me the girls names just for the record.

LH: Oh okay. The oldest girl's name was Dana Sue and then there was the twins Connie and Bonnie. You may know them, I don't know, Connie and Bonnie.

PC: I can't say that I do. I might if I saw their face. Not sure about that. Well that is wonderful, sixty two years.

LH: Sixty two years.

PC: That is a blessing, that is wonderful. I am trying to find out a little more information about the Campbellite Church. I know it was already out of existence when you were a child, but just wondering if you might have heard your grandparents mention it.

LH: No I never knew anything about it other than the church house. The house was there, the old church house was still there at Burke. It is where the cannery was.

PC: Okay.

LH: But there was never any church there in my lifetime. People always lived in the church.

PC: Okay, so you just know that particular house was used for a church.

LH: Yes.

PC: And it is where the cannery was.

LH: Yes.

PC: Okay. Tell me about you and my dad's friendship. You went to school with my dad?

LH: Yes.

PC: Anything you want to share with me, a particular memory about that.

LH: Well we went to grade school together and then we went to high school together. I remember he was president of the FFA in our senior year.

PC: Well I never knew that!

LH: You didn't?

PC: Well then he transferred to Lufkin too.

LH: Yes.

PC: So that was at Lufkin High School.

LH: Yes.

PC: Okay, and so you went to work after you came back from the war or you went to work from the foundry and you retired from there?

LH: No, I worked there three or four years and then I went to Houston and I retired from down there.

PC: Anything else you remember about Burke or maybe citizens of Burke? Anything you want to share with me about Daniel McCall or anything particular?

LH: I remember the dentist. There was a dentist office in Burke also.

PC: Dr. Johnston?

LH: Dr. Johnston, yes. That building is still here you know. It's there at Burke where the post office, the second post office was.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: That was the doctor office, Dr. Johnston's dentist office at Burke.

PC: We have a photograph of Dr. Johnston and his dentist office at Burke that his great granddaughter donated to us.

LH: Is that right?

PC: It actually faced the old highway originally.

LH: Yes, there was a little porch there on the end of it, you know.

PC: You remember going there?

LH: Yes we lived there at one time.

PC: Oh really.

LH: I don't remember him when he left the office. I don't know whether he died or what but anyway it just became a rent house. Various people lived there and we lived there at one time.

PC: You lived there as a child with your parents?

LH: Yes, my brother Jim was born there. He was born in '34 and we lived there at that time.

PC: Okay, what about Mrs. Nobie Campbell? What do you remember about her?

LH: I know that Mrs. Nobie Campbell was kind of like Mrs. Ina McCall, she knew everything. (laughter) But she was a fine lady too I think. Her daddy had been Justice of the Peace at some time another so they called him judge from there on out, Judge Clark. I don't remember him I just remember his name, you know.

PC: Do you know if Judge Clark was the same I.D. Clark from the Clark's Ferry? Any relation to that Clark's Ferry?

LH: I am not for sure. I feel sure it was the same family but I don't know for sure. Mrs. Nobie loaned money to people. She would even loan money to people to buy a place and things like that you know. And normally when you borrow money you make notes on it your notes are payable on or before. Mrs. Nobie made her notes payable on, you couldn't pay it off early. She wanted the interest you know. (laughter)

PC: She wanted to make the money.

LH: I remember when we lived there at Burke I would do little jobs for her and her mother. Her mother was still living at that time. I remember one time they had me to clean out their chicken house. Dig up all of the dirt under the roost and everything and dig a hole and bury it. Thinking about it later, that was fertilizer so why bury it somewhere?

PC: I've never heard much about her mother at all.

LH: I never did know that she ever even left the house. I never seen her anywhere except at the house so I don't know.

PC: What about Uncle Bob Weisinger's store? Tell me about something you remember about Uncle Bob and going to the store there.

LH: Well Uncle Bob had it when he got that it had a garage and my daddy run the garage for a while. Uncle Bob had always farmed and peddled. He peddled at Diboll, produce you know, garden produce and he bought that place. He had lots of problems with the boys in Burke. They would drive up to the gas pump and fill up their car (laughter) and drive off,

you know. Uncle Bob would say, "Oh they forgot to pay me." Hell they didn't forget, they didn't intend on paying him, you know. But he survived anyhow and everybody liked him.

PC: Did you ever do that?

LH: No.

PC: Did my daddy ever do that? (laughter)

LH: No, this was the boys that were older than us.

PC: Okay, the bad boys. (laughter)

LH: Yes, the bad boys. Like some of the bad boys joined the army way back yonder. Wasn't nothing much for them to do you know so they joined the army. Joining the army back in them days you had to give references, you know. So one boy that was wanting to join the army Uncle Bob wanted to get rid of him you know and he turned Uncle Bob in as a reference. And so they asked the question, "Did he use intoxicating beverages?" This boy was pretty bad about that but Uncle Bob didn't want to lie and he didn't want to do anything that would keep the boy from getting in so he wrote "lightly" (laughter)

PC: He wanted him to get out of Burke.

LH: He wanted him out of town but

PC: That is cute.

LH: Uncle Bob was a good old man. I liked him. We could always buy a bar of candy from him on the credit and stuff like that and he would just write it on a piece of paper and hang it on the wall. When you went and paid him he would tell you to mark it off the wall, you know.

PC: That is neat. That is neat. Do you remember anything else in Burke like any other stores or people that were in some type of business for their selves or something that I haven't mentioned that comes to your mind when you think about

LH: Well there was another store beside Uncle Bob's store which later you know was Jim Spears store. You remember that I guess. But anyway, that store belonged to Claude Smith and he eventually sold it to the Sam Courtney which was Jewel and Jeanette's daddy. You remember them don't you, Jewel and Jeanette Courtney?

PC: Oh yes sir.

LH: Their daddy had the store for a long time and then he sold it to Jim Spears.

PC: So first it wasí

LH: Claude Smithø.

PC: The Smithø store and then it became Courtney and then Spears.

LH: Right.

PC: Now that was on old Hwy 35 at the time right?

LH: Well yes but along there somewhere back when I was a little boy they changed 35 to 59.

PC: Or they built 59 I guess.

LH: No it was 35. It was the 35 highway and somewhere they changed the number of it. I remember when I was a little boy when it happened but I donø remember what year it was.

PC: Oh okay.

LH: They changed it from 35 to 59. Of course now you can still down close to Corrigan there is a place they got Hwy 35. Somebody told me somewhere else between there and Houston there is an old 35.

PC: Well my understanding was always what we call the old Diboll highway today was old Hwy 35 and then they came in and built 59 and moved the store.

LH: Originally it come around like it does at Hoshall now and instead of turning this way it went straight on up to Bloomer McCallø place and then on to Diboll. That was Hwy 35. But when they built this, what we call old 59 now they also called that 35 for a long time.

PC: Okay.

LH: But somewhere along they changed it to 59.

PC: They changed it, okay. Well the store that you just mentioned it was just down from Uncle Bobø store on the other corner kind of?

LH: Yes. I donø know exactly.

PC: And I believe it was a blacksmith shop in between the two stores or something like that.

LH: Yes it was a blacksmith shop that was just to the side of the Smithø store.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: It was a saloon to start with.

PC: Oh really.

LH: Way back yonder before my time it was a saloon and then it became a blacksmith shop and a grist mill. There was a grist mill in the back part of it.

PC: I knew about the blacksmith shop but I never knew it was a saloon, the location of the early saloon which we all know they existed. They even on the census records you can see you know, the saloon owner, even the early census records of Burke. So, we know they existed of course but I did not know that was the location of it. So that is wonderful.

LH: Then it wound up a blacksmith shop and a grist mill.

PC: Who ran the blacksmith shop?

LH: I don't know whether anybody had it before him or not but Mr. Burrous, old man Bill Burrous had the blacksmith shop.

PC: Okay. Well I guess he owned all that land which laterí .

LH: And the grist mill. Yes, he was the last maní

PC: Jimmy Lloyd inherited that land. In fact when I lived on the corner there, that is who owned that little house where I used to live on the corner there, across from Dr. Johnston's old place.

LH: They moved that house somewhere didn't they?

PC: Yes sir. So the grist mill was just all part ofí

LH: It was the same building.

PC: Same location.

LH: Just the back part of it.

PC: Okay. Tell meí do you remember anything about my grandfather, Mr. Rush? Daddy Dutch we called him.

LH: Yes I remember him.

PC: I know he was a farmer, do you remember anything about his farming?

LH: Yes I worked for him!

PC: Oh really!

LH: That old barn that used to be there where your cousin lives now there was an old barn there that belonged to him. He rented it to people.

PC: Oh really.

LH: We lived there at one time and I worked for him on the farm over there. I would go over there and help him.

PC: How old were you then when you worked for him?

LH: I was maybe fifteen, something like that.

PC: Really?

LH: You know he was a very mild mannered kind of a man and I can tell you something that will surprise you about him.

PC: Okay.

LH: I went over there one morning to go to work and he had already gone to the field and there was a cow, you know they always had milk cows.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: It was a cow laying down there in the lot. She was laying there just kind of moving her head around like that you know, and I went over where she was and she got up but she was awful wobbly you know. So, when I got down in the field I told him I said, "Mr. Rush I think you got a sick cow up there in the lot." He said, "No there is nothing wrong with her." He said, "I knocked her down." He said, "I told her three or four times to get back out of the way and she didn't and I hit her in the head with a brick." (laughter)

PC: Oh my goodness. (laughter)

LH: That surprised me to think that he would have a temper enough to hit the cow with a brick. (laughter)

PC: Yes, he was very quiet and I don't guess I ever remember him raising his voice or

LH: No, he was quiet.

PC: Just very mild mannered, like you said.

LH: I never heard anybody say anything against him. Usually you can hear something is wrong with somebody. I never heard anything against him.

PC: Oh that is wonderful.

LH: He was a fine old man.

PC: That is great. I appreciate that story. Did you know any of the Arringtons or know anything about the early Arringtons here? I know they donated the land where the Burke School is.

LH: No, I didn't know any Arringtons around Burke. The only Arrington that I knew for sure was Talmadge Arrington that lived at Diboll. He was one-armed.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: He had two daughters, I knew them. And then Frank Johnson's mother was married to an Arrington at one time, but I never did know him. And of course I knew your grandma.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: That is the only Arringtons I ever knew anything about.

PC: Okay. Well I know she inherited the property that, you know was my grandparents' place. It was 83 acres of land that she inherited from her father, which was just a portion. I believe there were seven or eight children so, you know, you multiply that and that was quite a bit of acreage of land. And I know my great-grandfather donated the land for the Burke school and the Burke Methodist Church as well so, I just wondered if you heard any stories or anything of how they acquired that property.

LH: Well where Catherine lives is the old Arrington place.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: But now Mr. Belote donated the land for the Methodist church so I've been told.

PC: Okay, I might be wrong on that.

LH: Maybe it was the Baptist Church.

PC: Might have been. I know it was the school.

LH: Because that would have all been in the same place.

PC: Yes sir, yes sir. I believe you are correct. The Belote's owned a lot of land. That is Mrs. Tuey Davis's family.

LH: There is a Belote Cemetery in Burke.

PC: Yes sir. Anything else you can think of about growing up at Burke or any other family.

LH: Well are you aware that Burke was not always Burke?

PC: Yes sir I'm glad you brought that up. That was a question I had forgot to write down. I wanted to ask you if you had heard anything about Bradley Prairie.

LH: Bradley Prairie is what it was to start with.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: I don't know what area they called Bradley Prairie.

PC: Well it's my understanding through research and also through some other research done by Lee Murrah who has the website on Burke now, it was in the area we know today as the Angelina County Airport. We also know the early school in Burke was certified in 1885 and it was known as "at Bradley Prairie." So we have very few records that show Bradley Prairie. We could count them on one hand, probably just two or three records that actually say Bradley Prairie. We feel like it was on a creek, you know there was a trading post and they would have had to have water from some source. When Burke was created when the Houston East and West Texas Railroad came up to Burke, it says in the records that it was on the west side of Bradley Prairie. So that is how when the railroad came in

LH: That would be right then because the airport is east of Burke.

PC: Yes sir. And then you know, it was named Rhodes at one time for the postmaster, I believe, and then later became known as Burke.

LH: Well do you have a plot of Burke how it used to be, how it was laid out?

PC: I believe that you donated to us or loaned to me the plat that you have, yes sir.

LH: Yes okay, okay.

PC: In lots and blocks, the actual city of Burke what they

LH: Yes the way they laid it out, street names and everything.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: I think I did give you one a long time ago.

PC: Do you have any photographs? I know at Ryan Chapel you just brought me the picture I believe of your grandparents when they got married at Ryan Chapel.

LH: My daddy, my momma and daddy.

PC: Your parents, okay.

LH: This picture right over here.

PC: Yes sir. I believe that is the only photograph you've ever loaned to us. I didn't know if you have any old photographs or not.

LH: No I don't have any old photographs.

PC: Okay. Well we went through all of my questions. I can't think of anything else that I wanted to ask you about. Mostly the things that I had on my list were businesses and doctors and things like that, just any personal stories.

LH: Have you heard anything about Lee Burke?

PC: No sir.

LH: You know Ward Burke?

PC: Yes sir.

LH: Lee Burke was Ward's daddy.

PC: Okay.

LH: He was in the store business there with Mrs. Ina. The store was called Lee, McCall and Lee.

PC: Okay. Lee Burke was Ward Burke's father?

LH: Uh-huh.

PC: I do remember being told that Ward Burke was born in the house that used to exist beside my mother's current house. That was where he was born and that was the first

house built in Burke. My Aunt Catherine's house was the second house built and my mother's house, which was the Nobie Campbell place, was the third house built in Burke. Something like that.

LH: Well now there used to be across the road there from where the school house is now there used to be a big yellow two story building. I think it belonged to a guy named Bloomer Florence and I've been told that when the high school was at Burke that there would be people in other parts of the country to board their children there at this place so they could go to high school. I don't know what year or anything like that that could have been. In my growing up that place belonged to Luke Quarrels and they tore it down and built another house there. Now then it looks like a junk yard.

PC: Yes sir. You're talking about right across from the school now, a two story yellow house that owned by who?

LH: Bloomer Florence.

PC: I had not heard that story. Maybe that kind of goes along with what you had heard about people coming so their children could go to school at Burke. We do know that it was a very well liked school and for 1935 the two story building they tore down, the two story school house, when you compare it to the other photographs of rural schools, Burke had a very nice school.

LH: Absolutely. Well it had downstairs there was two rooms that they used for teaching and they had a little room in between that they called the library. Upstairs it was two rooms but they were divided by a rolling wall.

PC: What was the rolling wall for?

LH: They would if they would have that wall would be down so there was two rooms. At Christmas time when they would have a play or the end of school they would have a play, well they rolled that wall up and that made a big room, you know.

PC: Oh yes. I had never heard that story. That is interesting. Well that makes sense, doesn't it. They didn't have auditoriums or space for activities and plays and get-togethers, so that makes sense. That is neat. A rolling wall and you remember that.

LH: It was kind of like a Venetian blind thing you know only it was made out of wood and it would roll up. I don't remember whether it rolled up with ropes or just how they rolled it up.

PC: And that was in the old two story?

LH: That was in the old two story building.

PC: Wow that is interesting. Well times have changed haven't they?

LH: Oh God, I reckon.

PC: But you know growing up in a small rural place like Burke when you did go through things like the Depression, a lot of people say they really didn't know it was much different other than just things not being available. Being used to living on a farm, a lot of people didn't know the difference.

LH: It was tough, it was absolutely tough.

PC: Do you remember hearing your dad speak of concerns, you know, could you as a child sense that concern?

LH: Well, no I don't guess. Me and my dad talked about that long after the Depression and he would always say, "I don't know how in the hell we made it," looking back, you know. But, I can remember going to people's places and picking dry peas on the halves so we would have peas to eat during the winter you know.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: But it was tough, it was tough, absolutely tough.

PC: Now you learned how to farm from your dad I guess.

LH: Yes, but I didn't like it all that much. (laughter)

PC: Well I didn't either. (laughter)

LH: That is the reason I started something else.

PC: But did you farm, like now do you raise a garden?

LH: Daddy always worked in the garages you know, and then we would have a garden. And then we lived part of the time right close to my grandpa and he farmed. When I was just a little kid I used to help him on the farm you know. And then of course in the fall of the year everybody needed cotton pickers, you know so. That is the only time I would ever catch up to where I had any money to spend was picking cotton. I was a pretty good cotton picker and I could make some money. I was telling somebody this tale the other day. Grady Grimes' mother, her name was Julie, and back then all women worked, you know, on the farms and we were picking cotton and she was in the bunch. I was the only kid there and we would come out and weigh up every time you got a sack full we would all come out and weigh it up. She was a big talker and this particular time she wasn't having much to say. She was just sitting around and somebody said, "Julie what is the matter with you, you are awfully quite." I was sitting off to one side. And she said, "Well I

have never worked as hard in all of my life as I have been working today and every time we weigh up that dang little ole boy over there has got more than I have got.ö (laughter)

DC: He was a real cotton picker. (laughter)

PC: Yes, he was a real cotton picker.

LH: Yes right. (laughter)

PC: Now you moved around a little bit. You said you lived in Dr. Johnston's house and you rented from my grandfather, where else did you live in Burke?

LH: Well to start off with when my mother and daddy got married they built a house down the road there from Ryan Chapel Church across the road and north of it a little ways. Just before you got to the cross road down there.

PC: Across from Ryan Chapel?

LH: Yes.

PC: Okay.

LH: That was my grandpa's old place. That is where I was born. They built a house there on the corner of his place. Then in '33 we moved to California and then in '34 we were back to this country and that is when we lived at Burke. Then we lived over on the old man Jim Williams place. That is where the Bounds live now.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: We lived over there awhile. Then we moved back and we lived behind the cemetery on Mr. Cannon's place. All over just any kind of an old shack you know. Then when my grandfather died he left half of his place to one of my aunts and then the other half, which would have been his wife's part, he left to the rest of the children. So my mother had a share in it and of course she was already dead. And so, the kids, they were all squabbling over what was going to happen to the place, how they was going to do this. So they decided to sell it and I didn't want my momma's part sold. I wanted my momma's part and I told daddy I didn't want it sold. So he, one day daddy was in town and he run into Carmen Brazil, that was Mrs. Ina McCall's brother-in-law. Dan Brazil in Lufkin it was his father.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: Daddy told him about it, that I wanted my momma's part of the old place you know. Mr. Brazil said, "Well move on it." He said, "Move on the place." He said, "Pick you out whatever part you want and move on it." He said, "There ain't a court in the world that

will take it away from them boys.ö There was four of us boys and we was all minors, you know. He said, There is not a court in the world that will take that away from them, so pick you out a place and move on it and let them squabble all they want too.ö And Daddy said, öWell, I ain't got no place or no house.ö öWell hell,ö he said. öBuild you a tent or something and move on it.ö And that is what we done. We moved on it. Jake Lee moved us out there and Jake told me, said, öThis is the first time Iöve ever moved anybody that I didn't put them in a house.ö We just moved under the trees and put up a tent and Daddy started building on a little house, you know.

PC: Oh.

LH: Well when they divided the place up they marked off that part and left for us kids you know.

PC: Oh that is wonderful.

LH: That is where Wilburn, Wilburn still lived there until he passed away.

PC: Now that was originally the Conner place?

LH: No the Warner place.

PC: No, the Warner place okay, but it was on your mother's side, okay. Well that is neat. Now do you remember mentioning that area over there, a lane or a road at that time that would have went from Ryan Chapel to Burke but not the Felix Weeks road that we know of today?

LH: No that was the only road that I knew the road that is there now.

PC: Okay, that is there now. Franklin Weeks had made mention of a road at some point that went from Ryan Chapel to Burke but more on that lane maybe where this land that you are mentioning now but Iöve never been able to determine that exact location.

LH: No, no. You know there used to be a road right down here that went up through the woods here to Burke long years ago.

PC: Okay.

LH: When they graded the roads well they changed them up a lot but that road was just an old dirt road way back yonder but it was the same route it is now in my recollection.

PC: Okay so the Felix Weeks Road that goes from Burke to Ryan Chapel is the same as what you remember as a child.

LH: Yes.

PC: Okay.

LH: Have you talked to Franklin Weeks about the history of Burke?

PC: Oh yes sir, yes sir. He has been interviewed as well, yes sir.

LH: Did he ever tell you about the airplane that landed at Burke?

PC: I don't know if he told us that story or if I read it in something. I'm not for sure. Why do you remember that?

LH: Yes I remember that. I didn't know it at the time till me and him was talking about it one time. He was the first guy to the plane after it landed.

PC: Yes sir and you're talking about a plane crash?

LH: No it just landed.

PC: Oh it just landed, oh okay.

LH: It cracked up because he landed cross ways of the rows in the corn field.

PC: Okay.

LH: So naturally the plane broke up. (laughter)

PC: But he had to emergency land or something?

LH: Yes.

PC: Was that over in the Weeks property I believe?

LH: No it was there at Burke across the road from where the school house is behind the old cannery.

PC: Okay. Were you a kid then?

LH: Yes I remember it. I don't remember it landing. I wasn't out there or anything like that but I remember going out in the field and looking at it. It had a wooden propeller on it and it had dipped into the ground enough going across them rows that it splintered it a little bit you know.

PC: Tore it up, yes sir.

LH: Then they went in there and repaired it and then your grandpa hooked his mules to it and brought it out and down the road and up to the curve in the Brannen place.

PC: Yes sir.

LH: That is where they took off from. It was a great day in Burke. (laughter) Everybody in the country was out there at Burke to see that airplane take off you know. Everybody was out on the highway there in front of Uncle Bob's place looking up the highway like that you know (laughter). They put the boys there down below and up above to stop a car IF a car come by, you know.

PC: Yes sir, if a car came by. (laughter) Yes, I believe Mr. Weeks told us that story. I remember now my grandfather helping with that, pulling it up there. He had to get it repaired before he could take off.

LH: Yes.

PC: And you were just a young boy then?

LH: Yes I don't remember what year that was but I'm pretty sure that was maybe '27 or '28, somewhere in there.

PC: So you were just six or seven years old, a little young.

LH: Yes because I remember when the plane took off. He got in the air by the time he got to Uncle Bob's place you know and he went on down and made a circle and came back over all of us and waved at us.

PC: Oh wow! Now that would be a great day in Burke wouldn't it?

LH: Yes it was a great day, yes, yes.

PC: Well Mr. Harris I can't think of anything else. I really appreciate your time today and helping us gather as much as we can about Burke history and I thank you very much.

LH: You're quite welcome, you're quite welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW