

CHARLIE HARBER

Interview 157d

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, former Rayville and Boggy Slough pasture rider Charlie Harber describes some of the sites on the old Temple ranch. He reminisces about his experiences working cattle and stopping poachers, taking those he caught to the Justice of the Peace in Apple Springs. He also mentions mule driver Edgar McAdams, a site suspected of containing remnants of an old Mexican battlefield, the Pan American pipeline site, and the Rayville ranch barbeques.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today is March 27, 2002 and I'm driving to go pick up Charlie Harber and we are going to go out to South Boggy Slough and he's going to show me a few things out there again today.

Tape Stopped

JG: We are at one of the slough bridges going north on the old TSE [Texas South Eastern Railroad] or Southern Pine Lumber Company railroad right of way. Mr. Harber was telling me a story.

Charlie Harber (hereafter CH): This fellow, I saw him come out of there, just had a net wire and three barbwire fence there. And, he got across that fence and that horse I was riding at the time, when you got after somebody or an animal or something, she jumped that fence with me on her, scared the living fool out of them. Well I caught him right out yonder. And he began to put up an argument that I didn't catch him inside the pasture. I said "I saw you get out of there, I saw you when you crossed the fence or my horse wouldn't have been after you." So he went ahead, I got his shotgun and, so I come on back there was another one hunting down in there. And I run into him and he's the only one that ever throwed a gun on me. And I let him go then I caught him later. But this fellow here, we got to the Justice of the Peace office in Apple Springs, and he wanted to know how much the fine would be and the Justice of the Peace told him \$44. He wanted to know how much the bond would be and he said \$1500. He paid the fine and he told me said "I tell you one thing, I'm going to get a deer for every dollar I spent." I said, "well that is fine. Temple has got plenty of them, you just come back and get all you want." I never did catch him again.

JG: About what year was that?

CH: That must have been in about '49.

JG: In '49, now was that the same guy that pulled the gun on you?

CH: No the fellow that pulled the gun on me, they got him for simple assault, which I didn't think was too simple.

JG: Simple assault.

CH: Simple assault. And they fined him \$25 for cost. Now that just shows you I never did know what the fine actually was.

JG: How did you apprehend him or whatever, after he pulled the gun on you?

CH: I caught him when he come out up here, same fellow. I knew him from down in there.

JG: What were you usually armed with, were you armed?

CH: Just a pistol.

JG: Just a pistol. What caliber?

CH: Nine millimeter.

JG: Automatic?

CH: Yes.

JG: And you were telling me earlier, I didn't have the tape going then. You were telling me about the two guys, the manager and the desk clerk from the William Penn Hotel in Houston. They had come all the way up here and got them a nice 10-point, you said.

CH: Yes, they was poaching on Cochino Creek down here. Of course they parked their car up here in this open country, you see. I don't know how far, it was a good long ways down there where the shots were fired. It was at the edge of the bottom down there.

JG: And you were hiding underneath the cattle guard.

CH: The cattle guard, I got in the cattle guard.

JG: And they were coming down the railroad right of way and you jumped up and scared them.

CH: Yes, I got both their guns. (laughing)

JG: One of them was a 12-gauge and the other one was a...

CH: .30-30.

JG: .30-30.

CH: So, and they both paid their fines.

JG: And that was in '49 also, huh?

CH: Yes.

JG: So how many people did you catch, or have to take to the J.P.?

CH: Oh I don't know Gerland how many, there was a lot of them. They come through here often. I caught them out of Nacogdoches and everywhere else.

JG: You had told me one time before that, it seemed sometimes there were SFA students that were hunting.

CH: Oh yes, and then I caught one fellow in here name Christian and owned Christian Storage and Transfer Company in Nacogdoches, him and his son-in-law, an old boy by the name of Lumpkin. This fellow, he was one of the Christian's, caught them right down in there about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. And they come in through Earl Smith's field.

JG: Yes, we are right here at the edge of Earl Smith's fenced place here. I guess Temple put that fence up, huh?

CH: Yes. (laughter)

JG: I see it is pretty high.

CH: Yes, yes.

JG: Hog proof too.

CH: Yes, the fence was, Temple has got them completely circled now all but on the main road up yonder.

JG: That is to keep people out and the deer in.

CH: Yes, but they come, all this open land belongs to them heirs of Earl Smith's, two brothers there, Jimmy and Joe.

JG: And he's got kind of an open pasture through here, a rolling pasture. Now is that kind of what this used to look like when Temple, some of the Temple lands used to look like back when you remember it as a pasture?

CH: Well the old farm that was in there, Gerland, but that was it. It, just the old farms, is all that was open land.

JG: Well I mean like Rayville Pasture and stuff, what did it look like?

CH: Well all that around Rayville, see there was open.

JG: Were there stumps around?

CH: No, there wasn't even no stumps around then.

JG: Judge Minton had written in that 1956 little history he wrote, he said that Rayville was started on cut over lands. Was Rayville cut over lands?

CH: Well, yes see this was virgin stuff. Right here was the only virgin stuff they had, right here between these two creeks. They logged this out with cat wagons and caterpillars, is what they logged this out between these two creeks in here.

JG: In the '40's?

CH: In the '40's and early '50's, '49, '50 somewhere back in there. I don't know the exact year, but it was somewhere in the '40's.

JG: Caterpillars?

CH: Yes, caterpillars and cat wagons. Them old logs, there was trees in there so big they only hauled one log at a time on one of them cat wagons.

JG: What you are calling a cat wagon, that is a little caterpillar tractor, that is on a little track that is on a trailer, kind of like they have at the Forestry Museum, huh?

CH: Yes.

JG: Temple gave those to the Forestry Museum.

CH: They did?

JG: That is probably the same ones they used here.

CH: Yes, the same ones. Yes, they bought, Gerland, they bought that stuff and they had to have special saws to cut that. They had a two man chain saw and that, Mr. Gossett, that just died here a few days ago. You might have saw it in the paper. Him and his brother was two of the first ones, Laymon Gossett, was the first one that ever bought a chain saw in this country. And they had, and they was the one that cut this timber up here. But it taken two man saws, the trees were so big, it taken a two man saw. One of these saws like we have now, 24 inch or something like that wouldn't even, those trees was enormous. Some of them was 6 foot through or better.

JG: Now in the late '40's, I forgot now, you mentioned it to me a couple of years ago, but were you working for Kenley and for the hunting club kinda at the same time?

CH: Yes, they were paying, one of them was paying half my salary and the other one was paying the other half.

JG: So you worked cattle with Dave and his crew and...

CH: Yes.

JG: ...then you'd watch out for poachers and stuff the other time.

CH: Yes, pretty well a day and night job back in them days.

JG: And where did you live then?

CH: Up here in this house.

JG: That house that you showed me before that you built?

CH: Yes. I'd like to go back to that house one more time.

JG: All right, well we will do that.

CH: I guess we could get up there today.

TAPE STOPPED

CH: Well it was...

JG: It's recording now.

CH: It's recording.

JG: Yes.

CH: John Wells and Frank Ashby, do you remember reading about both of them?

JG: Yes, yes, in Thad Sitton's book, *Backwoodsmen*.

CH: Yes, Thad Sitton's book. There wasn't no truth to that, because they tried to buy all of these hog marks. My father lived out here, he had a bunch of hogs. They let him run hogs in here. They bought his hog mark out. I don't know what they paid him for it.

JG: Talking about "they" being Southern Pine?

CH: Southern Pine Lumber Company. Old man Ray, which was Southern Pine's...

JG: Representative?

CH: Yes, well he's the one that done it. But Frank Ashby, he told in that book that John Wells had hundreds of head of hogs that Temple beat him out of. But to my knowledge, I never did know of nobody moving out of here that had anything that they didn't give them money for, pay for it. As far as, like I say, to my knowledge, they...

JG: Did your father sell some of his hogs to Temple?

CH: When we moved out of here, yes, in 1928.

JG: Bought his hog mark or...?

CH: Yes, they bought his hog mark in 1928. I don't know, I imagine he had over 100 head of hogs in here. They may not have give him over a dollar a head, I don't know. But, anyway, they let him run his hogs in here and when he got ready to move out, they bought the hog mark.

JG: Tried to keep the peace anyway, I guess, huh? But I guess, something we don't, certainly somebody my generation doesn't think about today, is just what a change to society that would have been.

CH: Well yes.

JG: You know, people living here for decades in the woods, and then somebody from Texarkana comes and starts buying up everything, you know. And I guess even if those people didn't own the land before, they maybe had rights, or thought they had rights to hunt on it.

CH: Well, they had been using it all these years.

JG: Kind of as public land, more or less.

CH: Well you see I&GN [International and Great Northern] Railroad owned most of this in this country on the north end up here.

JG: Through those land grants.

CH: Yes, well you see, I&GN [International and Great Northern] Railroad got a section of land for each mile of railroad they built.

JG: Yes. Now let's see, do we need to go left to go to try to find that old trestle?

CH: Well.

TAPE STOPPED

JG: Let me turn on the tape, I don't know if we have ever had you tell that on the tape. About, what you call the old battleground and the arrowheads and the brass works and things.

CH: Well, I got my mouth full.

JG: He just took a bite. (laughter)

CH: Is it recording?

JG: Yes, it's going now.

CH: Jonathan, we just passed the old brass works that they said it was a Mexican battlefield that was there back in the '20's. And, we used to come there as children and walk around through that old brass works, and pick up arrowheads and things.

JG: Do I go left or keep going straight?

CH: Keep going straight. Now let's see what else was it?

JG: You said your brother found some old guns.

CH: Yes, my older brothers found some kind of old rifles there that had rusted out and they just threw them back down. There were arrowheads all over that country there.

JG: Just after we crossed, came into North Boggy, still going north, on the right, just off the road there.

CH: Just off the road in North Boggy Slough, on the north side of Cochino Creek.

TAPE STOPPED

JG: Let's see now, you were telling me about Haywood Kirkland and Matt Wright.

CH: Yes, they were timber buyers for Temple, for Southern Pine Lumber Company. And Dave Kenley was timber buyer. Well, they caught up with all of them. And they said that, I don't know, they fired Haywood Kirkland, they let him go and they let Matt Wright go. And they tried to let Mr. Kenley go. And they said they couldn't pay him off, if they had during the Depression it would have broke the company.

JG: And what did they catch up with them about?

CH: Buying this, they were buying the timber for the company, buying the timber and the land for the same price then deeding the land to their selves and the timber to Temple. They ended up with the land after they cut it off of it. So that is what, but they let them all go except Mr. Kenley. And he stayed with the company. Now, I don't know, they said they couldn't let him go because he had too much stock in the company and it would have broke them at that time if they'd let him go.

JG: We are standing now, just this side of Morgan's Creek, I guess the east side of Morgan's Creek. Right here, pretty close, about, what is that, about 150 yards west of Neff? Right there on the railroad tracks. Neff is where the Eastern Texas [Railroad] and the TSE [Texas Southeastern Railroad] kind of came together for a little bit, and then the TSE went north. And of course the Eastern Texas ran from Lufkin to Ratcliff and Kennard. Mr. Harber was just showing me the house that he helped Mrs. Grumbles build in 1936. I just want you to tell me a little bit more about that. And who was Mrs. Grumbles?

CH: Well, she came here from, a little place out the other side of Austin. I can't even think of it now. But, she was Ab Grumbles' wife. And he was pasture rider here.

JG: Ab Grumbles?

CH: Ab Grumbles, Albert Grumbles.

JG: Albert, Albert Grumbles, okay.

CH: Yes, he was pasture rider. And they moved, built this house down here where their children could go to school at Apple Springs, back in about '36 or '37. I don't know the exact year.

JG: And you helped them build it.

CH: Yes, I helped build it.

JG: You would have been about 16 or 17 then, huh?

CH: Yes, about 16 or 17 years old.

JG: And where was your family living at the time?

CH: Up in Houston County.

JG: Houston County.

CH: At what they call Nogalus Prairie.

JG: Now, we are in Houston County now, aren't we?

CH: No, we are in Trinity County.

JG: Oh, okay. But we are at the very north end, huh?

CH: Yes, we are in Trinity County.

JG: Okay. Let's see, and you were saying that this Morgan's Creek was named after probably one of the early settlers. And this was...you remember it being called the Morgan place.

CH: Yes, that is the Morgan place and this is Morgan Creek.

JG: And you said you got a lot of the boards and things for the house from used lumber.

CH: Used lumber.

JG: And the barn that was behind it there.

CH: We tore down, and got used logs and what have you and rebuilt the old barn, the smoke house and it was used lumber practically all in the, that was put in the house.

JG: Were you going to school at the time? Were you out of school?

CH: I was out of school, yes.

JG: You were out of school. But you were raised and went to school at Pisgah, huh?

CH: Some.

JG: Mt. Pisgah, some, yea. Okay, alright, well that is about all I remembered to ask you, from what you were telling me earlier.

TAPE STOPPED

JG: Start again about the Pan American Pipeline.

CH: When TSE [Texas Southeastern Railroad] hauled the pipe for it?

JG: Yes.

CH: TSE hauled the pipe for that Pan American Pipeline back in 1939, and unloaded it down there on old Highway 94. And it was hauled from there up to the pipeline on trucks. So that is...but George couldn't even remember that, he said, when I talked to him.

JG: George Honea?

CH: Yes.

JG: In '39, well he wasn't around here then was he?

CH: No, he wasn't here. I don't know where they had any record but, they hauled that pipe. I watched them unload it and load it back on those trucks. It was hauled, the contractor hauled them. I don't...I can't think of the contractor right now, Jonathan.

JG: And that Pan American Pipeline that you said was built in '39, that is the one that runs right by the clubhouse that Arthur built in '41.

CH: Correct, yes sir.

JG: Kind of there by Rayville. Tell me about the fellow that used to live there at Rayville, or near Rayville or maybe it was Redgate, I don't remember. You set me straight. But the fellow that used to have to take care of the mules and you used to help him, come down and harness up the mules in the mornings.

CH: Edgar McAdams was there in 19.....uh, at Rayville, he fed the mules, harnessed them and taken them to the woods, in 1936 or '37, when they were logging around Rayville, on up to the 16 mile board.

JG: And you said you used to...

CH: I'd get up in the morning and go help him a lot of times harness his mules. And he had to have old gasoline lanterns hanging up out there to harness the mules by.

JG: Gasoline or kerosene?

CH: Gasoline.

JG: Gasoline.

CH: Had Coleman lanterns, but that is about it.

TAPE STOPPED

JG: Mr. Harber was telling me that the Pan American Pipeline, that same pipeline was actually earlier run by Sun Oil Company put one in.

CH: Yes, Sun put the first pipeline in.

JG: In the late '20's or early '30's?

CH: Yes, and then in 1939 Pan American put their pipeline in, right by the side of Sun pipeline.

JG: Now he is telling about how they would tar the pipeline, put buckets of tar.

CH: They would tar the pipeline and then they would, they had a Chevrolet motor that had tarpaper and it run down that pipeline and it wrapped that paper around and around that pipe. That is the way they preserved the pipeline back in the old days.

TAPE STOPPED

JG: I've got the tape player going. I asked Mr. Harber about the killing that happened. What was this place known as again? The hog pen or?

CH: Sullivan stock pen.

JG: Sullivan stock pen, and there was a killing here.

CH: Doc Durham was killed here about 1912. I never did find out who killed him, I never did know who killed him. They sent a boy to the penitentiary, one of them Christie's but...

JG: One of the Christie's. They're the ones that are buried, the Christie's are buried in the Pisgah Cemetery.

CH: Yes, the Durham's killed him in 1913.

JG: P-I-S-G-A-H.

CH: Yes, Pisgah Cemetery, Mount Pisgah.

JG: That was the Durham and Christie feud.

CH: Yes, first cousins.

JG: Now Temple owned all this then didn't they?

CH: No, no they bought it after that.

JG: After that.

CH: They owned a lot of it but...

JG: Who were the Sullivans?

CH: The Sullivans had all of this back here where the North Boggy Slough clubhouse is at. That was all Sullivan country. The Christie's was over here to our east.

JG: And you lived right in there for a while, over here and over here.

CH: Over here, down the other road over here.

JG: Yes, that is where you were born, huh?

CH: No, I was born outside the pasture and then we moved in here. I was born in 1920.

JG: Okay, where that beehive was up in that tree, wasn't it.

CH: Yes, where...over in that cedar tree.

TAPE STOPPED

JG: He was telling me about Mr. Ray having a big barbecue. Go ahead.

CH: Back in the '20's on Cochino Creek, Mr. Ray always had a steer killed and he had a big barbecue for all the employees of this cattle ranch here. I guess that is about enough.

JG: Well you said they barbecued the whole steer.

CH: The whole steer, yes they barbecued the whole steer.

JG: They just gut him.

CH: They'd just cut him up and quarter him up.

JG: Oh, okay. Did you eat at any of those barbecues?

CH: Oh yes, we always come to those barbecues. He'd invite everybody that lived on this ranch and everybody that worked on it.

JG: So that would have been your dad, your brother-in-law and...

CH: Everybody.

JG: ...your whole family, huh?

CH: The whole family, just have a family gathering there.

JG: About how many people would be there you think?

CH: Oh there would be 30 or 40 people there.

JG: But they would do it at the creek here, at Cochino Creek?

CH: At Cochino Creek. The way they'd make a pit...

JG: Was that just kind of like a central location for everybody?

CH: ...yes, they'd dig a hole in the ground and stretch net wire over it and build a big fire under it, is the way they'd barbecue.

JG: What kind of wire?

CH: Net wire, just regular hog wire, net wire.

TAPE STOPPED

JG: Mr. Harber was telling me about, right here at Lottie Temple's deer stand, No. 22, or the marker here off the road, and he was telling me that he started 1939 working for Kenneth Nelson running a survey chain.

CH: Yes, I started...we started surveying this field here in 1939.

JG: This field!

CH: Yes.

JG: There is nothing but trees now! (laughter)

CH: I know it. It was a field then. But we started surveying in '39 due to this government program.

JG: Oh, that is when they were marking timber, huh?

CH: Well that is when Mr. Kenley got all of these fields sowed free of charge see, when the government started giving...

JG: Oh, sowed, you mean planting, for planting trees.

CH: Yes, for planting cover crops for cattle.

JG: Oh, not planting trees, oh okay.

CH: Then they come in here and planted these trees. But that is what we done, we surveyed all this old field here and some more fields.

JG: And what did y'all plant it with?

CH: Rye grass.

JG: Rye grass. Now rye grass it dies out in the summer, doesn't it?

CH: Yes, that is Gulf Coast rye grass I believe is what they called it.

JG: And the government would pay for that?

CH: Oh yes, that is when it first started.

JG: What just buy the seed?

CH: Yes.

JG: Just pay for the seed.

CH: Yes, and I done the sowing.

JG: You done the sowing. How did y'all sow it, by hand, or a little hand crank?

CH: A hand crank.

JG: So you walked all this up and down, huh?

CH: Yes, from here on up to the north end.

JG: Who were some of the other people? Were there other people helping you?

CH: No.

JG: Just you and Kenneth.

CH: Yes, he helped and I sowed the seed after we got through surveying.

JG: About how many acres did you sow you think?

CH: Well I sowed a hundred, 100-pound bags.

JG: A hundred, 100- pound bags, all by hand, huh?

CH: All by hand, yep.

JG: And then they came through in the what, in the late '40's or early '50's and planted trees?

CH: In the early '50's.

JG: The early '50's.

CH: That started in the '50's.

JG: But Dave Kenley was the one that got the...

CH: Got the seeds.

JG: Got the seeds okay. Planted it for his cows, huh?

CH: Yes.

JG: And there is some big, fully grown mature pine trees all through here now.

CH: That just shows you, you could sit up here on this hill on a horse and see this whole bottom down here.

JG: Pretty through here, isn't it?

CH: It sure is.

JG: Well, we just came from Rayville. The old Rayville home place and the old barn, or one of the old barns there, the one that Mr. Harber and I went through in May of 2000, sometime between now and then it fell down.

TAPE STOPPED

END OF INTERVIEW