

KEN HENSARLING

Interview 284a

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ABSTRACT: In an interview with Jonathan Gerland and Richard Donovan, Angelina County native Kenneth Hensarling reminisces about growing up in the Concord Community. He talks about his school days, recreation, family life, church, race relations, farming, and livestock. Mr. Hensarling's family was forced to move off their land by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers when Lake Sam Rayburn was created. He talks about the impact that had on his community and on his family, particularly his father. He also remembers his career working for various railroads.

Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG): Today is July 27, 2017. My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm going to interview Mr. Kenneth Hensarling today. With him is his wife Marilyn Hensarling and also is Richard Donovan, who we will see their connections here in a just a minute when we get the interview going. Mr. Hensarling if you could just tell us when and where you were born.

Ken Hensarling (hereafter KH): I was born in my grandmother's home in the Concord Community of Angelina County, in the year 1935.

JG: What was your birthday?

KH: May the 18th of that year.

JG: May the 18th of '35. Who was your grandmother?

KH: My grandmother was Nancy Ora Elizabeth Mott before she married a Hopson.

JG: Okay.

KH: So she was part of the original Mott family that had settled there.

JG: Who were your parents?

KH: My parents were Jesse James Hensarling, grandson of Jesse C. Hensarling who was the early postmaster there.

JG: Of Mott, the community of Mott.

KH: At Mott community, yes and my mother was Era Grace Hopson.

JG: Spell that first name.

KH: E-r-a. (**JG:** E-r-a okay) And she was a Hopson and married my dad and they lived there in that community all the way through until building Sam Rayburn Lake moved them out.

JG: Just describe that community as you recall it growing up. The community of... what did y'all call it?

KH: Well, we called it Concord. We lived in the central area there in that lower Angelina County. Up above us north of us I suppose was the Bayou Springs Community. South of us was down, I'm not even sure it is in Angelina County, it was Plum Ridge. It was right near the Jasper County line and the churches were in all three locations. But ours was the central community. I remember my dad telling me at one point back there when I was a boy there was in that voting precinct, 261 registered poll tax voters at that time. I don't remember what year that was, but I know I was a boy and my dad was a member of the school board, so it would have been sometime when I was just pretty young.

JG: Before school age?

KH: Well I imagine it was about then or a little later, around late 1930's or earlier...before World War II, before Pearl Harbor.

JG: What was the community center? Was there a focus of the communities?

KH: Yes it was; the church was the primary focus of that community. In those days, it was a pretty large group of people that showed up at church.

JG: What denomination was it multi denomination?

KH: It was a Baptist.

JG: Baptist, okay.

KH: But it was very interesting. Those churches in those days, the pastors were all pretty much itinerant, they moved from one to the other. Preach one Sunday here and one Sunday over yonder and one Sunday somewhere else. And so very often the same way with Methodist, the same way with Baptist, very often if the preacher was at the Methodist Church this Sunday they would go down there. Well there wasn't a Methodist Church in that community so whoever was there or whatever their belief was, they came to that Baptist group on that Sunday. When they weren't preaching there, they would either go down to Bayou Springs or down to Plum Ridge, maybe. However, in the early, early days most of our folks in the community didn't have automobiles. I don't remember there being over half a dozen maybe in the whole area and right around where we lived,

my great uncle, R.K. Mott had a vehicle. We didn't own one. My aunts and uncles didn't own one, so you couldn't walk to those two churches, so they missed out on one Sunday a month. But, when they met, everybody came. It was like a big social event, in fact it was the social center of the community. And school of course would put on events and they would go there, but the church would have their events, and everybody would show up there. I remember this as a boy, when we met, we didn't have electricity, we had funeral home fans we called them in those days, open the windows people would come, and many, many of those old timers would sit on stumps outside the window. And quite honestly, I'm going to tell it like it is, very often some of them would be sitting out there sipping their whiskey bottles and smoking, listening to the preaching coming out the window. (laughter) But they weren't going to miss being there with the whole community showing up. It was a big event.

JG: Just everybody was there regardless huh?

KH: Regardless. And once a year they had what they referred as the annual homecoming, the fourth Sunday in June, everybody always referred to it as the June dinner. Man, you would have 2,3, 400 people show up. All the politicians running for office in the county would come down there. Two or three of the bottling companies would set up stands and sell Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola and orange drink and all that. Politicians would be passing out their cards.

Richard Donovan (hereafter RD): And a big barrel of ice water.

KH: Big barrel of ice water and some watermelon. I mean man...

Marilyn Hensarling (hereafter MH): Lots of food.

KH: And then they had those benches way off down through the woods over there, spread food from here to yonder and we would just...it was the biggest event all year every year.

JG: Now the church as I understand was near where Caney Creek and little Caney Creek kind of come together. Where was the school in relation to that?

KH: Alright. Hwy 63 at that time ran right through the edge of the community. There were a few people that lived along Hwy 63 right there. In the early, early days, a fellow by the name of Johnny King had a store. A dirt road went off of Hwy 63 down into the community on the opposite side of the road it went out to Boykin Springs. Johnny King had an old store right there, a country store, and he also had a grist mill and you could take your corn there and get it ground into cornmeal. Now, as you went down that road from Johnny Kings store there was a couple of houses in there and the property the school building was located on. It was a real nice piece of property, probably 8 or 10 acres.

JG: What direction would it have been from the church?

KH: Alright the church was right next to it.

JG: Right next to it okay.

KH: Just beyond it going toward big Caney Creek. At the edge of...

JG: Big Caney Creek, yes.

KH: Yes, at the edge of the church yard, the road went off a hill and big Caney Creek was at the bottom of the hill here, probably 300 yards down there. In fact, it usually had water in it and very often we baptized in a pool down there in that creek.

JG: In Big Caney?

KH: In Big Caney. About a half mile further on little Caney crossed that same road. In the spring, the flood period, the spring rains, both those creeks would overflow and close that road from the bottom of that hill all the way over to another hill going up out of that river that creek bottom at the Bingham place. The Bingham's lived on that hill.

JG: How did you spell that?

KH: B-i-n-g-h-a-m.

JG: Bingham's okay.

KH: So, all that would be under water there for a while.

JG: Could you get to the church and school when it was flooded?

KH: Well, we would walk through that water some, but usually mom and dad wouldn't let nobody go there and walk off into that water. We never knew whether the bridge was still there or not.

JG: Yes. (laughter)

KH: Because the bridge washed out on more than one occasion.

JG: So just how close was the school to the church? I am just trying to envision that.

KH: Well there was a fence, the school building was sitting here going toward Caney Creek next to the school yard was a house that the principal of the school lived in. Over the fence was the church property and there was the church building sitting there, so they were probably two football fields apart.

JG: A couple hundred yards apart, okay right close by. So, was this...we are looking at a circa 1930 photograph of the Concord School. Is this the school that was near the church?

KH: It was.

JG: In fact, I think I see a building in the background there would that have been the church?

KH: No, probably not. Well now...

MH: It looks like it can.

KH: It looks... maybe it was.

JG: I just now noticed that. So anyway, on that ridge, and you can kind of tell in this photo it looks like a little bit of a hill there, so on that little ridge there the church and the school were located.

KH: Okay wait a minute, see this roof right here behind here?

JG: Yes.

KH: That is the house where the school master lived.

JG: The school master lived, right.

KH: So that is the church right there.

JG: That is the church, well good. They were right there together. It looks like a pretty new building right there. It has a new roof on it too. Did you go to school in that building?

KH: I did not go in that building. That building burned while I was a young boy, four or five years old. I started to school in September of 1941, right before Pearl Harbor. (**JG:** okay) and that building had already burned and been replaced. I started in the new building, but I'm not even sure I was the first class to go in that building. I think it was one in front of me, which would mean I must not have been over about 4 years old when my father saw smoke one day and took off to go over and find out, came back and said the old school had burned down.

JG: Of course, it wasn't really an old school building at the time it was pretty new, wasn't it?

KH: I am not sure but what that might have been built by... I don't know, maybe CCC, [Civilian Conservation Corps] no that wouldn't have been. It would be before that.

JG: Yes, it would have been before that.

KH: But I have no idea how old that was; my mother went to school there see.

JG: Oh okay.

KH: I guess my dad too.

JG: Talk about some of those early memories that you had of going to school.

KH: Well, most of us around where I lived in there, I lived about a mile probably away from there, probably about a mile and a half, we walked to school. And packed our lunch in a bag, and in fact on more than one occasion we carried what we called a chow-chow sandwiches in my bag to school. I never forget one hot summer day, one of mine spoiled and I got sick as a dog on that sandwich and from that day forward I hated onions for years and years and years. I would never eat another chow-chow sandwich or onions. Many years later, in 1955 I got married, my wife loved onions in everything and she was always amazed because the minute I put my spoon in my mouth I spotted those onions and I would pull them out and she couldn't believe I could taste onions that well, but boy my system just revolted. And we carried our lunch

And so we would meet in class as I said, several class age groups in each room. As I recall there was three classrooms, a kitchen and a small storage area. We usually ate our lunch in one of those classrooms, maybe in one we were meeting in. They would feed us by classes...groups. They didn't just loosen us all at once and they prepared some food there, but I remember carrying mine most of the time in those early days. I suppose I don't remember whether you had to pay money in those days for that food, but I always had a sandwich with me most all the time. We would eat our sandwich and there would be recesses along between class periods and we would go outside and play out there. One of the favorites in the early days was deers and dogs for the boys.

RD: Yes.

JG: Say that again.

KH: Deer (d-e-e-r) and dogs. Some of us would be the deer and some would be the dogs chasing us.

RD: Usually two dogs.

JG: Deer and dogs, huh?

KH: Yes, we would run, and they would chase us (laughter).

RD: Had two bases Jonathan, one over here and one over here and a long distance apart and deer would all accumulate on one base, which would usually be a big tree and then the two dogs would start out in the center, and you had to go from here to this tree and escape the pursuing dog and if they touched you, you became a dog. So then as the dog herd grew the deer herd diminished. (laughter)

JG: What was your favorite? Did you like being the dog or a deer?

KH: Well I think we all wanted to be deer, but some of us were not fast enough to stay that way very long. (laughter) But then we had that red-rover, red-rover and we would line up holding hands you know in two teams, and they usually sent their biggest bully you know to run through and break through our arms. So that was another one.

JG: Did the boys and girls play together or were y'all separated?

KH: Well it depended, very often they were separated. Then for boys we played mummy peg. We had knives, we all brought knives with us in those days and we played mummy peg with those knives. Then we played marbles. And we would bring marbles with us and we would draw a circle and put marbles out in the center you know and then you get back outside the line and shoot and if you could knock that marble out of the circle you got to keep it. We would actually take each other's marbles away from one another through that game.

MH: And if your momma found out you were playing for keeps you were in trouble.

RD: That game was called keeps!

KH: Yes.

JG: What about basketball?

KH: Well down there we didn't have it, but the teachers would set up a net and we would do volleyball outside.

JG: I see in a lot of the old photos there is always an basketball backboard, it looks like there is one over here. So, y'all didn't just play it for fun, I mean not necessarily organized teams or anything, but you don't remember anything about basketball?

KH: I do not remember the basketball for some reason, but I do remember volleyball though.

JG: Volleyball okay. Again, did the girls and boys play together or...?

KH: Some of the games they did, but a lot of them played separate, as I recall in those days.

JG: Okay, now when it was really cold, or the weather was bad what did y'all do then? Did y'all just not have recess or did y'all do something inside?

KH: Well we had, of course all the clothes we could pile on probably, and I'm very vague about that, but I remember standing around the heater a whole lot during then. We were supposed to go outside, I do remember that, if the weather was not raining or something, or sleeting or snowing, which it rarely was. It would be raining more than anything else, but I remember hanging around that wood stove in there pretty much in cold weather.

JG: Now did the students collect the firewood for the stove? Do you remember anything about that?

KH: I don't remember anything about that. I don't believe they did. I think we had somebody referred to as a janitor who made sure we had...I'm not sure how that all came about.

JG: What about fishing did any of y'all do fishing in the creeks?

KH: We fished. Fishing was something we did a lot of. During the early, early Depression years, my father could not get any work otherwise and he actually caught fish in the river and took them out in the community and sold them to pick up a little money from time to time. So later on, as I came along, and my brother, we fished regularly.

JG: In the river?

KH: In the river, Angelina River ran through a few miles back there.

JG: It wasn't far away was it?

KH: Ultimately my father bought a hundred plus acres of land that fronted on the Angelina River and it had a bed of Texas soft coal that came out into the river from under our property there and the river in the summer time would come up and push up over that and be real shallow. We would go down there and play all along that but...

JG: Now what are you saying coal?

MH: Texas soft coal.

KH: It was tested a couple of times and not considered usable, it was too low grade, so they never did mine any of it, but we owned that after World War II. My dad earned

money in the shipyard during that period from '41 until the war was over, World War II, and they bought that hundred acres of land down there.

JG: Now how would y'all fish or how did your dad fish in the Depression?

KH: All right, they made homemade boats out of cypress lumber. And so they had an old boat and he would use what they called drop lines or trot lines and put five or six hooks on there and anchor them in, tie on a limb and drop the ends of them off in the pot holes in the river and so forth, and we kept doing it that way right on through. Until they ruled them illegal, they would build nets and anytime there was a flood or something, they would put those nets out in that muddy, muddy water...

JG: Are those hoop nets?

KH: Hoop nets, yes.

RD: Illegal.

KH: Of course, they declared those illegal at some point, so they quite using them. By the time I was old enough to fish with my dad, we never used one of those anymore. But we made our own boat. My dad and I built one of our boats our self out of cypress lumber and we would go down and as I say we would run our lines with that. Well fishing was pretty serious business then. When you put your hooks out we'd just stay there with them, put up some kind of a shelter or something, make a big pot of coffee, run our lines about every three hours. We would bait them and so forth and catch fish. Of course, by the time I was old enough, he wasn't selling fish anymore. My dad worked in the lumber business and timber and he and his brother finally bought a sawmill along with one of their uncles and they cut crossties for the railroad through my later childhood. But once the war was over, nylon had become available and we would use nylon lines for our fishing lines. We would put those in the river and we fished often enough we wouldn't ever pull them up. Anytime we wanted to catch fish we would just go bait them, go back the next day, take the fish off and if we had all we wanted we would just leave them and go our way until we were ready to go back and bait them again later some other day. So, that is how we did it. Every year on the fourth of July though, my whole family, my uncles, aunts, the whole bunch had every year a big fourth of July campout. We would go down on the river and they would load up the wagon with teams. Mosquito bars... everybody had made bars out of netting to put over a quilt. We would throw a quilt on the ground sleep on that under those mosquito bars.

JG: How affective were they?

KH: Well if nobody pulled them up they were good.

JG: They were good. (laughter)

KH: After the kids went in and out a few times, which we always did, they were very often a many of them trapped inside.

MH: Biting you!

KH: My mother and the one of the other women were pretty much jokers.

JG: Jokers? Practical jokers!?

KH: Practical jokers. So when I was a pretty young boy, they went down there with the wagons and teams, and of course when we got down there they unhooked the teams and usually they pulled the harness off and put long ropes on the mules and stuff and let them graze out there out of the camp. But the harness was always hanging there, you know, around on the wagon or something. So, my mother and one of the other women who was of the same mind one night snuck around, got some of that harness and put it on their selves and went outside the camp and came running into the camp rattling that harness. Well some of the other women were outside hollering, "Oh my god the mules are running away! They're running through the camp!" and of course everybody left was jumping up and running all directions and that memory stuck with everybody and every year from that point on, "you better keep your eye on Era Grace," and I don't remember, my Aunt Mammy, R.K. Mott's wife, "no telling what they liable to do next around here."

MH: Try to top it!

JG: How long would you stay out there on those trips? Just one night?

KH: Oh, we would usually stay out there two or three nights.

JG: Two or three nights.

KH: As a matter of fact, on the 4th of July, we always had watermelons, we had a small farm and my father always made sure that his melons were ready if possible by mid-June, and we would have plenty of melons. And then Willie Jones, who was married to my mother's sister, and Earnest Jones, who was married to my father's sister, the Jones family, some of the Hopson family, the Hensarling family, goodness I don't know, and the Mott families, the whole bunch of us, I'm talking 25-30 people maybe more with the kids. But usually Willie Jones or Earnest Jones would come out and go over to the store and buy ice cream in one of those big paper buckets, half can, and they would bring that along with a whole bunch of ice, pack it in ice, bring it back and on the fourth of July we would have that ice cream and watermelons. We would end that day, take camp down and everybody go on back to whatever they were doing, farming or logging or whatever they happened to be doing at that point. [cell phone ringing] I'm sorry I meant to turn that thing off. That wasn't a call I wanted to get. (laughter)

JG: Talk about just a little bit more, about Concord and your family coming there and about that name. What is the origins of that name of Concord?

KH: Well, you mentioned it dating all the way back to the early days on the east coast, but I'm not real sure why or how that got named Concord. It started out as Mott...

JG: Mott, okay.

KH: ...back there because the Motts were among those early settlers. The Hensarlings came as well about the same time. They migrated from Mississippi there. In fact it was news to me, to find out my great grandfather was postmaster there. I did not know that.

JG: That was Jesse, the first postmaster of Mott.

KH: Jess C. My great grandfather, he was also a pastor and he was among the founding members of Concord Church, along with his wife's father, his father-in-law, and other family members. They were Davis's and they were among that small group that formed Concord Church in 1860. Which means they got there a little before that, I don't know how much earlier than that.

JG: So, it is possible the name of the church then was applied to the community?

KH: That might be a possibility, but I can't be sure because I don't remember anyone ever explaining that to me. However, the history based on our Hensarling portion of that family, was that an old German, I believe his name was Luz, L-u-z, came from...we always were told Hamburg, Germany, along with his son by the name of Louis. Louis was a young boy, and they came in at New York evidently, and somehow or another they ended up...

MH: In Mississippi.

KH: In Mississippi, and I'm not nearly enough familiar with the details to say for sure. I think Luz, the old man, died probably before they got to Mississippi. I think it was Louis who ended up as a young man coming through New Orleans maybe, and migrated up the Mississippi River near... that little town most of them lived in was Petal.

JG: Was what?

KH: P-e-t-a-l or something like that, Petal. It is right outside of...

MH: Oh, you mean in Mississippi?

KH: Yes.

MH: It was Jones County, is what it was, which has a history all its own.

KH: Yeah, they were in Jones County, the nearest big city though. It is not Vicksburg...it's Hattiesburg.

JG: Hattiesburg.

KH: Right outside of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, yes. And, from there, three of Louis's sons migrated over into East Texas. My grandfather, Jesse C., his brother Tommy, and one other I think his name was Abraham.

MH: Abe.

KH: Abe they called him. My grandfather stayed there. Abe went on to Brazos County, so you have some Hensarling's up there. Tommy stayed around in the area of San Augustine County, maybe, so you have some in that area and some over in Woodville, part of Tommy's family, but my grandfather Jesse C.'s, basically all stayed around in Concord area there.

JG: Were they land owners? Did they come and buy land?

KH: Yes.

JG: Did they buy from others or did any of them get headrights from the state? I meant to look and see, but I forgot.

KH: I don't know how they did that.

MH: I believe Louis got a headright from the state. I believe I have seen that. I may be in error but...

JG: Okay, okay.

KH: I don't remember otherwise. I know almost between Concord School and Plum Ridge...

JG: That is going south then.

KH: ...going south toward Jasper, the Hensarling Cemetery was located down there on property that apparently some of that family, my grandfather's family bought and owned.

JG: Nearer to Plum Ridge or just in that direction?

KH: About half way between and the school and Plum Ridge.

JG: But they didn't live there?

KH: Well, my grandfather's sister married a fellow by the name of Jesse King, K-i-n-g. They lived on the old home place there that was right by the big cemetery.

JG: Okay. Which cemetery?

KH: The Hensarling Cemetery

JG: The Hensarling Cemetery, okay.

KH: Now up in Concord, and right near where Mott settled, and Mott had a little store and so forth there, was the Mott Cemetery. And the Hopson's and Motts were buried in that, and the Hensarlings and all down around in there, Kings and different ones were buried down in the other one.

RD: But they've all been moved out on the Jasper highway now.

KH: All of those were moved up there to the present location. In fact, there is either six or seven cemeteries relocated in that spot there by where that present church location is, that came out of Sam Rayburn Lake.

MH: Didn't they try to keep the ones who were buried together in the same area?

KH: Yes, they marked them off in separate areas.

JG: Were you still around when they did the moving of the...

KH: No.

JG: Okay, okay.

KH: All that took place after I had gone.

JG: Let's talk a little bit about how your ancestors, and that includes even your parents, but how did they earn a living? How did they live?

KH: I don't know about...well my great grandfather apparently was the postmaster and I'm not sure what else he did. He was also a preacher. In fact, the last 9 years he was alive, he was a pastor of the Concord Baptist Church. My grandfather, his son, Samuel Harrison was a log cutter.

JG: Log cutter. Did he work for a particular company, or did he...?

KH: I never found out that, but let me tell you this, he had a partner. They worked together for years and his partner's name was Harrison Frazier.

JG: Frazier.

KH: Harrison Frazier was a black man that lived in that black community between Boykin Springs and Bowden Lake area.

MH: What was this? (reference to Richard Donovan's expression)

JG: He knows a lot about the Frazier's. So let me back up a little bit. Tat was your grandfather and a black man were partners. What do you mean by partners?

KH: Well a cross cut saw has got two handles, and you got to have somebody pull one end of it while you pull the other and they were teamed up as partners and I remember my grandfather talking about the fact they partnered together for years.

JG: Now what was thought of that? A white man and a black man working together?

KH: Well, let me just say that my family had lots of friends in the black community. We fished and hunted with some of them and apparently because of my grandfather and his relationship with Mr. Frazier, we never thought anything about it. Now during cotton picking time, my father tried to raise cotton a couple of years, he hired some of those black boys to come pick cotton and my mother tells it, I was very young then, that was my really young days, I wouldn't eat with Momma and Daddy. I insisted on sitting out there and eating with those black boys who had been there picking cotton. So, our family never had a problem. As a matter of fact, the black church down there at that Boykin Community, which is what they called that area, and the Concord church, when either one of them had revivals, they went and sat in each other's churches and sang and praised the Lord together.

JG: So not just in the buildings, same building, but the congregations were together, is that what you are saying?

KH: Well we would go as a large group when they were having special meetings at their church and sit with them in their building.

MH: Join in.

KH: Join in...

JG: And they would come to your church.

KH: And they would show the same...protracted meetings is what they called them in those days, because they were going to last several days. They never knew when they were going to end. In those days, they would start one of those meetings and man the

hooping and shouting and hallelujah and people getting saved lasted, they would just keep going.

JG: Were these in the evenings?

KH: They would do it in the summer after they laid the crops by.

JG: After when?

MH: After they had laid their crops.

KH: After they laid the crops, waiting for harvest, they would have their meetings sometime in June or July along in there. And, they would meet in the evenings. Of course, on Saturdays and Sundays they met in the morning. I don't remember whether they met during the morning during the week or not.

JG: Now would these be special preachers traveling that would come to like these...

KH: It was usually somebody they knew that they invited to come over and preach those services during that time. Later on, because of that type of thing, a group of vocational evangelists who didn't do anything else but go from church to church in Texas.

JG: Now was this during your life time or before?

KH: Yes, my lifetime.

JG: So this would be 30's and 40's?

KH: Forties and fifties.

JG: Into the fifties, so the white community or some church members, would go and hear a black revival preacher?

KH: Yes.

JG: How common or rare was that? Do you have any experience with that Mr. Donovan?

RD: No, because there were absolutely no blacks in the Zavalla area. The closest one was ten or twelve miles down to the settlement that he is describing. Now the blacks came to the stores and intermingled in the stores and everything, you know, freely, but they left town early in the afternoon and they were gone.

JG: So, what he just said was pretty rare? Is that what you are saying?

MH: I think it was pretty rare.

JG: I would think it would be.

RD: I would say that would be extremely rare.

MH: I grew up in Brazos County and that was certainly not the case that that happened. I mean the blacks were in a certain area and the whites were in another area and we didn't go to each other's churches.

RD: I can see that both of those were isolated areas and were reasonably close to each other, and they kind of depended on each other at different times, so I can see a relationship building there.

JG: Is there anything else you can talk about that? Because that is very interesting. How many would go... of the white community would go to the black church and how many of the blacks would go?

KH: Well it certainly wasn't the entire church, because quite frankly the entire church wouldn't even come to their own church. (laughter)

JG: Unless they sat on a stump and drank whiskey huh? (laughter) Were there any whiskey drinkers that went to the black church?

KH: I don't believe so, probably not.

MH: That you knew of.

KH: I didn't know about it if they did because there, they would actually go inside and join in the singing and so forth.

JG: Right, right.

KH: But I'm thinking probably 15-20 would go that I remember.

JG: And your family was among them?

KH: I was one of them.

JG: Did any whites ever preach in the black church and the blacks preach in the white church?

KH: I don't remember whether they did or not because frankly I don't remember a single one of those sermons (laughter) or who was preaching. And, that is bad because I'm a pastor and have been now for 51 years. (laughter)

JG: What about the music, describe the instruments and things like that?

MH: Can I speak to that? I just was thinking all the time he was talking about the preaching crossed over, it was the music that crossed over. I can remember as a child and this would have been for me in the early forties, probably during World War II. My friend lived across from a black church and there were good climbing trees in her front yard and we would climb up in those trees and listen to the black church singing and I know it affected my music. She and I sang together afterwards all the way through our teenage years and I know that a lot of the sound that I had in my voice was from listening to that and it becoming a part of me. So yes, I think there was a definite influence there.

KH: My memory of that is very vague because I was pretty young, but we sang basically the same songs. It's just the way in which we did it was different. We joined right in with them and we could sing the same songs with them, but it was no way we could ever make them sound exactly the same way! But by the way, in those early days, my grandmother and some of the older women were prone to shouting and things that would just be a no-no in today's congregations, so they weren't much difference in what we went to in the black church when we got out there.

JG: What about was there a piano?

KH: Yes, they had a piano.

JG: They... both churches?

KH: Both churches, yes.

MH: Yes, everybody that is the first thing they bought.

JG: An upright piano?

KH: Yes, an upright piano.

JG: Okay, was there guitars?

KH: I do not remember one, but they may have been before there was ever a piano. I don't remember that far back. My memory always was there was an upright piano and somebody to play it. In fact, my sister, mother and dad had her take piano lessons and she became a church pianist before ...in her lifetime, for a long time.

JG: So the same songs, or pretty close, but just different styles.

KH: Different styles and we sang out of those paperback songbooks.

JG: Were they shaped notes?

KH: Yes, they were shaped notes. In fact, my dad taught singing school in the community there at Concord.

JG: What school?

KH: Singing.

JG: Singing, oh okay I'm sorry.

KH: By shaped notes and it was do-ra-me-fa-so-lah-tee-doh!

MH: My dad did the same thing.

RD: Did y'all ever sing during school hours together, within the schoolroom?

KH: Seems to me we may have.

RD: Yes, I think so, you probably did and you sing church songs.

KH: Yes, yes. I'm not remembering much of that, but it seems like we certainly did. Always said the pledges and all that stuff back then. I was a very young boy then, you know. (laughter)

MH: Well at least you can still remember it.

KH: And some things I do remember but there is a lot of things I'm not sure I do.

JG: Anything else about your school years that you can remember? I'm trying to think of some questions to ask about that. You talked about walking to school. You talked about your lunches, recess, any particular subjects or teaching styles or particular teachers or any other events that happened at school that would have been memorable times? Did y'all celebrate Mayday? Was there a Maypole or anything like that?

KH: We had Maypole I believe I remember doing that. I have a few memories that were not very pleasant. I'm not sure you want to hear about those.

JG: Well...

KH: You may want to cut them out of your tape, but my father and mother bought me a very nice winter jacket one year. It was heavy like wool fabric. I wore it to school and it disappeared. (snaps fingers) In the room, it was warm and we hung them up in the back. It disappeared and nobody knew what happened to it. My poor old coat was gone and the principal of the school finally found the jacket. One of the boys had lifted it off and taken

it back to the back of the campus to the boy's restroom, we had those open toilets, threw it down in one of them and the principal found it.

JG: So it was a pit toilet?

KH: Yes, a pit toilet. He fished it out, cleaned it up and took it to a professional cleaner, had it completely redone, cleaned up and everything and brought it back and gave it back to us because we couldn't afford, my parents couldn't afford to buy another one. They didn't have that much money. So, I went back wearing it but the boy who did that couldn't keep his mouth shut about it, so pretty soon other people in the school knew what had happened and knew where that coat had been. So, I put up with a whole lot of...

MH: Bullying!

KH: Bullying, ugliness as a result.

RD: What was that boys last name? I just thought maybe I knew him.

KH: I was never told the name of the boy that did that. I did not know and I'm glad I wasn't. No one ever told me who did that. To this day I don't know. I do know that after that very often I was skinny and frail. I didn't weigh much over 98 pounds soaking wet in those days and young for the age grade I was in school because I had skipped grades growing up. But during recess time after that event, any number of times instead of me being involved in play out there, one of those bullies would grab me, swing me on the ground and sit on me and I couldn't get loose from him, couldn't get up, and he would get tired of sitting on me he would call one of his buddies over and he would sit down on me and now you can get up and go play awhile. Now obviously that didn't happen every day, but it happened way, way too many times to make me happy. So, my brother who was also behind me in school but because he didn't get those double promotions was way behind me. When did you graduate?

RD: In '54.

KH: Yes, see I graduated in '51, so my brother was 3 years behind. Well I complained a lot to my parents about the way I was being treated. It wasn't much anybody could do about it.

JG: Did you have any older siblings?

KH: No I didn't. I was the oldest, so my brother who heard all this and even witnessed some of it, decided that would never happen to him.

RD: And he was a pretty good-sized boy, too.

KH: He was a pretty good size boy. Well, in those days all of us carried knives to school because we played mummy peg with them. One of those bullies decided to do to him what they had been doing to me. And so my brother just reached in his pocket, pulled out his knife, flipped it open and stabbed the boy through his hand.

MH: He would go to jail for that now.

KH: Well of course that caused no small stir, to use the words of the Apostle Paul, (laughter) in the school. The principal took the knife away from him and gave it back to my father and insisted he not bring it back to school. But my brother boasted for the rest of our life, and he is dead now by the way, that he did not let them bully him like his older brother did.

JG: Now this younger brother, what was his name?

KH: Kelly.

JG: Kelly.

KH: Yes.

JG: And you went to school with him right Mr. Donovan, in Zavalla?

RD: Yes.

KH: His first name was Albert, Albert Kelly. I don't have a middle name; mine was Kenneth only.

JG: Kenneth okay, and Albert Kelly. Where did you get your drinking water?

KH: Well, my earliest memories, we had a big huge tank sitting under the eave of the house at a point where it came together and the down drain came and rain water ran off the roof into that.

JG: So like a cistern?

KH: An above the ground cistern. We didn't really drink that unless we absolutely didn't have anything else, then we would boil it. But we would walk from there down to my grandparents and they had a large well with a bucket and we would go down there with a bucket, empty, and fill it with well water and carry it back. That is my earliest memories about water.

JG: So that was the drinking water. Did you bathe in the cistern water?

KH: We bathed in the cistern water.

MH: Washed clothes in it.

KH: At least every Saturday. I mean you know you had to have a Saturday bath.

JG: So y'all didn't have a well then at your house?

KH: Not then.

JG: Okay.

KH: And a couple of places we always got it from my grandmother. At first, we were closer to my father's parents and got it from that well. Later on, we moved to a little house that belonged to my mother's mother. Her father had died when I was a baby or right before I was born and we'd get it from her well. After World War II, after my dad bought some property, we built a home on it. In fact, I'm living right now in the house that my mother and dad and myself built in 1947 after World War II. We had a well that we dug. My father dug it. And then before or after I was gone from home I guess we got electricity when I was a senior in high school, the REA [Rural Electrification Administration] came out there to Concord.

JG: The REA?

KH: Yes, he had a well drilled then and a pump put on it, a deep well. And my father, we had an outhouse out in the back down there, but when I was bringing my fiancé home for the first time ever, my father put some pipe from out of the well into the house onto the porch to fill the water bucket and put in a little room inside the house for a bathroom. The one you know about right now.

MH: Yes.

JG: So you were in Concord when the electricity came or Jasper?

KH: Yes, Concord.

JG: Concord, okay. What is your memories of some... what about lighting? Do you remember that?

KH: Oh yes!

JG: And the difference it was.

KH: We had a coal oil...well the old carbide systems...

JG: Carbide?

KH: Carbide.

MH: C-a-r-b-i-d-e.

JG: Okay.

KH: Had pretty much run their course. They had deteriorated pipes and all that and it was several of those old systems around with remnants of lighting often times on the porch and places, but I don't remember ever really trying to use that. We pretty much had gotten past that, so it was Kerosene lamps. And then I remember man we really went uptown when we got that lantern that had a wick...not a wick, but had a little mesh. You remember that?

RD: Yes.

MH: Coleman lantern.

KH: A Coleman type lamp.

RD: A silk stocking hanging down.

KH: Yes, a stocking hanging down in there.

JG: The mantle.

KH: The mantle and that thing was much brighter than an old kerosene with a wick. And, we used those and in the church house, there was some posts up and down the center of the church, about three of them, and they had a little shelf built out and we put one of those lamps on each one of those to light up inside of there. That is how it worked in those days.

JG: So tell about when electricity came.

KH: When electricity came, one of my dad's cousins was an electrician. He wired our house and they just ran the wire out and ran it down through the ceiling and light bulbs...

JG: Just hanging light bulb.

KH: hanging off there with a pull chain on it.

JG: No fixture just a bulb.

KH: No fixture, nothing, just a raw bulb hanging down and almost no plugin's anywhere, but a few.

RD: Well you could screw a socket in your thing and then screw the light bulb into that socket.

KH: Yes plug into that. I remember my mother got her very first ever refrigerator after that and between the time I graduated from high school. I told you I went to Pineywoods Business College and got trained in something called Traffic Management. The professor or teacher, Pat Scoggins ran that school. I. H. Costen who had been a superintendent of Lufkin schools I believe, had retired and had now gone himself I believe to the University of Chicago and had been taught Transportation Management, came back and they offered that course. At that time Dr. Costen said the schools, only three in the country even offered that training. The University of Chicago, Pineywoods Business College, and the University of Houston. And what they taught us to do, now there may have been others but Pat didn't know about them, was how to read Interstate Commerce Commission tariffs and work for a transportation company. Well anyway, I had gone from there to Houston back home and my mother in the meantime had gotten her first ever refrigerator and she was so proud of it.

MH: Oh yes.

KH: I went hunting one day. Came in, had my shotgun and always unloaded it outside the house and brought it in and so forth, sit it over in the corner. My mother came, in saw the gun, and she said to me, "Did you unload that gun?" I said, "yes I did momma." She said, "listen let's don't take a chance. I don't want a hole shot in my ceiling. Check that gun." Well, it was a 12-gauge pump shotgun so I picked it up and pulled the bridge open and when I did a shell went right in the barrel, it hadn't been emptied by the way, and when that happened my mother said, "you're going to shoot a hole in my ceiling" she put her hand on the barrel of the gun and put it down and it went off and shot a hole right in the bottom of her new refrigerator door. (laughter)

JG: Now how old were you?

KH: Well see I was...

MH: Old enough to know better.

KH: I wasn't 18 yet because I had not left to work for the railroad. I was around 17 years old then. Well praise the Lord that was an old Philco refrigerator and it was made out of pure steel and that bullet blew a hole in the outside of that door but there was all the...

JG: The shot and everything

KH: ...the shot and everything accumulated right there and it had not penetrated the door.

JG: Wow!

KH: So we went right then and stuffed newspapers and everything in there (laughter). My mother found some duct tape or something and we taped over that. She painted it with white paint (laughter) and after her death, years later in Jasper, after they had moved their home from the lake to Jasper, I retired that refrigerator and got rid of it. She had moved it, and bought a new one, out into the back of her storage room there.

MH: She didn't get rid of it.

KH: I finally got rid of it myself after her death.

JG: (laughter) Well still kind of jumping back a little bit, but did your family have any livestock?

KH: We owned livestock on that farm we had a 20-acre field we grew crops in.

JG: Twenty acres of field?

KH: A 20-acre field out of the 100.

JG: What crops did you grow?

KH: We grew corn, soy beans, a patch of lespedeza hay, peanuts, and lots of watermelons. Man, we would have a mighty big watermelon patch ever year.

JG: Did you grow the same things in the same places every year or did you rotate them?

KH: No we rotated them around.

JG: Okay.

KH: It was sandy land soil in the river bottom. And the back side of it, right over our fence was an old slough and very often the rainy season it would come out into our field on that side. It was real sandy. We did plant our peanuts over there, but the watermelons, corn and soy beans we swapped those back and forth among the rest of the field.

JG: So did the slough flood into the field occasionally?

KH: Every now and then.

JG: Would it subside pretty fast or would it stay awhile?

KH: It might stay there three, four, or five days.

JG: Okay.

KH: And be gone. As I got older my dad and his brother and uncle owned a sawmill, so he turned farming over to me. At first, we had a big pair of what he called Persian horses and they pulled our plows and...

JG: Did you say Persian horses?

KH: They were huge.

MH: Were they Percherons?

KH: Yes, that is what they were they were Percherons.

MH: He called them Persian.

KH: Big old feet about that big, and they both weighed somewhere between 1500 to 1800 pounds apiece.

JG: And how many did you have?

KH: Two of them. So, I plowed with them for a long time and then finally my dad bought a 1950 model Farmall Cub (tractor) and I put in a plot or two with that one. I well remember the last crop I ever put in. I put the crop in, laid it by, finished it off, had corn, watermelons and so on, not sure I had any soy beans that year, we didn't grow soy beans every year. We rotated them between the lespedeza hay because we used those soy beans actually for hay. I put my crop in and went to look for a job. I went first to my mother's kinfolks in Port Arthur area try to get on with the refinery.

JG: A refinery, yes.

KH: It started raining. I stayed nearly two weeks, applied two or three different places and never got a job there, came back home. When I got back home my dad said, "Well I have bad news." I said, "oh what is the bad news?" He said, "Well after the rains came the floods came and your brother and I..." we were on a hill, but right below went off into the river bottom. He said, "your brother and I launched our boat right past that sycamore tree right there in our pasture and we motored," by the way I had bought a little 5hp motor, and they had that and he said "we putted right down to the field fence and the water was so high above the fence that we just barely had to lift the motor up and went right over the top of the fence and went on down across your field. So now we will go down there and look at what is left. So, we went down to my field and I had watermelons that big and corn stalks and everything. All of it was laying on the lower end of my field. The fence was pushed over because all that crop was washed down against that fence. Gone, completely, that was my last year of farming. (laughter)

MH: Cured you, did it?

KH: That September I got a job with Southern Pacific Railroad in Houston.

MH: Never looked back.

JG: So this was in the late forties then when the flood came?

KH: That was in the early fifties.

JG: Early fifties, okay the flood.

KH: I went down there in '53 so that would have been...

JG: The spring of '53.

KH: Probably the spring of '53.

JG: That might have been the last rain that we had. (laughter) The fifties were pretty dry weren't they?

RD: That big drought lasted about 7 years, as I recall.

JG: Seven years. So that was the flood before the draught. So, you said you had the big horses but what about a cow did you have a milk cow? Did you have hogs?

KH: All right, let me back up once again. At Zavalla High School I was in Future Farmers of America and one day me and Joe Erwin.

JG: I'm sorry let me interrupt. So you went to high school after what eighth grade or ninth grade?

KH: After eighth grade, nine ten eleven and twelve were at Zavalla.

JG: Okay, I'm sorry go ahead I just wanted to clarify that.

KH: I was in Agriculture, FFA and Billy Joe Erwin was...our instructor was the name of Young. Remember him?

RD: Yes I do.

JG: What are you saying the name?

RD: Young.

JG: Young? Young.

KH: Was the ag teacher, but Billy Joe Erwin came...

JG: Billy Joe Evans?

KH: Erwin, E-r-w-i-n. He said guys we have an invitation to send some fellows to the Livestock Show and Rodeo at Houston enter a milking contest and I can take three of you, but here is the deal. If you win a calf you have to bring it back and you have to care for it, keep it groomed, fed and kept, and you have to take it back the next year and show it. But it will be a female and you don't have to sell it, in fact they don't want you to sell it. They want you to start your own herd. So, anybody in here volunteer to do that? So, three of us did. Me and Whiz Boulware and I don't know who the third one was.

JG: Is that Boulware?

MH: Yes.

KH: We went, mother had a milk cow, and she let me practice a little bit and so we took off. There were 24 boys, but only 12 winners.

JG: Twenty-four boys and 12 winners.

KH: Twelve winners. And they had these cows out there and the cows had halters on them and somebody was basically, I think they were holding the cow's halters.

JG: How were you assigned the cows?

KH: You weren't. They lined 24 of us up in a row in the rodeo arena at Houston and when the gun fired you went out there, found you a milk cow, hoped she had milk, and you had a milk bottle. You had to pull past the line and run back. I came back across the line number 3 out of the winners. Billy Joe Erwin and us had found the calves back in the back before the thing and judged them according to our standards, they were jersey heifers and chosen the top three of them.

JG: You knew who their momma was?

KH: No we didn't know anything about them other than the characteristics of the calf as we looked at it. So, when I came in number 3 I immediately found what was our number one choice and she had not been taken and I grabbed her halter. Whiz won, all three of us won calves by the way.

JG: Well I want to know more about the milk contest. Tell me more how that worked. You had to run and get the cow.

KH: We had to run out there to the cow, find her and then you had to squat down there and milk the bottle so full, and then bring the bottle back to the judge. The foam didn't count it had to be real milk.

JG: The foam didn't count, it had to be real milk.

KH: Now some of the cows gave more milk than others. Some of the boys said they just couldn't get enough milk to qualify, but of course with 12 winners there wasn't any more anyway so it was over.

JG: But you practiced on your family's milk cow?

KH: Milk cow, yes, that is a whole other story by the way.

MH: Which you don't have time to tell.

KH: I showed my calf the next year and brought her back home. She turned into a fantastic milk cow. She would give 4 gallons of milk every day.

RD: My goodness!

KH: We had milk, we were giving milk, everybody making butter out of it, drinking buttermilk. You remember now, mother just got her refrigerator about that time. Before that when we milked the cow we put it in a syrup bucket, let it down in the wells to keep it cool.

JG: So it was a jersey calf that you got. And what did you breed her with?

MH: Tell him how many you ended up with in your herd, too.

KH: Well we found another registered...because she was registered and had paperwork on her, we found another registered...Billy Joe Erwin helped us do that.

JG: A jersey bull?

KH: A bull and we bred her with that and I had calves and I ended up, I forget, 16 or 18 head but that wasn't all.

MH: His own little herd.

KH: But that wasn't all, because a year after that he got invite for anybody that wanted to go to a calf scramble at the Nacogdoches County Fair, so I volunteered. And once again it was going to be a female, only this time instead of a Jersey, it was a Hereford, white face. I went up there and that time it was much bigger. This time there were going to be 24 winners and 48 guys chase them cows out there and they were big old jerseys,

small calves, whatever out there. They fired the gun and we had the same thing. They were out there in the arena and we just all ran out through there and grabbed a calf if you could, threw him down, put a harness on his head and drag him back down to the judges. Well it was a scramble...you can imagine, I mean 48 guys with 24 yearlings out there. I grabbed one and trying to put my halter on it and some big old boy ran up there and elbowed me off of him, took him over, so I hopped up ran and got me another and got him down and when I got him over the line, or her, whatever it was, I found that it had bit the end of my finger off. It was dangling.

JG: His finger was dangling. (laughter)

KH: So I cleared that hurdle at the fire department right across the street, Billy Joe took me over there and they bandaged up my finger and got me fixed up with that. Well now I had a Hereford, had to bring her back the next year and show her, so part of my herd I had to breed her with the registered Hereford bull, keep those separated. I had no bulls in my herd.

JG: You were in the beef and the milk business.

KH: I was in the beef and milk business and by the time they were telling us we had to clear our land I was married in Houston. My herd was still there with my folks. My dad had a few more than I did. I think he had 27 head by then, so we were forced to sell that off but there was no place for us to keep the cattle. The whole country was being bought up by the government, so I had to sell my herd.

JG: Talking about the lake and the Corps of Engineers and the lake. So, talk about that a little bit. What do you remember about that?

RD: Yes, I would like to hear about that.

KH: I don't have much memory because by now remember I'm married, I've been in the Army and come back and...

JG: But your dad negotiated with them, right?

KH: My dad was still living there. In fact, my oldest two boys, I have a picture of them, little bitty boys dressed in hunting gear just before my dad had to sell that property and move the house out from there. And, where was I about that time...in any case we had to get rid of the herd, sold those off. The price for cattle about that time... it may have been the drought we were talking about, was dirt cheap. I hardly got any money. I don't remember what I got for my whole herd.

JG: So you had to sell them in the mid to late 50's and the drought was bad.

KH: Yes, the drought was bad, prices for cows... and besides that everybody that had any up in that area was having to do that. So, it was more like forced sale, and of course the same was happening with property by the way.

JG: Yes, what do you remember of that? Did your dad talk to you about that?

KH: Oh yes, that was not a pleasant experience. My dad had paid \$800 for that property.

JG: About how many acres was it?

KH: A 106 acres.

JG: 106.

KH: They paid \$800 for it. Very interestingly, about the time we were building our home, a timber company came in and agreed to buy his timber from him, the hardwood.

JG: Just the timber, uh-huh.

KH: The hardwood, he sold that hardwood for a thousand dollars, they paid him cash, had a contract. They had two years to cut the hardwood. Well, that river bottom would get wet and you couldn't log down in there in the wet weather and the two years passed and they never came and took one stick, so after two years he got the hardwood back. In fact, later on after he and his brother and uncle had the sawmill, they cut some of that hardwood timber. But, when they finally bought the property, the Corps of Engineers, they paid my dad a \$100 an acre for his land. They allowed him to buy his house back, the barns he left. He bought his house back for \$500, paid a mover to have it moved over to Jasper. After he...before he had it moved, he went over to Jasper but by then land prices, it took him almost two years for him to get his money, land prices had skyrocketed everywhere. **(RD: Exactly)** My dad was able to buy 5 acres of land about five miles out of downtown Jasper with a little two-bedroom house on it for the remainder of his money. By now it wasn't quite \$10,000 because he had to pay \$500 for the house and had to pay for it to be moved. So, his money was gone, when he bought 5 acres with that little house. Well he got his house, moved in there, set up, and they were living there and everything. My sister and her husband had decided to live in the little house, so they made arrangements with my parents to move in the little house. The highway then, [unintelligible] the highway department decided to widen Hwy 96 from Beaumont. By the way, it is now a four-lane divided highway from Beaumont all the way up to Hwy 255, about half way to Brookland where the road goes to both Toledo Bend and Sam Rayburn Dams, divided highway to there. But in so doing, my dad was on the high side of the road. The low side of the road just went off into Sandy Creek, so they came and bought about one acre of that five from my dad to divide the highway.

JG: So he lost land both times.

KH: So he lost land both times. And to be very honest my dad was very angry. He felt...in fact the way he said it was, "It seems to me that the government is following me around to take everything I've got." I'm sorry to say he became very bitter about that, and I wouldn't be surprised, but what it didn't cost him his life. Because the property line now came up to the porch of the little two-bedroom house. There was a set of rock and concrete steps extended over the property line. They were going to come out there and start clearing timber with a bulldozer and everything, so the highway people or whoever contacted him said, "If you would like for us to we will just come bulldoze those steps off the porch away from it, and you won't have to fool with it." My dad said, "no I believe if possible I would like to move them around to the end of the porch so I will do that myself." Him and my mother got out there and he took vacation, he was working now, the mill had long since been sold, he was working for Texas Co-op who handled creosote poles for all the power companies around there, creosote plant there in Jasper. He was working for them, took vacation, he was preaching a revival meeting at night, he was a pastor also part time, bivocational, he was preaching at Concord and took vacation to do that and move his steps. Wednesday morning of that week he went out there and discovered that those rocks cemented together; he couldn't move that. When he tried to move them they broke up so then he got his sledge hammer and shovels and stuff and beat around on that until he got exhausted. He said to Mom, "Mom take my tools and put them away." He had heart problem by the way a few months before, he said, "I'm going in the house, take a shower, go to town and get my heart medicine prescription refilled." She went and put the tools up walked in the house and my dad was dead on the sofa. But he was angry the whole time, it just so infuriated him.

RD: Do you remember J. T. Boykin?

KH: I do.

RD: He would cry in his old age anytime you mentioned it, that they took his land. You remember where his house was down there.

KH: Yes. Well, now I was married, living in Houston raising my family, so I didn't witness any of that. I did not witness R. K. Mott and several of them on the committee that found and help me locate all those cemeteries. I remember all of that was going on, but I was in the army for two years in '55 and '56, got out the end of '56, went back to work for the railroad, raising my young family. And...

MH: I think we of our generation don't realize how important land was to that generation. It was just what they were. It was their definition and just to lose it all like that without any recourse and not to be paid fairly for it and then just to have to give it up.

RD: That was a good price for it ten days before, but as soon as they started purchasing that land it skyrocketed everywhere else.

KH: It went off the map, yes.

MH: Exactly.

KH: And what was worse on my dad's property, there was a question about clear title for some reason back then, so they had to take that to court in Tyler and eventually they cleared the title. It's sad to say it was authentic and paid him but that was two years, now.

MH: And in the meantime, yes.

KH: And in two years land...I don't remember what the prices were now, but by him not being able to buy but 5 acres and that little house with the remainder of his \$10,000. They had it all up considerably.

JG: Talk a little bit about your father's sawmill.

KH: Well my father was in the logging business, cutting logs, hauling logs...

JG: Now your grandfather was the one that was the sawyer with the black man.

KH: My grandfather was the sawyer, the old-fashioned way.

JG: So your dad followed him?

KH: My dad followed him, but he actually worked in the woods crew and I don't think he did that much log cutting himself. He had other jobs working for these mills and stuff. My brother by the way went on to do the same thing and went on to be a millwright for a big sawmill down there in the Jasper area. But my father, his uncle Matthew Mott and his brother Hiram, three of them pooled together their resources and bought a small sawmill that primarily cut railroad crossties.

JG: So it was the Hensarling's and the Mott's?

KH: Right.

MH: As usual.

KH: And they put that sawmill on a piece of property owned by Matthew Mott, which was right there in the old Mott settlement. The original old Mott house was right over there in the woods behind the sawmill. The cemetery was right down the road past the sawmill and so they cut cross ties and sold them to an old man by the name of Clark, who had an operation here at Lufkin.

JG: What was his last name?

KH: Clark, C-l-a-r-k.

MH: Clark.

JG: Clark, okay.

KH: Clark, I think he was operating as Clark Tie Company and he bought ties from all these small mills up and down and sold them. And my dad and them delivered the ties to Zavalla, parked them along the railroad track there where the trains ran through there. I remember going up there as a younger boy even before that, Fortenberry Grocery Store, watching those steam engines pull those trains by there, you know. In those days, they had several every day that went down that track to Beaumont and they put those ties out there and stack them and that went on until about the time they were starting to buy up that property. I was working for Southern Pacific by now. A man over in Georgia invented a process. Up to that time a tie had to dry for a full year before they could creosote it and put in on the track, so they had surplus tie yards all over the railroads everywhere, all over the country. But this man in Georgia invented a process that they could put that in a container and pull a vacuum on it and draw the moisture out of that tie, turn around reverse the process with creosote and literally fire the creosote through the wood.

RD: You know we had one of those here.

JG: Was it pressure treatment?

RD: Yes.

KH: And when that happened wow, here is a years' worth of ties laying out there but they don't need a years' worth of ties anymore. They sent that process out these railroad companies grabbed that up all over the place and the tie market went boom. My dad and them started sending their stuff to the port to ship it overseas.

RD: The Lowery's did too.

KH: And sure enough then as timberland began to disappear, Dad and his brother sold their part of the mill to Matthew.

JG: Matthews?

KH: Yes, he had been their partner.

JG: Matthew Mott, okay.

MH: It was on his land.

KH: And then he finally sold it to someone else who dismantled it and somewhere I don't know where it went.

JG: So they cut mostly hardwoods?

KH: Mostly, although we cut pine.

JG: Because they could pressure treat pine, too right?

KH: Yes, and they had the same amount of lumber. Of course, Matthew found some people who would buy the lumber. My dad dealt with Mr. Clark on the tie part of it. Matthew had a couple of trucks haul finish product away. My dad had a couple of trucks to haul logs in and my Uncle Hiram ran the sawmill.

JG: Now were you around when the mill was running or were you already moved away then?

KH: I was still around for part of it.

JG: Part of it okay.

KH: Before I could get that job with the railroad, summer time I had worked in the back of that mill, pushing ties when they came off the roller bed here me and another man would lift them over onto a runway, which you kept slick with grease, and we would push them up to a point high enough they could load them onto the bed of a truck. We didn't have fork lifts.

JG: So they came out of the mill on rollers, a roller bed and you took them off the rollers and greased them up...

KH: Pushed them all the way up to the front...

JG: Up a little ramp or something?

KH: Yes.

JG: Okay.

KH: And the slabs and slips that came off it, we had a machine here that had a big drum being pulled by a belt off the motor, had teeth on it and you pitch the slab on that and it shot it out yonder into the far beyond you hoped! (laughter) Not back here on you!

RD: A boy in Zavalla threw one off and it came back and hit him in his voice and he never could talk anymore after that.

KH: Well I worked back there one summer, well actually I didn't work all summer because my dad had two drivers on his log truck. It was the summer right before I went, it was '53, right before I went to work for Southern Pacific, I asked my dad to let me drive because I have commercial driver's license. The first one I ever got, I took the test in a truck and so my dad hired me, but he told me he said now look I don't want you to bring a half a load of logs in here, you are going to have to work just as hard as any other man did. I want four loads of logs from where we are coming right now with our timber and I want four full loads of logs not half loads. Well I go out before daylight and haul those things in there all the way through until right before sundown I would have my fourth load. We loaded them with a mule team. An old man by the name of Williams, Arthur Williams, stood almost 7 feet tall and a bean pole, everybody called him High Pockets. (laughter) High Pockets was my mule skinner and we logged off of government property around Bouton Lake during that summer. The government would go and mark timber and sell the hardwood out of it.

JG: This would be Forest Service land?

KH: Yes, (**JG:** okay) and so I drove that summer after I left working in the back of the mill for about a couple of three months with my dad. I finally turned 18 in May and I had a friend working for Southern Pacific who was keeping me posted, he said, "I hear they are hiring you need to come down here." So, it was right at the first of September, late August, I said one day to Dad, "Dad I'm giving my notice; get you a driver." My Dad walked up to me stuck out his hand, "Shake my hand." I shook his hand. He said, "Son, I been waiting a long time to hear this. I don't want you making a living like this." I went to Houston and they hired me.

JG: For Southern Pacific?

KH: For Southern Pacific as a clerk.

JG: A Clerk.

KH: In Englewood yards...

JG: Englewood.

KH: ...out in Northwest Houston. I worked on the extra board from September but because I had that Transportation Management diploma from Pineywood's I had already talked to the yard master when he hired me and told him that I wanted an office job doing what I knew how to do, reading those tariffs.

JG: The tariffs, yes.

KH: In December about mid-December he called me in. He said, "I've got a proposition for you." He said, "Come January 1, there will not be the present extra board at all, I'm

having to cut it off December 31st and on January 1,” he said, “I’m cutting off” ever how many I forgot what he said, “of regular jobs and because of seniority those men are going to fill this board. I have an appointment set up for you in the sales office downtown for the Southern Pacific Railroad. I’m going to send you down there, you are going to talk to this man here, my advice to you son, get the job because otherwise you won’t have one with the railroad.” So, I went down for the interview. I got the job, moved in to the sales office of Southern Pacific there in downtown Houston and worked for them for the next several years.

JG: Seven?

KH: Well, several.

JG: Okay, several.

KH: I went to the Army, I got drafted through the draft board here in Lufkin, spent two years at the end of the Korean Conflict in the Army. I came back, and in those days when you got drafted your company would save your job, put you back to work so they did. Well I worked there for a good while. I was raising my family by now. I married my first three months, at the end of it in the Army I got married between basic training. I now had my first child already and my second one was on the way. I worked there until that job...I was enrolled at The University of Houston, night classes. The job got so hard that I was about to go out of my mind. In fact, at one point I was diagnosed with a brain tumor, and they were threatening to do brain surgery on me and it all turned out to be overwork, stress. I was on a complaint desk for the Houston switching district of Southern Pacific Railroad. I kept the phone at my ear 8 hours every day tracing lost cars all over the system.

JG: Lost cars, yes.

KH: Yes, rail cars. I would hang up, go to class two nights a week, come home and I would have phone calls waiting on me. My wife had already taken the numbers down for people who had to be home at night wanting me to find their car at night. I was so well known by the long-distance operators of the Southern Pacific, they had their own system by the way, that when I picked up the phone and called in, the operator well tell us who you want to talk to tonight. Well I need to call San Francisco, they found out I didn’t have a brain tumor, all I had was stress out. I resigned from the Southern Pacific and went to work as office manager for the sales office of Illinois Central. To make a long story short, I changed jobs a couple of times and wound up, my last job in that type of job was regional sales manager for Louisiana Arkansas Missouri Railroad. A small railroad owned by Olan Mathison Chemical Company located in Northern Louisiana and Arkansas. I was called to preach during that time and started pastoring a church, but I had to resign that job because when I told my clients, my shippers, that I now had been called to preach and I was no longer going to be able to take him to the night clubs that we hung out in and no longer going to be drinking booze with them in the restaurants, they all took

their business away from me for some strange reason. I had to leave the railroad and I went to work for another company selling business forms. I ended up finally back with the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad as office manager of their sales office and was with them for about two years and they reorganized completely, found out I had been a sales person, tried to force me to take a sales job, but between the time they were about to make me take a job in Kansas, my first full-time church called me to be their pastor. I no longer had to work a job other than the church. So, in 1968 I became a pastor full time and have been ever since. I actually started pastoring part time in 1966, so you've heard my life story. This is it.

MH: And you need to quit talking or you're not going to be able to talk the rest of the day.

JG: You have anything to ask Mr. Donovan. about some of the school days and stuff?

RD: I just wanted to ask him how many hogs did you have back in the livestock days?

KH: Well that is another horrible story.

JG: If you need to take a drink of water go ahead.

MH: It's the jaw.

KH: My father had probably about a hundred head. but we didn't have stock laws there at first. so they run wild down there in the woods and we had a couple of dogs and we would go round them up every now and then and mark them and so on. But while he was gone working in Pennsylvania Ship Yard in Beaumont during World War II. one of the local fellows there, and I will not name his name, got drafted. and the story they tell about him is that after he got drafted, and my uncle is the one that tells the story, they said every morning he got up and walked out and walked all over the yard and held paper nope, nope, nope,

RD: I know this story.

MH: Have you heard this?

KH: You've heard this story? Anyway, he got discharged, he went back home and he stole every hog in that whole country and sold them. So, when my dad came home. the only hog we had was the one we had in the pen down there. And we never did have a herd anymore after that.

JG: Now what is he talking about Mr. Donovan?

RD: I just heard that story about picking up and he finally got his discharge and said oh that is what I've been looking for.

MH: That is what I've been looking for. (laughter)

JG: Oh okay, but how did he sell all the hogs?

RD: He must have had some good dogs.

KH: He rounded them up, throw them in a trailer and hauled them to auction.

JG: So he stole them huh?

MH: Oh yes!

JG: Not just y'all's, but everybody's in the community?

MH: Everybody was off at World War II, there were no men around.

KH: My uncles were either in the army or working defense jobs somewhere. There wasn't no men around.

JG: Did you know about that in that area?

RD: There was a lot of hog stealing went on Jonathan. What was the guys last name will you tell me that.

KH: Marshall.

RD: Yes, I know him.

KH: We saw him doing some of it but you couldn't stop him.

RD: He got some of Mrs. Dessie's hogs too.

JG: Really?

RD: Yes, he got some of her cows too.

MH: And the law didn't do anything about it. That is what troubles me.

RD: There wasn't much they could do about it. It was hard to nail down.

KH: It was hard to nail down.

JG: But if they were marked who did he sell them to?

RD: Sold them through a ring.

MH: The buyers didn't ask any questions, I'm sure.

JG: They just slaughtered them immediately?

RD: Yes, loaded them up in trucks and left with them, yes.

JG: Now that was during World War II.

MH: That was one of the saddest stories I heard about World War II. I mean here are all these off either fighting or working in defense plants and some fellow comes in and steals their property and sells it. It's disgusting.

RD: Then they come in and build a dam for the rice growers and take all the people's land away from them and I mean those people were destitute, just like you described. They left there with land and then they didn't get enough money to buy anything else with and they spent the rest of their lives...I know a lot of them.

MH: Which is why their ancestors and them came to this area anyway. The area would have never been settled without them. They came for land and then it all gets taken away from them. It's a sad story.

RD: And they were all angry about it for years about it.

MH: It's a sad story really.

KH: Over on the Neches River they planned Dam A at Rockland and Dam B down at Steinhagen Lake down there and now they ditched that for the rice farmers so they could get water for them for their crop. So far Dam A never has been, I guess probably won't ever be built now.

RD: We hope not.

KH: But it's on the drawing board isn't it, Richard?

RD: It's still there. It's what they call a Class B designation; it is not a Class A but it is still there.

KH: They talked about, they called it McGee Bend at first you remember, they talked about McGee Bend Dam from the time I remember anything as a boy. I was grown and married by the time they put it in, but it had been talked about all through those years.

RD: They took Jack, what was the congressman's name?

JG: Brooks?

RD: No in the Beaumont area down there, Jack...

KH: Congressman?

RD: Yes.

KH: It was Jack Brooks.

RD: Brooks, Jack Brooks.

JG: That is what I said. (laughter)

RD: Did you say Brooks? I didn't hear you. (laughter)

JG: That is alright. I was thinking that is the only Jack congressman I know from Beaumont.

RD: It took Jack Brooks to do it.

JG: Well...

KH: I remember one other thing you may or may not want to bother with.

JG: Go ahead.

KH: When I was in high school Billy Joe Erwin was Ag teacher and his wife was a nurse, talking about milk cows. We got without one and my dad hunted and hunted and hunted for a good jersey milk cow. And he finally found one at an auction and bought her and brought her home. But during that period of time, a mad fox had showed up over here around Groveton, over in that area I think. That cow got sick and died. Billy Joe was down there trying to help and find a vet from somewhere to come in and so they were certain that she must have had rabies and been bitten, so they cut her head off and shipped it to Austin. Sure enough she had rabies. Now she was a fine milk cow; before she got sick we had been drinking that milk.

RD: I wouldn't think that would be transmittable.

KH: Now here is the thing, nobody knew whether we had any risk or not and so the doctors said to my dad, "We don't think there is any risk, but there might be." I remember my dad staying awake nights and praying and trying to figure out what on earth to do and finally he decided I'm not going to take a chance. So, Billy Joe's wife was a registered nurse, they managed to get the serum or whatever it was and we go out there to Zavalla together and Billy Joe's wife gave us all rabies shots.

RD: Wasn't it multiple injections too? Didn't it take more than one?

MH: Several times.

KH: It took, I don't remember, maybe ten or twelve shots.

RD: Yes.

MH: And it was in the stomach?

KH: In the early days they put them all right in your stomach but Billy Joe's wife said, and she got the doctor's agreement on it, they never proved that they had to go in the stomach to work so she rotated arm, arm, butt, butt, arm, arm, butt, butt. Which meant we were sore all over. (laughter)

MH: All the time.

KH: All the time. And sure enough none of us ever got rabies out of it but that took place while I was in high school.

RD: Did you ever see Billy Joe ever give anybody a whipping?

MH: He didn't give you one did he?

KH: I might have been one of them. (laughter)

RD: He administered discipline liberally.

MH: Had a paddle did he?

KH: He sometime...

JG: Now see he is not saying anything, but you have those memories?

RD: Yes! (laughter)

KH: I also remember him having a big paddle.

RD: Yes, he had a paddle but he would whip you with his belt if you were...

KH: He would say "Richard I want you to give Ken three licks, and by the way you better be careful how you give them, because if I'm not happy with it he is going to give you three."

JG: Now did you ever get any? (asking Richard Donovan)

MH: He isn't talking. (laughter)

KH: I'm going to be very honest with you I probably deserved them, but I don't remember ever getting one.

JG: What about you Mr. Donovan?

RD: I got a few. (laughter)

KH: We had close relationship with Billy Joe and his wife because of that incident plus the calf thing, you know, because he and Billy Joe helped me with the paperwork. I became a Lone Star Farmer.

JG: Lone Star Farmer?

KH: Yes, which is the highest achievement that FFA could award to a high school student. They had a higher one you could earn with a degree from a university in Future Farmers of America.

RD: I participated in the calf scramble in Houston and I caught a calf one year.

KH: Did you?

RD: And then had to take it back the following year.

KH: Yes, that was later on wasn't it?

RD: Yes.

KH: They got rid of the milking contest and went to the scramble.

JG: So what happened to your herd?

RD: I sold them when I went to college.

JG: Cashed in.

RD: Yes.

MH: Paid a few college bills huh?

RD: I did.

JG: Now you played basketball and stuff in high school too?

RD: Yes.

JG: Do you remember the basketball teams?

KH: Yes, I was on it.

JG: Now you got out before you (Richard Donovan) were going right?

RD: Yes I guess so because I started and got on the team in probably '52, I guess.

JG: And you graduated in '51?

KH: I graduated in '51.

JG: But you went to school with his brother, right? Did he play basketball too?

RD: No he did not.

KH: No he did not. I never made A team, I was on B team, never was that good.

MH: Too skinny!

KH: And I was small and I wasn't good enough dribbler to be a guard and I really wasn't big enough to be a very good forward but that is the position I always played and I had some pretty good nights occasionally but I wasn't that great. But on occasion some of these nights you get hot and just throw the ball up there and it go through the goal and other nights I couldn't walk up there on a ladder and drop it in.

RD: You remember the Roebuck boys they were pretty good ball players from down there.

KH: Yes, I remember them. I played with Whiz Boulware and all them.

RD: Yes, yes.

MH: What district did y'all play in?

RD: B and played Huntington, Hudson, Central.

MH: Y'all didn't go as far afield as College Station, did you?

RD: No ma'am.

JG: Did y'all go south did y'all play Jasper, Woodville?

RD: No, we played them, we played Beaumont before.

KH: We played the one that was toughest for us was that school between Woodville and Livingston.

RD: Oh, Big Sandy?

KH: Big Sandy!

RD: Oh Big Sandy was at Indian Village, they played 12 months out of a year.

KH: I mean when you played those boys you thought you had been on a football field.

RD: Milby High School and places like that would hire them to come play them during the Christmas holidays.

KH: They were tougher than junk yard dogs!

JG: That was from the Indian Reservation?

KH: Yes, those boys were Indians, most of them. They also played football.

RD: I didn't know that.

KH: They came out of football and played basketball. When they were on the court, they were just as rough as they could be. You never knew when one of them was going to knock you from here to yonder.

JG: They were playing NBA style ball. (laughter)

MH: Way back when.

RD: One of them, Milton Williams, went on to play at Tyler Junior College and he played and made Mr. All American playing at Tyler Junior College and while he was at Tyler Junior College he got into alcohol which Indians are prone to do. I was at Woodville at that hospital down there one time and I looked over there and I saw him and I just said to him are you Milton Williams and he said yes and he was a preacher.

MH: How about that.

KH: How about that.

RD: He made, while he was a Tyler Junior College he made 98 out of 100 free throws.

JG: Anything else you want to add or ask?

RD: Y'all covered the bases pretty well I think.

MH: I would like to just tell, you talked about when electricity came and I have a special memory about that. It came a little earlier to Brazos County than it did to his county.

JG: And you said you were born in '38 right?

MH: Yes I was born in '38, yes so it came when I was about 3 years old, so between '40 and '41, and I remember they had the hanging... with the bulb with the little metal pull chain and when it first came into my house my daddy held me up and let me pull the chain for the first time and the light came on. Oh! It was so bright compared to the lighting that we had had up until then.

JG: The lantern yes.

RD: It went off frequently too though didn't they?

MH: Oh yes, every time a storm came and we didn't have any wall plugs or anything like that it was just we would have to run an extension cord if you wanted to.

RD: You screw the bulb out and screw a double socket we called it then and plug it back in.

MH: Yes, and it could plug in from both sides.

RD: Run a wire off.

MH: I especially remember too that...

KH: We are still having to add plugs to our house.

MH: Yes, we are, we did just this last week. (laughter)

KH: We came home, my dad from World War II and bought that property. You remember Julie Creek?

JG: Julie Creek?

RD: Yes, I know Julie Creek well.

KH: It was at 147, you know it closed earlier and they moved them into Zavalla before Concord ever closed. The school building was vacant my dad bid on and bought that

school building and he and myself and my brother went there and dismantled that building.

JG: The Julie Creek Schoolhouse?

KH: Yes, and we moved that lumber to our farm and we pulled the nails. I pulled thousands of nails and my brother and we built that home out of the materials from that school house.

MH: The one we are in now?

KH: Yes.

MH: You never told me that, for goodness sakes.

RD: Which family was it that moved their house from down there into Zavalla and set it right up there on 147, but it was off of 147, a pretty good-sized house, was that the Motts?

KH: I don't know.

RD: Okay. It was a big house, it wasn't painted.

KH: My brothers I mean my uncle, my dad's brother Hiram, had been in the sawmill business with him they moved there to Zavalla, my grandparents were still alive. He lived with them. He had divorced early on; his daughter is married to Eugene Bryant and they all live right there on that back road. Bill Havard who had married into our family somehow or other Aunt Kate they lived on the other side of the road there.

RD: It may have been your family that moved that house in there then. It was a big unpainted house that was just, you know, east Texas pine house.

KH: I don't know that any of them moved anything in there or not.

RD: Okay.

KH: Then Hopson's daughter was married to Claude Marshall and they moved in somewhere on the other side of that highway there and lived, but I don't know much about who else was in there.

RD: Okay.

JG: All right well I will go ahead and stop the recording. I thank you for doing this Mr. Hensarling.

KH: Well I hope you found a little bit of stuff you can use.

JG: I think we do, I'll go ahead and stop it.

END OF INTERVIEW