

**GOLDMAN DIXON  
LEAMON LIGON  
CLEVELAND MARK**

**Interview 285a**

**September 14, 2017, at The History Center, Diboll, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, Nigton (Trinity County, Texas) natives Leamon Ligon, Cleveland Mark, and Goldman Dixon reminisce about growing up in the Freedman's community. They discuss family life, school, recreation, sports, race relations, and farming, among other topics. They also talk about their time in the military (Air Force and U.S. Marine Corps) and prominent musicians and sports figures to come out of Nigton and Diboll. Mr. Ligon also recalls his interactions with Diboll figure Jay Boren. People they mention include Willie Massey, Uncle York Ligon, Dogan Dixon, Professor Will Jackson, Arthur Temple, Jay Boren, and Jeff Carter.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Okay, today's date is September 14, 2017 and my name is Jonathan Gerland. I'm at The History Center today with three gentlemen, Mr. Leamon Ligon, Mr. Cleveland Mark and Mr. Goldman Dixon and we are going to do an oral history interview today. I think Mr. Mark and Mr. Ligon, we have interviewed y'all at least once or twice before, but we are really glad to have Mr. Dixon with us today. So, maybe we will just go around a circle, and y'all say your names that way we will have it for the recorder.

**Leamon Ligon (hereafter LL):** Okay, my name is Leamon Ligon and I was born in Nigton and grew up here in Diboll.

**JG:** Okay, Mr. Cleveland.

**Cleveland Mark (hereafter CM):** Yes, my name is Cleveland Mark. I was born in Nigton and I grew up in Nigton, finished high school out there. I also spent a lot of time in Diboll because my mother lived over here.

**Goldman Dixon (hereafter GD):** Well I'm Goldman Dixon and I was born in Nigton and spent all my life in Nigton, grew up there and went to the military from Nigton.

**JG:** What year were you born? When was your birthday?

**GD:** My birthday is June 17, 1930.

**JG:** 1930, now are you older than these fellows?

**GD:** By a cigarette between our age, a little bit. (laughter)

**JG:** So, 1930, kind of right at the beginning of the Great Depression. What were some of your earliest memories growing up out there?

**GD:** Well, they said it was a depression but I don't know nothing about it. We had plenty to eat, whatever it was in those days.

**JG:** Who were your parents, Mr. Dixon?

**GD:** My parents were Aaron Dixon and Carrie Ligon Dixon.

**JG:** Okay, so y'all are connected, related anyways?

**LL:** Yes, all three of us.

**JG:** All three of y'all are related. So, all your parents, were they born at Nigton also?

**LL:** My father was, my mother was born in Quintet, Florida.

**JG:** Florida, how did she get here or did he go over there?

**LL:** No, my grandmother migrated from Florida to Texas, I guess when she was about 8 or so years old, as best as I can remember and they ended up in Nigton too. That was the Scott Family.

**JG:** The Scott's. Go ahead.

**LL:** They stayed there, I can't remember I must have been 3 or 4 years old when they left there, and they moved down to Hardin County, down around Kountze and Silsbee and all down in there. Most of them now are living in Beaumont.

**JG:** Okay. So, what did your parents do for a living?

**LL:** Farming mostly farming. My grandfather had, well he inherited some land from his dad, which my great-grandfather's name was C. C. Ligon, and him... and my great-grandfather and his brother had approximately 3 or 4 hundred acres of land over at Nigton and they farmed that land off and on I guess until they lost it. I don't know how that came about.

**JG:** How they lost it?

**LL:** Yes, I'm not sure. The...C. C. made his homestead in Trinity. He had 100 acres of land over there and he also owned, him and his brother also owned approximately... somewhere between 3 and 4 hundred acres of land in Nigton, so...

**JG:** So, what kind of crops did you grow?

**LL:** Anything edible. We had a few cattle and raised a lot of corn and vegetables and stuff. And during those early '30's, as far as I could tell, we lived right down there on the banks of the Neches River, and we ate whatever we could come up with out of the woods. If you paddle across that river, you might come back with a young pig or hog or one of those Pineywood rooters. We would eat off that for quite a while.

**JG:** Did y'all eat a lot of berries and nuts and things you would find in the woods or was that mostly hunting hogs?

**LL:** No, we had a few cattle. He would butcher a cow or a hog or, you know, everybody out there hunted, they lived off the woods, what you could find, deer, wild hogs, turkeys and whatever you could get out of those woods. When he would go across that river, he would string out a trot line and he would be over there an hour or two and he would come back and he would pull his trot line up and we would have fish for dinner or supper that night.

**JG:** You talking about your dad or grandfather?

**LL:** My great-grandfather

**JG:** Your great-grandfather.

**LL:** Yes.

**JG:** Did y'all ever go with him to run the trot lines?

**LL:** No, I was too young at that time. He wouldn't let me go off with him like that. My dad was there to help his daddy, which was my grandfather, he worked the farm. We grew peas and tomatoes and watermelons, and you name it, they grew it.

**JG:** Did y'all grow any cotton?

**LL:** I think somebody did, yes. I'm pretty sure they did.

**JG:** That is about the only thing you could get any money for right, cash?

**LL:** Yes, I think that was the big money maker, you know, but we didn't do much cotton growing down there near the river. It was back up in the community of Nigton and Cleveland's grandfather, they come together and they would grow cotton and so on, and I remember me and Cleveland used to burrow down in that cotton. We would be in there on those cold winter nights sleeping in that cotton. In those days, as I can remember, they had all kind of farming facilities. Somebody was raising tobacco. I remember seeing big old long poles with those big giant tobacco leaves hanging on drying in the sun and stuff

like that. As you came up out of the river bottom, coming up towards the Methodist Church and the School and stuff like that. Well the whole community shared with each other whatever bounty they had, you know. They would kill a hog or something they would share it with, you know, take it over to Uncle Jack's house or Aunt Sinie's and everything, we covered each other. What we were short of and they had some, and what they were short of maybe we had, and we would share with each other that way.

**JG:** Tell me about the name of Nigton.

**LL:** That I will have to give to Cleveland. Your turn Cleveland.

**CM:** Well we lived under similar circumstances. I don't ever remember being hungry. (**LL:** No.) I was born August 4, 1931 and we always had pork and chicken, and my grandfather grew cotton, and I remember one time the best cotton crop he ever had, these gentlemen came out and they went down there and they drove a stick up in the ground and put a yellow ribbon on it. They said this is from here to over here that is all the cotton you can raise. You got to plow that up over there, acres and acres, you have to plow it up. I don't know why they did that.

**JG:** Was that the federal government saying that?

**CM:** Yes, the Federal Government came in.

**JG:** Farm Adjustment Act I believe during the Depression.

**CM:** Yes.

**JG:** You actually remember that?

**CM:** Yes, I remember that. I remember that.

**LL:** I do too!

**CM:** I remember that.

**JG:** So what did you think about it at the time?

**CM:** I didn't think nothing, you know, I didn't think nothing about it. My grandfather was a man that, he was first thing he did he believed in God, and he just had a believe that whatever they say do, he would go do this and he would find another way to make money. My grandfather was a very smart man in books.

**JG:** What was his name?

**CM:** My grandfather...I was raised...my grandfather's name was Jackie Ligon and he married Sinie Odom. So, Jackie Ligon and Sinie Ligon, that is who raised me. That is who I lived with and went to school in Nigton, and even back then my grandfather cut logs for Southern Pine Lumber Company. That is another way they had of making money, because after farm season was over with, it was just a period of time when things were kind of blank, but my grandmother always managed to work. She was a midwife and she managed to work for these people and we had a real good life.

**JG:** So, after he would get the cotton in, he would saw during the winter I guess. Is that what you're saying?

**CM:** Yes, see they used to have a crib like Leamon talking about, where they put the cotton and all that. They had this storehouse, we called it a crib.

**JG:** A crib, yes.

**CM:** And they put everything in there, peanuts and...

**GD:** Corn.

**JG:** Would that just be for your own family or for the whole community?

**CM:** It was for the whole family. Everybody was pretty well at farming, because our parents came out of slavery and that is all they did was raise...and that is the reason Nigton was such a successful place. As slaves, they had learned how to grow stuff and all of this, and Nigton was just a thriving community. Now if you ran out of...there were people who just never learned how to farm, you know, but they wives and kids were taken care of by other, you know, other members of the community. The men would just go down there and see that the children and the widows were fed.

**JG:** Now did most of the people own their land or were they renting their land or sharecropping or anything?

**CM:** Well coming out of slavery...when we came out of slavery, ain't nobody owned no land. A lot of people were between a rock and a hard place. They didn't have nowhere to go so they had to stay on the farm, the plantation, after the 1965 [1863] Emancipation Proclamation. When they were free, they still weren't free, so you had to stay on this farm and you had to, it was supposed to be sharecropping, but you farm a year and the old master would give you what he wanted you to have. Goldman going to tell a story about his daddy worked on a farm for a year, and the man gave him at the end of the year, the man gave him \$38 for this whole year. And things like that happened out there in Nigton, but the reason Nigton is what it is to thrive, they cooperated together, they shared what they had you know. Then Monroe Mark, Monroe Mark, Jeff Carter, this Deason man [Emanuel], York Ligon, if you got anything from a white man you had to get approval

from one of these guys, before a guy would sell you anything. One of these guys had to approve it.

**JG:** One of the black men had to approve?

**CM:** One of the black men had to approve this. You couldn't just go up like you white and I couldn't come up and deal with you or talk to you. They dealt through these people.

**JG:** Now who set that up? Who enforced that?

**CM:** Well it was just the times.

**LL:** It was agreed on by the leaders of the community.

**JG:** Oh okay.

**CM:** And you talking about naming the town, Saturday or Sunday one day, the original name was Nigger Town. That was the original name, and someone said that Jeff Carter had something to do with that, but I don't believe that. I don't ever believe that Jeff Carter would name a town Nigger, I don't believe that came from Jeff Carter.

**JG:** Jeff Carter, is that what you're saying?

**CM:** Yes, Jeff Carter, he had everything owned in Nigton his name was on it. He was just a born leader and people followed him, so if you wanted, my grandma and grandpa tried to buy 50 acres of land, and they had the money to pay down, but then they told them to go talk to Jeff Carter. And Jeff Carter went to them and told them it was alright to let my grandpa buy the farm. These people...

**JG:** Now what time period? Is this before you were born, we're talking about now?

**CM:** Yes, this was right after slavery.

**JG:** After the civil war, okay.

**CM:** Right after slavery. And they just, that was the way it was and every person had to have a white man to stand for you. Just like Goldman Dixon's daddy was an entrepreneur. He had log trucks, pulp wood trucks, he did stuff after farming was over. He had other things that he could do, but you still had to have a white man and we were fortunate enough that my grandmother worked for these people and we got a lot of things through my grandmother working for these people. They would allow my grandparents, they would allow them to buy land or whatever it was and if they got behind or something, they would pay my grandpa's...if he missed a note or something, they would pay it and work something out with my grandma. So, it was just love of the community and they

owned... a black man owned a cotton gin out there one time, he owned a cotton gin. They had a shoemaker that lived out there.

**JG:** Did any of these leaders in the community, as you described them like Mr. Carter, did he have children and descendants that y'all knew and grew up with?

**CM:** Yes, in fact Jeff Carter's grandson right now he lives in California and he is 92 years old and he is still living.

**JG:** 92!

**CM:** I talk to him all the time and he remembers about things and he still owns 300 acres of land out there.

**JG:** But he grew up there and y'all know him and went to school there and everything?

**CM:** He went to school there and his father was a school teacher. His father was a principal there.

**JG:** And what would their names be?

**CM:** Jeff Carter's, this guy's daddy was named William Davis. He was the principal at Nigton and he was also the principal over in Diboll.

**JG:** Mr. Davis okay.

**CM:** And the Carter Family, they got more breaks than anybody. In fact, he got a land grant, 160 acres of land, Monroe Mark got a land grant for 160 acres. York Ligon...

**JG:** They all grew up in Trinity County?

**CM:** Yes, they were born...held in slavery over there.

**JG:** Do y'all know who the owners were by any chance?

**CM:** Well there was a Cook Plantation.

**JG:** Cook?

**CM:** Yes, there was a Fagile Plantation out there.

**JG:** Any Womack's?

**CM:** Womack's, yes well the Womack's owned that Fagile Plantation.

**JG:** Okay.

**CM:** And Uncle York Ligon was the first free black person in East Texas. He...when Uncle York Ligon was 7 or 8 years old, the Womack Family gave Uncle York Ligon to this...they had a son named Henry who was 8 years old and they just gave Uncle York to him for him to have somebody to play with.

**JG:** So, Henry, a white boy, had a slave friend.

**CM:** Henry Womack had a slave friend and they grew from the time they were 8 years old until they all the way through their teenage years, when Henry got old enough to go in the army, he went in the Confederate Army. He went to the Confederate Army. Uncle York was 18 during that time too, so when he and Womack got out of the Army and came back, he freed Uncle York Ligon and gave him 7 acres of land and a house.

**JG:** Seven?

**CM:** Seven acres of land and a house and Uncle York got a grant, a land grant for, he ended up with 160 acres of land.

**LL:** His brother had another 160 acres, C. C.

**JG:** All there in the Nigton area?

**LL:** Yes.

**CM:** Now how that land got away from C. C. [Christopher Columbus] Ligon we don't know.

**JG:** I came across his name last week actually in some of the lumber company stuff, York Ligon.

**LL:** His real name was Robert C.

**CM:** Robert Lee.

**JG:** Robert Lee [Uncle York] Ligon. How did he get the name York?

**LL:** That is a good question.

**CM:** Somebody said he saw the name on the side of the train and Uncle York couldn't read and he got some white man to tell him what that word was and he started repeating the word like he was reading and everybody knew he couldn't. He made an X when he signed his papers and it, kind of what I understand, it came as a joke.

**JG:** So, like the New York Central, or something like that, the railroad name on the boxcar or something.

**CM:** Yes, on the boxcar, and he would ask them to read the boxcar, and he would tell them he forgot his glasses and left them at home. He sat on the porch in a rocking chair and got his newspaper bottom side up. (laughter). People would say Uncle York whatever that was on the front page of that newspaper, they must have had a terrible storm up there because them people was standing on their head. (laughter) But Nigton was allowed to grow because they raised so much cotton out there and they were making the white man money so he, you know, they took care of him.

**JG:** Who were some of the ones that were connected with cotton more than anybody else, blacks maybe that would have worked? You said that Nigton was growing a lot of cotton, do y'all remember who?

**CM:** The most prolific farmer out there was Man [Emmanuel] Deason.

**JG:** And what is the first name?

**CM:** Emmanuel, they called him Man.

**JG:** Okay, Emmanuel Deason.

**LL:** Yes.

**CM:** He raised so much cotton.

**JG:** So he was just a better farmer or had better land, or both?

**CM:** It was a gift for him, not only cotton, but anything he planted, he was a just a prolific farmer and they took care of him because they knew someone told him one time said, "Uncle Man don't you know that man is cheating you up there?" He said, "well I'm going to let him cheat me and do what he wants, but I'm going to raise so much cotton I will still have plenty when he gets through cheating me." And he did that, and he owned half of Nigton at one time after they started letting people buy land. Monroe Mark was the first person that was allowed to buy land out there.

**JG:** Mark, your name Mark?

**CM:** Yes, Monroe Mark, he was my great-great uncle.

**JG:** Great-great uncle.

**CM:** Yes, and he encouraged everybody to buy land and I was fortunate enough, my family never sharecropped because my [great] grandfather, George Odom on my mother's

side, he bought 150 acres of land and whenever one of his daughters get married, they would just build a house right there on the land and then when my grandfather moved, he bought 50 acres of land, but he never sharecropped. He never had to sharecrop.

**JG:** Mr. Dixon, you got something to say about any of this we've talked about so far?

**GD:** Well they got it covered pretty much. Like he said my dad was like his grandfather, he was a big farmer. He raised just about various things, peanuts, corn, peas.

**JG:** Now what was his name?

**GD:** Aaron Dixon, but they called him Bud Dixon. He was known by Bud Dixon.

**JG:** Bud Dixon.

**GD:** He raised his crops and, in the meantime, he was cutting logs for Southern Pine Lumber Company and during that stretch Southern Pine owned a lot of land.

**LL:** They sure did.

**GD:** We set on about 10 or 15 acres and took it away from, we just called it Diboll at that time, we took that land from them and went to farming it. Nobody didn't know it, out in the country there we took that land and we farmed it. In later years they had it surveyed and David Kenley. You remember him?

**JG:** Yes, I was going to ask you about Dave Kenley.

**GD:** Yes, he knew Dave Kenley, and they tried to come take it away from my dad, but my dad said, "Well, I've owned it I've been here for over 10 years and it's mine." We had done turned it into farmland. It was trees out there, but we had cut it up and made it a farm. We had about 50 acres overall, but that made him have about 60 acres overall, when he took that, but we didn't think nothing about it. We fenced it off.

**JG:** Fenced it off and farmed it.

**GD:** Farmed it for years, and Dave Kenley came out there and, "Well you going to go to jail." He said, "I don't think so."

**JG:** What did he say, what did Kenley say?

**GD:** Kenley said he was going to take him to jail.

**JG:** Take you to jail. (laughter)

**GD:** And he kept on playing around with it so, back in those days we were surrounded by Southern Pine land out there and we would just go out there and cut us wood and everything we wanted to, oak trees, and when we got ready to build a house, a little barn or something, we would go out there and cut them pine trees just like they were ours. I didn't know the company... (laughter) and build them barns and things, but we did. And so one time, Dave Kenley came out and somebody else came out there to carry my daddy... my daddy was at Groveton.

**JG:** And what was your dads name?

**GD:** Bud Dixon.

**JG:** Oh, you were talking about your dad all along. I thought you were talking about your granddad. I'm sorry.

**GD:** No, I don't know nothing about my granddad, none of my granddads. But he was gone down to Groveton to a sale, an auction sale.

**JG:** For cattle?

**GD:** For whatever, I don't know what it was. He may be buying mules. We bought mules down there and horses, whatever you need to farm with they would go to the sale and buy them. He came down there and my two brothers were out in the field plowing and he got them down there, I think David Kenley, or maybe somebody else, but he carried them and made them unhook the horses and he took them to Groveton. "We want to see your daddy."

**JG:** So, Kenley took the horses?

**GD:** No just made them unhook the horses and my mother was there and she said, "what y'all going to do?" There was a man up there named Mr. Riley. Do you remember him?

**CM:** Yes.

**GD:** Aunt Fannie married him finally. Mr. Riley, he was was out there and he said we picking y'all up. Them cars, back in those days they put them all in the back. Mr. Riley nearly didn't get that door, Pearl and Larry were the ones they took down to Groveton.

**JG:** They put them in a car you said?

**GD:** Yes, they took them down there to find and when they got to the auction, they seen my daddy down there, and he seen me he said oops! They didn't want to tangle with my daddy. He was a great big, he was straight up and he weighed about 250 pounds. He was about 7'9 inches tall. That is true. He didn't want to bother with him no more. But anyway, he wanted to go to the law, and the law told him said, "You done overstepped

your bounds.” The law in Groveton told him, said, “that land belongs to Bud Dixon. It’s going to be Bud Dixon’s unless he wants to turn it back to you.” And I need to file charges on you for bringing these young boys down here. Well I believe it was Dave Kenley or some other little one he had out there.

**JG:** Was it Minton?

**GD:** I don’t know. I just remember...I was too little, you know, I was small.

**JG:** So it was in the ‘30s?

**GD:** Yes, it was in the 30’s or 40’s.

**JG:** 40’s okay.

**GD:** And that ended, and later on down in the years my dad got to know Temple, he really got to know him really good. And then so, he’d talk with him.

**JG:** Arthur Temple or Henry Temple?

**GD:** Arthur Temple. He knew him and he come over here and talk with him and so they finally made some agreement and he let him have the land back and he said you go down there as long as you want to and cut wood or anything just as long as it’s for yourself and you can have it, anywhere you want to. They signed the papers and he gave him that little old ten acres back. We weren’t farming no more, but that is the way it turned out.

**JG:** Yes.

**GD:** My daddy, later on in the forties, no it was in 1937 or 1938 he went to share cropping. We moved from Nigton, well it was still in Nigton, but it was far Nigton, a place called Laney Place. I don’t know where it got its name from but they had...

**JG:** Laney Place

**CM:** Delaney [Plantation].

**JG:** Delaney.

**GD:** Delaney? Well anyway it was a big farm down there, had three or four sharecroppers living on it and we lived down there for about a year. And this is what Cleveland was talking about (laughter) and we raised about 40 or 50 bales of cotton. Boy we had...and cotton had went up to 25 cents a pound and we thought we were going to come back with...and we didn’t get no groceries or nothing. My daddy always...

**JG:** So how much would a bale of cotton weigh about?

**GD:** About 500 pounds in those days, but that was a lot of money.

**JG:** Yes, and you had about 50 bales.

**GD:** We had more than that...yes, we had about 50 bales.

**JG:** 50 bales.

**GD:** And what happened, when it come to about August or September, they were settling off or sometime I don't know exactly when, but anyway, I know my daddy went down there to settle with him and he said, "Well Bud I ain't got all your money, but I got \$38, that is all you going..." We didn't owe him nothing, we didn't owe nothing on that farm because we bought our stuff. My daddy cut logs and we boys did all the farming.

**JG:** You borrowed to do the farming is that what you saying?

**GD:** We boys. We had a lot of us boys.

**JG:** Boys, okay.

**GD:** We had done most of that farming, I don't remember my daddy doing very little of that farming. My momma would come out there and kind of supervise. She would go back to the house, she didn't work in the fields too much. And, so when it came up to \$38 my daddy went on and it was in one-dollar bills. I remember! My daddy said, "well I can't live on \$38 a year, so we fixing to go. We're going to move back to our home place." We had a place laid out that year, and it was about the same, we still had that 10 acres we took from Southern Pine and we moved back up there. When we got ready to leave from down there, the man walked up there that morning and my daddy got four or five wagon loads. People from the Nigton community, and we had loaded all our stuff up on those wagons, everything we owned on those wagons. We didn't make but one trip, but about 4 or 5 wagons. We loaded them up and we was out at the barn loading the last corn on the last wagon and he come up there. Mr. Walker Davis was his name, and he come up there, "Bud you can't hardly leave, don't leave me now." He said, "I can't live on no \$38."

**JG:** So, this is a white man begging him to stay.

**GD:** Yes, a white man, my daddy told him said, "Mr. Walker I can't live on \$38." He said, "Bud I don't care whether you go or stay, but he had fell to his knees. He liked to have had a heart attack, he did that day. He said, "I can't live on no \$38 and I'm going, I'm leaving you." He told him he was going to pay him if he lived and he didn't live either. My daddy never got the money that he owed him. He owed him quite a bit of money and he still owed him until he died. But we went on and raised some on our small farm and then the war broke out. Well I guess the war...

**LL:** World War II.

**GD:** Yes, was kind of breaking out so, farming went to going downhill after World War II in the late thirties and forties. Hilton [Dixon] went to the military; my oldest brother went to the military at that time. Then later on they drafted my other two brothers.

**JG:** I was going to ask you how many siblings you had?

**GD:** There was seven boys and one girl, there were eight of us.

**JG:** Okay.

**CM:** They was all in the army...tell him that.

**GD:** We all was in the army, in the military except for me. All of them was in...

**JG:** You went in during Korea, didn't you?

**GD:** Yes, there was still some in there. I had two made careers out of it. So, they were in there...well actually there were 3 in there at that time when I went in. Larry, Emerson and Joe, they were still in there, but Larry didn't make no career out of it, but he did his time and he got out early. Joe and Emerson did make a career out of it and they finished their career in the military, the Army. Joe, when he was drafted, they drafted him into the Navy and he got out and then he stayed out and worked at a tire company in Lufkin, Kelty's Tire Service for a few years, and he couldn't get adjusted to it and he went back and joined the Army, so he stayed in the Army the rest of his career.

**JG:** I want to talk to y'all about your military experiences after a while, but I want to stay in Nigton a little bit longer if we can. Anybody else in the community, you have mentioned several names of people that were maybe in and out of the community and maybe some of the whites that the community was sharecropping for? Any other names?

**GD:** Roland Davis.

**CM:** He had the Dairy.

**JG:** Yes, the Dairy tell me about that. What was his name?

**CM:** Roland Davis.

**JG:** Roland Davis.

**GD:** That was Walker Davis's nephew.

**JG:** Okay.

**CM:** Goldman remembers, we used to go down there and watch them dogs. He had them Collie dogs.

**JG:** Collies? Like Lassie?

**CM:** Yes, and he would come down there and whistle and them dogs would go down there and they would bring them cows up to that dairy. They wouldn't run them cows either, they would just line up out there and...

**JG:** Just walk them up, huh?

**CM:** Ride them cows right up to that dairy out there.

**JG:** Did any of the Nigton Community work in the dairy?

**CM:** I don't remember. Did they Goldman?

**GD:** Well it might have been, Pearl might have worked for them awhile.

**JG:** Do you know about how many cows they had?

**GD:** Oh, he had 50 or 60 cows out there.

**JG:** Fifty or sixty, milk cows?

**GD:** Yes.

**CM:** Yes, Jersey's.

**JG:** Jerseys, did y'all get milk there?

**CM:** No.

**JG:** Y'all had your own milk cow?

**CM:** Yes, my grandma always had a... somehow or another she had a Jersey cow, and that cow gave a lot of milk.

**GD:** Well what happened in our case, we would go out in the woods and they had a cow (laughter) I guess it would roam, but they had cows running wild out, kinda wild and we would go out there and cowboy them up and put them in our lot.

**JG:** Now none of those were Dave Kenley's cows, were they? (laughter)

**GD:** No, I don't think they were. I guess they were Oscar Warren's and all of them people in Apple Springs. We would herd them cows up there and they would have a baby calf and we would keep the calf up in the lot all day, we would leave them water and everything and the cows would go off and she'd come back in the evening and we would milk them and let the cows stay overnight and the next morning we would let them out. That is how we got our milk.

**JG:** Now what word did you use a while ago Cleveland, you said entrepreneur?

**CM:** Yes.

**JG:** That is one word for it.

**GD:** I don't think my daddy even knew that. We were boys and we would do things like that. We wanted some milk we just go out there, we had Jersey cows, we did, and then we had some Jerseys cows, but we wanted more milk. We weren't trying to sell no milk or nothing like that. See, it was a lot of us and we had to have it. We just did that because we could do it, I guess, but we did that. (laughter) Then Mrs. Pauline Cook, she lived up the road from us, and we kind of, when them boys left and went off, we quit that and we got our milk and butter from her. She would have two jersey cows and she was selling milk to people in the community out there. She was a white lady, but she was very nice and she would sell us the milk and I would go up there and do her yard for her when I was a little old boy, you know.

**JG:** So what was involved with doing her yard?

**GD:** Oh, you would rake the straw and the leaves up and pile them up.

**JG:** Because people didn't have grass in their yards back then did they?

**GD:** Not too much, not too much. Well we would rake the straw up and they would pile it up and burn it. She would burn it.

**JG:** Just keep the leaf litter...

**GD:** Oh, they kept them yards clean!

**CM:** My grandmother used to go out there and cut a little old tree down and them women could keep that yard spotless.

**GD:** Dogwood trees!

**JG:** They didn't even want grass growing, did they?

**CM:** No, they didn't grow no grass, but they kept their yard clean.

**JG:** Just clean dirt huh?

**CM:** Yes sir.

**GD:** I don't know why that was but they didn't believe in grass in those days.

**LL:** They would bundle those limbs up and tie them together and use that as a rake.

**GD:** They called it a brush broom.

**JG:** A brush broom.

**GD:** And it would do the same thing as these rakes do, might do it better. See you could use willow or dogwood, that is what they used in those days.

**JG:** Willow or Dogwood.

**LL:** They used those little old limbs about as big around as your little finger to tie them up, be two, three or four feet long and tie them together in a bundle, you know, and they take those, they would have a few extras one they used to plait together to keep me and Cleveland in line.

**CM:** Oh yes, that was a weapon man.

**LL:** A Switch they called it.

**CM:** It was really a weapon. That was really a weapon. They took what was available, whatever they needed, they took it and it wasn't no going to the pharmacy and all that, so they go out there and dig up roots out of the ground, leaves off of trees, bark off the trees and boil it and whatever you had, it went away.

**LL:** Make a poultice or something. Well, in my growing up, see I left Nigton when I was about, I guess maybe three, maybe four years old and we moved into Lufkin for a year and then we moved down here where the nursing home is, which was Old Man Conn's Farm.

**JG:** Here in Diboll.

**LL:** Yes, E. J. Conn's.

**JG:** E. J. Conn, yes.

**CM:** Emporia.

**LL:** Emporia, that is what they used to call it. That is where I was when I started to school in 1936 maybe, somewhere in that period of time. I would have to walk up the railroad track and cut across through the woods. Diboll then was a mile or more north of where it is now going towards Lufkin and it was about 2 miles from where we were living down there at that Conn Pond. On one side was a pond and on the other side they raised sugar cane and cotton on that side of 59. And on the other side of 59 was a Dairy Farm, cattle and horses and things. That is where I got this jewel at. We were making syrup.

**JG:** Crushed finger?

**LL:** Crushed in a cane mill. Yes, the men would be putting so much sugar cane in that grinding stone. It was the first year they had electricity coming into Diboll and Old Emporia. And Bill Henderson and I were little kids running around out there on the farm, chasing ducks and chickens and once in a while a stray horse would wander up there and we would throw rocks or whatever we could at them. We were having fun. They brought that electricity in that year and so, they let us crawl up on top of this thing when it got plugged up, too much cane in it, because we could stick our little skinny arms down in there and pull that stuff out.

**JG:** Pull it out.

**LL:** Yes, so I was pulling on something. Bill got through with his before I did and he jumped down and when I got down to the last gear was clogged and he threw the switch and these fingers got crushed and I lost a year. I was supposed to start school that year, but I never did get to start that year because of this injury. I think J. C. Clements was the first year out of medical school, he was working for Southern Pine Lumber Company then up over the post office.

**JG:** So, he tried to bandage you up huh?

**LL:** Well I have good use of those and you know, he did a pretty good job considering, back in those days.

**JG:** Where did they grow the sugar cane? On the creek?

**GD:** On the river.

**LL:** Well it was just a little this side of the river, where you cross, you know, you go down south of Diboll here and you cross over the river and there was a little...I don't know exactly the distance from the river up to that, but they would go down there and they would harvest that sugar cane and bring it back in wagons.

**JG:** Was that on company land or who owned the land?

**LL:** No, E. J. Conn.

**GD:** Conn.

**JG:** The Conn's owned it on the river bank.

**LL:** He was a lawyer in Lufkin, a big-time lawyer at that time and he had, sometimes he had 60 to 80 men working for him. My grandmother was the cook, you know, and she was pretty well known for her, shall we say, culinary skills so. But she cooked for him.

**JG:** There in Lufkin for him, at his house?

**LL:** No, that was here, down here.

**CM:** About where the Catholic Church is.

**JG:** But he lived in Lufkin though, right?

**LL:** He had a house in Lufkin, he had a big old mansion type thing down here in Diboll too. Down here. He split his time up between...

**JG:** This was his plantation house?

**LL:** Something like that yes, he lived here and he had a daughter. I don't know where they lived, I think they lived out in west Texas somewhere, and they had two sons, one was named Bob and one named Craig.

**JG:** But the old house is no longer around. Do you remember about when it was torn down? Had you already moved away?

**LL:** I was gone.

**JG:** You had left, okay.

**LL:** I left here, I started leaving somewhere around the latter part of '48, summertime, school would be out and I was shipped off to wherever, a relative's place. I spent the summer with my Mother's people down around Kountze and Silsbee and Beaumont, and then sometimes I would be in Houston. The raising that I got here, was very much the same as they got over there in Nigton. We could go down, from where I lived go down through those woods, it was about 2 miles down there to the river. You would jump in that river and swim across you would be in Nigton. It was a very short distance.

**JG:** Cleveland lived on the river for a time, didn't you?

**LL:** No, I don't think he did.

**JG:** No, you were saying you lived on the river over there. Okay I see what you're saying.

**CM:** You talking about sugar cane, my grandma and grandpa, George Odom and [unintelligible] Odom, they raised sugar cane so big that they couldn't put it in the press. They had to split it.

**JG:** They were so big around huh?

**CM:** Yes, but my Uncle Elam Ligon, now you talking about an entrepreneur. The Smith's had a sugar cane mill and so...

**JG:** Was that powered by horse, the sugar cane mill?

**CM:** Yes, mules, horses, yes. But then the Smith's got a tractor and they could run it off that PTO (**JG:** okay) and that increased it, but they imported small sugar cane in here that would take...but they gave it to my Uncle Elam. He asked them could he have it and they told him yes. So, we had a blacksmith shop in Nigton at the school.

**GD:** Old man Deason.

**CM:** Old man named Lum Deason ran it.

**JG:** Lum?

**CM:** Lum Deason and he I think his name was Columbus.

**JG:** Columbus, okay.

**CM:** But he shoed horses and things so my Uncle Elam bought he carried it to that old man and he brought a big old stalk of that cane up there and old man Lum, he expanded that thing and made it big enough you could stick that whole big old bundle of sugar cane stalk, you could put it in there and Uncle Elam made more syrup than anybody in Nigton. He worked for them Smith's, so he could keep the tractor on the weekends and instead of mules he hooked it up to the tractor. He made more syrup than anybody and he was that kind of entrepreneur.

**JG:** Did any of y'all besides Mr. Ligon here as a boy cleaning it out, did any of y'all work around sugar cane mills any?

**CM:** No grandma wouldn't let us.

**GD:** I was around them a little bit, but not often. They had that sugar mill they would be pulling around with that mule. They had a big old long tongue and that mule would go round and round all day long, all day long.

**JG:** All day long turning that press.

**CM:** Uncle Austin, he made a little fine drink out of that. (laughter)

**JG:** Some distilled huh?

**CM:** We would go down there and watch them hogs it would go off in this branch and get sour and then hogs would go down there and drink that and they would just get drunk as a man.

**LL:** Drunk with the hogs, mules, horses, chickens, ducks, man you would see them wobbling around all over the barnyard.

**GD:** Austin went to making something ...

**LL:** He called it the recipe. You could let it set there just for a week or so, maybe not that long, and it would ferment and man that stuff was pretty potent.

**JG:** I was going to ask you about moonshining. Any notorious moonshiners?

**LL:** No.

**CM:** Yes, Joe Pierson.

**JG:** Joe Pierson.

**CM:** Yes, and, I'm going to tell you something else, my grandpa Jackie he had a little still.

**GD:** No kidding?

**LL:** My grandpa had one too.

**CM:** Grandpa had a little still. They had that big stone jug. There was salt and pepper and this big old stone jug and it stayed full.

**LL:** We had several of those jugs. Papa would make beer out of two of them and he would have white lighting in the another two.

**JG:** Now where did he keep it? Did he move it around or what?

**LL:** No, he didn't move it around. He built a smokehouse but it was big enough that he could...the smokehouse was there to cure meat in. He was very good at butchering and curing meat and making sugar cured and salt pork meat and bacon and so on. And he had a corner back in the smoke house that he had these crocks and they must have been five or ten gallons, possibly. It was my job to keep the heat, the smoke going. You can't let it flame up.

**GD:** In the smoke house.

**LL:** In the smoke house.

**JG:** Just smoke not flames.

**LL:** Just smoke because the meat had to have that saturate the meat with that smoke, and after he had worked it he could take the heel of his hand and take that brown sugar and when he got through doing that it would penetrate thoroughly throughout that ham or whatever, a shoulder or whatever it was he was curing. Then he would hang them up somewhere in that smokehouse. You could see the smoke coming out in certain places from the smokehouse.

**JG:** He used brown sugar to help season it huh?

**LL:** Yes, he made salt pork and big old fat back slab of bacon and then he would take a knife and slice it into bacon.

**JG:** Now tell about how you kept the smoker going.

**LL:** Well he would go out and he would get hickory wood and make chips out of it. He would start the fire and then he would do something to it and it would just be fire in there but it wouldn't be flamed. All it would do is just smoke.

**JG:** Coals and ashes.

**LL:** Coals and ashes and you know.

**JG:** But hickory.

**LL:** Hickory, maybe once in a while he would use some pecan but pecan trees...well we had more hickory nut trees, black walnut trees than we had anything. A lot of pecan trees too, but he didn't use that he loved hickory.

**JG:** The hickory, yes.

**GD:** I believe that hickory has done got obsolete.

**LL:** Almost.

**JG:** That is what I was going to ask you. Mr. Dixon said he thought hickory was about obsolete now.

**LL:** Yes, just about. Over here at Old Orchard Park there was some black walnut orchard over there. It was more hickory around here and walnut trees around here you could shake a stick at.

**JG:** What happened to them?

**LL:** People sold them. That stuff was very good for furniture manufacture and different other stuff. It made some of the best furniture you could imagine, hickory, walnut and besides you could take the bark off that walnut and you could stain stuff with it. It would take you weeks to get that stuff off your hand.

**JG:** Yes, dye stuff with it.

**LL:** When we were growing up, we had hickory nuts almost as big as the top of that cup, great big huge things. At least as big as the bottom of it.

**GD:** You can't find none nowhere now.

**LL:** You can find some in Lufkin out at Cedar Grove they got two or three trees, hickory nut trees.

**CM:** But they are not big old hickory nuts.

**LL:** No, they are not big enough to do nothing. We used to take a brick and a hammer or a mallet or something and crack them open and get us a pen and get ...

**GD:** Get the goodie out. They hard to get but it's better than a pecan, better than any kind of nut you want to eat but it's hard to get out of there.

**LL:** Hickory nuts and black walnuts man! I still love black walnuts.

**JG:** I haven't...I don't even know where a black walnut tree is.

**GD:** I guess there's a few of them left.

**CM:** Up around Nacogdoches.

**LL:** Blue Bell ice cream makes a black walnut ice cream, man.

**GD:** They get them from somewhere.

**LL:** Somebody is growing them some place.

**JG:** Did y'all ever use walnut wood for the fire or just hickory?

**LL:** No, we didn't use too much of it for the fire.

**CM:** There was so many hickory trees out there.

**LL:** Over here west of Diboll the place was saturated with hickory nut trees. When we got up big enough, we used to go out in the woods out there and cut stove wood and firewood for home and they would pay us fifty cents or so for a cord of wood or whatever. That was pretty hard work for us 13, 14-year-old boys, but we got it done and have a cord of wood sitting out there and they would come out with their truck and load it up on the truck and bring it back in. We would go down there and get it for our home.

**CM:** I got a gallon of hickory nuts right now.

**GD:** Where did you get them from?

**CM:** Jim Ligon gave them to me.

**GD:** Well they probably not no good. How long it been?

**CM:** It been about a year ago.

**GD:** Oh, they probably done...

**CM:** Well I don't know they been in a nice cool place. I can't see how to bust them now. Grandma and them used to make hickory nut cakes.

**GD:** Yes, but you would have to work on it, get them picked out there and they get a plate full of them, the meat, you know, and Momma would put them in cakes at Christmas and all of that.

**LL:** My grandmother did that.

**JG:** Did you collect the hickory nuts? Is that something the boys would go out and do?

**GD:** We had them right there by the house. They died out we didn't cut them. When I got back from the military, those hickory nut trees were gone. I don't know what happened to them.

**CM:** I got some hickory nut trees on my grandmothers, my momma's land out there. We got 50 acres of land.

**GD:** I believe it might be some back there.

**CM:** Yes, it's some hickory nut trees back there, but I ain't going back there though.

**LL:** Walnut trees, I go down to Jasper if I want some walnuts. I go down there and get them.

**CM:** It's a place in Nacogdoches out there at Sand Hill, Pine Flat.

**LL:** Oh yes.

**CM:** It was an orchard of walnut trees, black walnut trees.

**JG:** Mr. Dixon tell me about going to school there in Nigton.

**GD:** Yes, I went to school in Nigton. I started when I was about 5 years old. My uncle was the principal at that time. His name was Nelson Dixon, and later on I went out there and I was worrying my mother and them to let me go to school and they let me go at 5 years old.

**JG:** You have older brothers, right?

**GD:** Oh, yes. I was the baby.

**JG:** Was your sister older? Oh, you were the baby?

**GD:** My sister is next. She is the very baby.

**JG:** She is the very baby, but you're the baby boy!

**GD:** Yes, when I got out there the teacher was named Mrs. Paley.

**JG:** Paley or Dailey?

**GD:** Paley, she was nice she was the music teacher. I went to crying and crying and I finally had to hang on in there and go on to school. I stayed in the primer a whole year. It was a primer, it wasn't no first grade. It was a first grade but it was a primer first grade and then on up the ladder.

**JG:** Primer is what you are saying?

**GD:** Primer, that's the very first class.

**LL:** It was the same thing here in Diboll.

**GD:** He had a book he was reading out of, Jocko. You remember that book? Jocko and the man turned into...

**JG:** Monkey Grinder is that what you're talking about?

**LL:** Yes.

**GD:** It was a book.

**JG:** The book was about the monkey grinder?

**GD:** And the man had a monkey riding on his shoulder and all that and he would...that was the reader at that time. I was kind of slow and my mother went home one night and we was by the fireplace, we had done run out of coal oil and was using the fireplace and she said THE...I couldn't never know what that word was. She said what you going to school for you don't know what that is?

**JG:** T-h-e, the or tha?

**GD:** Yes, and she kept making a sentence saying the word and I never did know what it was. She tore me up good when she told me what the word was. People don't know what went on in my home. (laughter) She got ahold of me, but when I went to school, I went to learning and I went to listening and I began to catch on what reading was about. I got to the point I just kind of drug around in my reading, I would read slow and all that. But Cleveland was over here in Diboll at that time, so he come home and he was going to school out there, and Cleveland got in a book there, I don't know the name of it, but it was poems and things in there. But Cleveland went to reading this book and he got up there and everybody stopped, got attention, he was reading it so well, it wasn't nothing kidding about it. I said I'm not going to let this man...

**JG:** He was reading Shakespeare probably.

**GD:** He was reading that book. I don't know the name of it but it was a real interesting book. We were in about second grade at this time, or third grade.

**JG:** You were impressed with him?

**GD:** I was, and I said this ain't going to happen to me, and it made me go to reading better.

**JG:** He might have just been making it up. (laughter)

**GD:** No, he was reading, he was reading. He stepped on it that day and I learned how to read then.

**JG:** So, you owe it all to Cleveland.

**GD:** I might not have gotten no better but he went along and he come there and I guess he inspired a lot of us out there. (laughter)

**CM:** Goldman Dixon has always been my protector.

**JG:** Your protector.

**CM:** Yes! He is a warrior and I'm a negotiator.

**JG:** A warrior and a negotiator.

**CM:** I'm a negotiator and he is the only person I ever, I told Leamon, he clutches his fists. He will do his fist like that and to me that look like the hammer of a gun. He is the only friend that...and when he closes his fist...

**JG:** Uh-oh, look out! (laughter)

**CM:** I tell you what, I have saved a lot of guys a lot of pain. We'd be playing basketball, I never forget one time we was playing basketball and this little, back then, the small guys they called them point guards now. We always brought the ball down you know, and this little guy he was little like me, but he was real stocky and we got over there in the dark and that guy hit me in the mouth. He busted me in the mouth, my lip started bleeding, and here come Goldman Dixon. Which one of them did it to you? I said oh I got it, you know, so we worked around down there in the dark and when I got him back down there, I hit him in his balls down there. I hit him in his balls and left him lying there. I said, "I got him kid, don't worry about it." We had the greatest basketball team and track team.

**JG:** At Nigton?

**GD:** That was in the late forties.

**JG:** Late forties. Who did y'all play, some of the teams y'all played?

**CM:** We played all these local teams.

**GD:** Everybody, Diboll,

**CM:** There wasn't no classification then like Class 5A and all that.

**JG:** Yes, just whoever wanted to play.

**GD:** We beat a team in, I believe we went to Tyler and beat a team in Galveston in that tournament up there.

**JG:** So, a Galveston team came to Tyler to play up there.

**GD:** At the college, an invitational, and we went up there and beat them. But the little old team like us beat us, Garrison.

**JG:** What was the name of it?

**GD:** No, it wasn't Garrison it was Cuney.

**JG:** Cuney, Texas, C-u-n-e-y.

**GD:** Yes, it's up there about Jacksonville.

**CM:** They had some big old guys up there though.

**GD:** They could play basketball though, they could.

**JG:** Did y'all play inside or outside?

**GD:** Outside, we was playing inside in Tyler but, most if you didn't play in a college, we played in Apple Springs when it be raining if necessary, but other than that we played on the ground.

**JG:** You play in a gym at Apple Springs?

**CM:** Yes, later on they let us play up there.

**JG:** So how was that different, playing on dirt than playing on a court?

**GD:** There's a little difference, but it didn't make no difference to us where we were. It really didn't. It really didn't.

**JG:** What kind of shoes did y'all have?

**GD:** Regular tennis shoes.

**CM:** Converse.

**JG:** Converse?

**CM:** Yes, converse.

**GD:** That team came out of Beaumont up to Nigton to play us that day. And they came up there and we...that team kind of wiggled around and they was giving us a little hard time and so Professor Willie Massey said...called time out and he said "Ken, Cleveland and Charlie" he told me what number to take, and told Cleveland what number to take, and told Charlie what number to take. So, Clarence and them was some bad boys and give them and we took them and they throwed that man around there and they couldn't cross the line we would take the ball back in those days. I believe it was Charlton Pollard.

**JG:** Charlton Pollard, yes in Beaumont. And y'all beat them?

**GD:** Yes.

**CM:** Yes, we didn't know no better.

**GD:** See Professor Massey would make you run ten miles.

**JG:** Ten miles.

**GD:** Ten miles a day just about.

**JG:** So y'all pushed the ball a lot, no standing around dribbling around, y'all were running and gunning. That style of play?

**CM:** If we could stay close to the fourth quarter, it was like turning on a burner on the stove. Willey Massey, because see, we ran from Apple Springs to Nigton one day, the next day we ran from 94.

**JG:** How would y'all get there?

**GD:** Run.

**JG:** You would run there and run back?

**GD:** No, he would take us up there on the bus.

**JG:** That is what I meant.

**GD:** He would take us up there and drop us off.

**JG:** Take you on the bus, yes.

**CM:** Drop us off and then he would drive that bus about 5 miles an hour and so if you didn't...he would whip you according to where you finished at. (laughter) And me and Goldman always were the first there because we would be running down the road and we would get a hill on Willie Massey, we would jump on the back of a truck and we would

ride down it and we would find some woods and get off the truck and stand in the woods until we hear the other players coming and then we would come out there and act like we had been running all the way. But Willie Massey, he knew what we were doing, so every time he would take us in there, he would give you a little extra! Man, he had a...

**JG:** So y'all would jump on the back of a truck while it was going slow going up a hill?

**CM:** People would stop and let us get on.

**JG:** Oh, they would stop and let you on. White and black?

**CM:** Now Nigton is a place where we really had no problem. We had no problem with race problems.

**GD:** No, no race. Apple Springs and Nigton didn't have no problems.

**CM:** Fairbanks Deason integrated baseball and he integrated music because he owned this club, and we would go out there. In fact, Fairbanks Deason had a white team like the Harlem Globetrotters got the Generals. He had and we would go out there and play against these white boys and some days if the white team get there and they didn't have enough players he would tell me and Goldman, "go over there and play with them."

**JG:** So, Fairbanks Deason was like a manager?

**CM:** He was the owner.

**GD:** Owner.

**CM:** He owned the team. He was our sponsor and like I was telling them on the way over here, Fairbanks Deason not only help black people out there in that Nigton community, Fairbanks Deason was such an entrepreneur until he opened up like a, same as a bank. He would let people have money and he had 50 acres in one place down there and then all up there probably 25 acres, so if they didn't pay him, they just went out there and worked in the fields.

**JG:** So that is where he got his wealth, was he had land.

**CM:** Yes, he had land and then he made his money in that club. He had a club called the Black Cat Country Club.

**JG:** Where was that?

**GD:** In Nigton.

**JG:** Black Cat Country Club. Like a dance club, dance hall?

**GD:** Yes, they would dance and drinking beer and all that. They didn't have liquor out there but when he moved up on the river, they did get a liquor store.

**JG:** Did they have music entertainment?

**GD:** Oh yes.

**JG:** Piano players?

**GD:** He had a cousin, Sweetning, would play that piano. Remember he would come there?

**CM:** Yes, he was entertainer for the week.

**JG:** Who is that?

**CM:** His name was Alton Reed, but we called him Sweetning. He played the guitar and the piano.

**GD:** He could sing too!

**JG:** Did he play acoustic guitar or amplified electric guitar?

**GD:** Amplified electric guitar. He could play.

**CM:** He played that acoustic.

**GD:** What is acoustic? What is the difference?

**JG:** Non-electric, just a regular guitar.

**CM:** And you know he had the biggest guitar I ever seen.

**LL:** Yes, it was a little bigger, it was kind of like a concave type of situation. The back of it seemed like it ballooned out a little bit because they bent the wood to a certain position so the sound coming out of it would be a little bit different.

**JG:** A bowl shape back, not a flat back but a bowl shape.

**LL:** Semi-bowl shaped but more melodious than the regular guitar.

**GD:** I know one thing, he could play. And he could play that piano too. He was still living when I came out of the military.

**CM:** He died in 1979.

**JG:** And his name was Reed?

**LL:** Alton Reed.

**CM:** A wore a big old cowboy hat.

**JG:** Where was he from? Was he from the area?

**CM:** Nigton.

**GD:** He was from Nigton.

**CM:** He was born and raised out there.

**JG:** Did he travel around and play at other places?

**CM:** Yes, he played at little juke joints, you know.

**GD:** He could have went on up. I don't know why he didn't. He could have been good as T. Bone Walker.

**LL:** There was a lot of guys that got their start with whatever they could start with, homemade guitars and stringed instruments and so on. Sometimes, they say some people like Lighting Hopkins and Milford Slim, they got their start on some farm or some place and the moved. You have to leave, kind of like Soul Stirrers started in Trinity and moved to Houston. From Houston I think they went to Chicago and from Chicago they went to California. They got to be quite famous, but you know you can't ...

**GD:** Sam Cooke came out of the Soul Stirrers, didn't he?

**CM:** Yes, he was later on.

**LL:** We had a relative that started...a lot of those guys the Sour Stirrers began in Trinity. They were relatives of ours, the original bunch. I can't remember what Reba's last name was.

**CM:** Reba Harris.

**LL:** Reba Harris, he kind of trained Sam Cooke.

**CM:** Reba Harris and J. J. Farley. Jessie James Farley.

**LL:** And then that Crain Sims, Sr. Crain [Sam Crain, Sr.].

**CM:** Now he came back here and I got to know him real well. In fact, he had a big article when the Soul Stirrers were elected to the Music Hall of Fame, they sent him a ticket to come up there.

**JG:** Did y'all know Professor Jackson?

**CM:** Oh yes.

**JG:** Tell me about him.

**LL:** Professor Jackson, he was...well it was said...we didn't know it when we were fooling around with Professor Jackson, he was trying to teach me the Clarinet until I lost a finger. And he taught a lot of kids around Diboll there.

**CM:** He trained Harry James.

**LL:** Yes, I was getting to that. He worked for the Ringling Brothers or something.

**JG:** The Christy Brothers.

**LL:** The Christy Brothers, but he worked for the circus and he taught Harry James how to play that trumpet.

**JG:** Do y'all remember him? Did he play much? Did y'all witness him playing the piano?

**CM:** He played the piano.

**LL:** He played almost every instrument that we could come up with.

**JG:** How did he walk?

**CM:** He walked spryly. He was a spryly little old man until he died.

**JG:** I've heard he had a little pep, he had a certain step, like he had a song or a tune and he was walking to the tune he had.

**GD:** I don't guess I know him.

**CM:** In fact, my cousin Jim Ligon that died, he left some cassette tapes and he got a tape or two of them the guy that interviewed Professor Jackson, Will Jackson. He interviewed him and he came to Diboll and Diboll had a 14 piece, like an orchestra, and that's the way he ended up in Diboll. I was listening to that interview and that is the way he got to

Diboll. That is when he got that and then he played... Leamon's daddy, my daddy, and my uncle, they had a quartet.

**JG:** At the church? They played at the church mostly?

**CM:** Yes, and he played for them. Man, they went everywhere. Arthur Temple bought them some uniforms.

**JG:** I remember seeing some pictures of them in white suits.

**LL:** Yes, little waist jackets on and they got...

**CM:** He taught a lot of people music, a lot of people. He married one of them Nigton girls.

**JG:** He is buried over there isn't he, Professor Jackson?

**CM:** Yes, he is buried over there in Nigton Cemetery, beside his wife.

**GD:** Who is his wife?

**CM:** Lila. Was her name Lila [Delila] or was that Edward Sweats wife?

**LL:** Wait a minute now there were four or five of those girls, because let's see...her name was Emma Jackson.

**CM:** There was Etta, Emma and Lila [Delila].

**LL:** There was another one or two of them girls. Calvin. John Calivn. Their last names were originally Calvins. I had a picture of those girls.

**CM:** I was looking at a picture last night.

**GD:** Lila belonged to Edward Sweats didn't she?

**CM:** Yes, Aunt Lila, Aunt Emma, Aunt Etta, Aunt Savannah, and Aunt Elsie.

**GD:** Savannah is Bob Griffin's wife?

**CM:** Yes, she married Bob Griffin. She also married D. S. Garcia.

**GD:** Yes, they were all sisters.

**JG:** Besides basketball, what other sports did y'all play?

**GD:** Baseball.

**CM:** And track.

**JG:** Did y'all pretty much play the same schools that you played in basketball?

**GD:** We got to play some grown folks every once in a while, but mostly...

**JG:** Were y'all as good at baseball as you were in basketball?

**GD:** Pretty much.

**CM:** We had a great baseball team.

**GD:** Diboll had a good baseball team too. It wasn't no push over. It was a little old boy pitching for them, you know, I forget his name.

**LL:** Was it a Hubbard? It wasn't O'Rea was it?

**GD:** No, O'Rea was a big boy, he pitched with the big boys.

**LL:** He wasn't that big.

**GD:** I mean he pitched in the...

**JG:** Big leagues.

**GD:** Yes, O'Rea was a good pitcher. O'Rea was left handed, but he had a little old boy and he was pitching left handed and I don't know I done forgot that boy's name. But we came over here to play them on day and he was pretty good and he done struck me out a couple of times.

**CM:** You remember that.

**GD:** And Willie said kid you go up there and you bunt. He didn't know I could move, but I could bunt too, and I take that bat and I swing just like I was going to drive that ball down the right field, I batted left handed and it all shift over that way and when he spit that ball up there I just slip my hand about middle ways of the bat and let the ball hit me where I normally catch it at and I drive it out right down third base about 20 feet from home plate.

**JG:** And you were half way to first huh?

**CM:** Well what happened, they never got smart, all they had to do was throw the ball to second base because that is where Goldman Dixon was going. When he left home plate

all he wanted to do was touch first base and they throw the ball to first base over there and he on second. Throw the ball to second base, throw it to second. But see Goldman was loading pulpwood and all and he built his body up and he was big up here and real neat in the waist.

**JG:** He is a good size man.

**CM:** People look at him and they laugh they say he can't run. That big old man can't, once he got started boy! (laughter) We ran the first track meet we ever had. We didn't have no track out there. We didn't have no football team because...one day he called us over there and he had a baton in his hand, Willie Massey, he said we going to have a track team. "Mr. Massey, we don't have a track."

**JG:** Cross country!

**CM:** He would take us to Groveton and we went out on the field and he said you see these lines right here, they call this...this is a lane...they call it a lane...and all I want you to do is stay in this lane and outrun the other guy, stay ahead of him and don't let him get ahead, you know. We were so stupid we didn't know. We had no experience and we went to Groveton and they had a guy, a couple of guys had gone to state the year before. We ran them in the ground and he ran an anchor.

**JG:** Dixon did?

**CM:** Yes, he ran the anchor.

**JG:** He was the anchor.

**CM:** Man, when I give him that baton, he had his job already worked out for him.

**JG:** What distance was it?

**GD:** A mile.

**CM:** A hundred yards...mile relay.

**JG:** A mile relay so each of you ran a quarter mile.

**CM:** And man, when I gave him that it was over with. See they had trained these guys, when you run track, they train you to run down there and when you get down there to about 50 yards you turn your burner on, you know, you pace yourself and nobody never got in front of us. We got to the place where these big schools didn't want to play us, didn't want to compete against us. We were in such good shape. We call Willie Massey. I told his daughter last Sunday I said, "I hate your daddy!" I didn't like him!

**JG:** Is that Gloria?

**CM:** Yes, Gloria Toran Massey.

**LL:** Those two ladies were out there at Nigton chasing deer and armadillo. That armadillo would run to a tree and make a right turn and these guys were so fast and so quick at what they were doing, you know. That is one of the things I never could understand. Me and Cleveland used to fight when we were little bitty boys. He was born in August and I was born in October...we would get into it. I'm not going to tell that story. (laughter)

**JG:** That was before Goldman was his protector, huh?

**LL:** Well we were supposed to have started school the same year, but I was late because of injuries. I lost these two fingers one year and I lost one the next. Cleveland was ahead of me. He come out in '48-49.

**CM:** Hold your point right there. That is another story. Me and Goldman, that year, Diboll had won the state championship.

**LL:** In '48 yes!

**CM:** In '48, they come out there, boy...

**JG:** In what, what sport?

**CM:** In basketball.

**JG:** Basketball.

**CM:** They came out there and we beat the snot out of Diboll.

**LL:** Yes, they did.

**CM:** So, Willie Massey told me and Goldman, he said, "well y'all aren't going to do nothing so y'all just stay on another year." And we did and I was telling my children how smart I was...

**JG:** You mean stay in school another year?

**GD:** Yes, stayed another year longer than I ought to. (laughter)

**CM:** Me and Goldman both. My children told me said, "Daddy you tell us how smart you were" and they saw my diploma, they say you were 19 years old when you graduated

from high school you must not have been that smart. (laughter) But Willie Massey just kept us there and...

**LL:** You could do that back then.

**CM:** Yes, it wasn't no interscholastic league.

**LL:** It wasn't no A school or 6A school or...

**CM:** No, it wasn't no interscholastic league.

**LL:** And Diboll only went to...it was classified as a B School, because that started under Professor Davis.

**GD:** Who? Bill Davis?

**LL:** Yes.

**GD:** He was over here at that time.

**LL:** Yes.

**GD:** Well my daddy helped him to get that job. He had already taught in Nigton, and he come back out there. My daddy helped him to get back on out there.

**LL:** Well he was principal when I started school here. I started in the primer as a new attendee, you know.

**GD:** Yes, I know what you're talking about.

**LL:** I came up through those woods with my little syrup bucket in my hand.

**GD:** People won't know what you talking about this day and time.

**CM:** Lard buckets, syrup buckets.

**LL:** It wasn't but one building there. We had one single building with bi-fold doors that separated the different classes. I would come in on the back side of the school through those woods and you had to...they didn't have a gate to the school yard you had to walk up over the steps over the fence.

**CM:** Yes, I remember that.

**LL:** So, it was...but when we got in that yard we weren't supposed to get out until school was out.

**GD:** That is the way it was in Nigton. We didn't have...we had the steps but at church but they had a cattle guard down there was the main entrance. Then they had another little place down by the cafeteria where you go through the fence to the store. You don't remember that?

**CM:** Yes, I remember that.

**GD:** That is where we would go and they wouldn't even...if they catch you it would be too wet to plow.

**LL:** Yes, it would.

**GD:** But we would slip over to that store and get us some stage plank or something. You could get a big old stage plank for a nickel man!

**LL:** Nickel bottle of soda water.

**JG:** And what are you saying a what?

**GD:** Stage plank.

**JG:** Stage plank.

**GD:** It was a cookie.

**CM:** It was like a cookie.

**GD:** It was about that long and two in the package, about that long and together and you take one out. That is what it was, a nickel!

**LL:** Wrapped in cellophane or something, a cellophane package.

**CM:** We were so poor.

**GD:** In the cafeteria you had to pay a dime I believe to eat there. We didn't have no dime you could eat anyhow.

**CM:** We were so poor.

**GD:** We wasn't poor!

**LL:** I didn't know what poor was.

**CM:** Nobody else did either.

**JG:** Y'all didn't know it at the time, is what you are saying.

**CM:** But anyway, this real pretty young lady asked Goldman for a nickel. (laughter)

**GD:** Oh boy! (laughter) I had had fifteen cents that day, and I spent it on me in the Busters store and she...

**LL:** Busters store right there at four corners?

**GD:** Yes.

**LL:** Okay I know where, yes.

**GD:** Right there where they put the marker. So I was liking the girl but I guess we were both about 12 or 15 years old, very young. Oh, I loved her I thought, you know! And she...

**LL:** Puppy Love!

**GD:** She was there with her daddy and her daddy and my daddy were sitting there talking at the store after they got out of church, and she said "Goldman I need me a nickel" oh my! (laughter)

**JG:** You had already spent it all?

**GD:** I had! (laughter) I said, "oh" I didn't know what to do, had him ease me a nickel and I eased up to her and I said, "here it is Marie go get what you want with this nickel." I just acting...like Barney Fife, you know what I mean. (laughter)

**JG:** You borrowed money to give to her.

**GD:** Well the boy heard me. I didn't ask him for it, but he was my cousin, he just...he was a little older than me. He heard it and he knowed I was lacking, so he eased me the nickel, he sure did! I never will forget that. We talk about that even after I got back from the military, but she had done went on to California or somewhere. She got...the girl went on and she got really educated. She got to speak seven different languages.

**LL:** Oh really?

**GD:** Oh yes! Something happened to her.

**CM:** She died real young.

**GD:** Yes, she died real young.

**CM:** There are just so many memories we have of growing up out there, you know, in them woods but it was just a joy. I told a man from the *San Antonio Express* about how good a time we had growing up. We didn't have no running water, no electricity, but you just surrounded by love everywhere you go, you know. Everybody was your parent and you go to somebody's house and do something and I'm just glad they didn't have telephones back then. (laughter)

**LL:** I got in more trouble like that, you know. Somebody say Mrs. [unintelligible], I saw Leamon over there throwing rocks and when I turned that corner going to my house, "come here boy" I would say, oh lord what have I done now, you know. "Boy you calling Mrs. So and so a liar?" "No mamma I don't know nothing about Mrs. so and so. What did she tell you?" "Oh, you questioning me now?" Oh man she would tear it up.

**JG:** Now you mentioned throwing rocks more than once was that your...?

**LL:** No, it really wasn't my thing. If you made me mad and I figured I couldn't handle you yes, I would rock you. (laughter) But that was only twice that I can think of that throwing rocks came into being.

**JG:** Mr. Dixon was telling me the other day a funny story about riding the bus when you were going into boot camp I guess with the Marines. Do you remember that? Can you tell me about when you got on the bus and I was asking you about integration or segregation and you told about the bus ride to Houston?

**GD:** Oh yes, we went to Houston and...oh I know what you talking about now. Yes, we got on the bus up there in front...across from the courthouse, that street, Mrs. Anderson was there, well that is where her office was. You remember Mrs. Anderson, don't you?

**CM:** Yes, she was over the selection.

**GD:** Selective Services. Yes, me and Henry, he worked at the Foundry...

**CM:** Henry Rusk?

**GD:** No, Henry Jordan, he was a white boy. I didn't know them until we got on that bus, it was three or four buses and they put us all on there and they put us on the back.

**JG:** Us meaning the blacks?

**GD:** Yes, blacks on the back and whites on the front, that was back in 1952. It had to be '52 and that was still segregated. But, when them boys got on the bus they were having to go, somebody giving them white boys donuts when they got on the bus and didn't give us nothing. I said, "what the hell".

**JG:** So they got donuts and you didn't, huh?

**GD:** Didn't get nothing. Well I figured it out and we went on and got on the bus, but on the back of the bus when we got about to Diboll we started us a craps game.

**LL:** On the bus?

**GD:** Yes, and them white boys went to coming back.

**CM:** And integrated.

**GD:** ...and we integrated that bus. (laughter) That bus driver just kept keeping on. We was having fun! Then after we got to Houston down there, they gave us another examination, a physical, it was up over the bus station there where I took that physical at. They took the physical and then that's when they said, they lined us all up and there was a Marine guy sitting there, Marine, Navy sitting there and they was picking out who they wanted. I wanted to go with Richard Stanton. You remember him?

**CM:** Yes.

**LL:** Vaguely.

**CM:** Red's brother.

**LL:** I remember the name quite good. I don't know Red.

**GD:** It was Joe Redd's brother. He was about the same age Richard was. I thought I was going to go with him, and he went to San Antonio or somewhere. He didn't go where I went. They put me in there and I said, "no I don't want to go." He said "no, you're going to the Marines." I said "I don't want..." He said, "you going have to go though." I quit arguing with them and I got on...that night they put us on this Argonaut, a train, a steamer.

**JG:** The Argonaut.

**GD:** Yes, it was a steamer, and they had sleeper cars, and Baker, Jessie Baker he was a big pulpwood man, or was, in Lufkin, he may be dead I don't know. But anyway, they put us on that and we would get up and go eat breakfast every morning. We were eating all together.

**JG:** On the train going to the Marines?

**GD:** Yes, we could eat together on the train, even in Texas we could eat together on the train and we got to California, Los Angeles, we had to change trains I believe it was. Well they fed us in a restaurant there. We all went there, had a meal ticket that we all went

around there and I said well I'm going to eat pretty good. I had a little of everything. When I got to San Diego that night, it was dark when we got to San Diego, and they brought a bus, a truck and they had a trailer on the back of it for everybody to get in there. He said, "the last one on that bus I'm going to kick his butt." That is what he told them and I was the last one. (laughter) I said "uh-oh." I said I'm going upside his head whether I lose or not.

**CM:** You going to nail him?

**GD:** Yes, I was going to nail him. I was going to try, but I stopped and looked back and I was pretty strong then. I had just quit working on the railroad. I worked on little old spur line so, "Everybody get off that bus" He said, "I want you to get back on there and this time I ain't going to take no names." I didn't rush neither. That time I got on about middle ways, I didn't rush myself. I wasn't going to rush and hurt myself. Well when we got to the base there it was worse. Y'all don't know what I'm talking about. I said, "gosh" I wondered what I had myself into. Then they got there and said y'all go in there, some kind of barracks, y'all go in there and take you a bath. We took a shower and all of that and it was getting late at night. Said y'all go to bed, you're going to get up and 4:00 o'clock in the morning. I said god dog! It was almost getting up and I needed to sleep.

**JG:** It was almost 4 o'clock, huh?

**GD:** Yes, got up and they was calling "get up, recruit". That's what they was calling... and they calling you more than that too. (laughter) They made you line up and go eat your breakfast and all that and then you come out and they take you to get your clothes. They give you a bucket to get all this stuff in man, brushes and all your shaving gear.

**LL:** Old rusty razor blades.

**GD:** Yes, they had that Schick Razor they was giving us.

**JG:** Schick?

**GD:** Yes, you had to take and slap, you remember that kind?

**LL:** Yes, I remember that kind but that is not what they gave us.

**GD:** That is what they gave us. You put that in there and then slip the blade out and it knocked the other blade out. That is the kind we got. We got in there and I started to leave there too. I started to go AWOL too. It was so bad. It was a PFC Cleveland, an old man, he had all them stripes, not the chevrons but he had PFC stripes and some little notches on the sleeves. A lot of them, he had been in there a long time. I was sitting by that telephone or light pole or something. I come out of that mess hall or something. And I say I'm going to leave this place. I don't know how he read my mind. I was sitting there and I was figuring me a way and I said Pearl have hitchhiked from California I said I can

do it too. And so, he said, “Look here recruit, don’t you do that, don’t you do that.” I said “what you talking about?” He said, “stand up here.” He made me stand up, “don’t you ever think about leaving here, you stay here.”

**JG:** Was it a black man or a white man?

**GD:** A white man. Yes, he said, “you will be wishing you hadn’t.” He had been pretty bad hombre himself because he had done lost all them stripes, but he was still hanging in there. Had all them...

**LL:** Them longevity stripes.

**GD:** Yes, them longevity stripes. I didn’t know what they meant then, but later on I found what it meant. He said, “you go on and you’ll be glad. It will be alright afterwards. It’s going to take a while, but stay with it don’t leave here. You will wish you hadn’t.” So, I did, I took it under consideration and then we went through something. They take me to the [unintelligible] and they made me go clean the coffee pot, go out there and get some dirt and clean that coffee pot and rinse it out and get all that grit out. “I don’t want no more grit in there” and all that. When you make this coffee and when you pour my coffee you turn it clockwise and if it isn’t turning clockwise you get to me...I give him his coffee, “that coffee ain’t turning clockwise” and he nailed me in the belly and boy I liked to...boy that hurt me so bad. Y’all don’t believe it but they did.

**LL:** Yes, I do.

**GD:** I said ...so the next time he hit me I tightened that belly up and he nailed me in the belly and I just stood there. I tightened it up like that you know, and it didn’t hurt as bad.

**JG:** Now who was that doing that?

**GD:** Sergeant Wedge, he was the drill instructor.

**JG:** Was he white?

**GD:** Yes, he was white. He had a little old Mexican assistant and his name was Alvarado. But anyway, somebody turned him in. Somebody in our platoon had some kind of father in the military and he turned him in and they had to court martial him. They come around there with a little book and tell us did he do this or that. I said I don’t know what he did. I told them boys, “y’all don’t know what he done.” But some of them wouldn’t listen, but it was a few more listened. And I had told that fellow that brought them, if you don’t know what was done if you didn’t see it, well you put down there you seen it. I said I ain’t going to do that. I told them boys not to do it and he carried us all...they finally court martialed him. I really didn’t go against him. I sort of got to liking Sergeant Wedge after a while, you know. It was just his way. Jessie James, I told him

about Jessie James, he was from Missouri. His name was Jessie James, he got out of there, he got out of boot camp.

**LL:** I didn't want no part of Marines or Army.

**GD:** What he did he was checking us out one night, he come over there asking the order, you know the general order you are supposed to learn, and my brothers had told me you got to learn good. They go through and skip through them and ask you because they ain't going in order. They going to skip through them.

**LL:** What is honorable 9?

**GD:** Yes, they ask me mine and I blasted it out and they asked a few more and they blasted theirs out, but when they got to Jessie James, I never will forget, he said, "Jessie James what is your 6<sup>th</sup> general order?" "Sir my 6<sup>th</sup> general order is sir, my 6<sup>th</sup> general order is sir!" and we were in them Quonset huts like, and I was sitting in there and they kept I said "cucucucu" and he picked up a belt with a bandit and all on it and threw it towards me and I ducked and it missed me. He called me a name and said I'm going to get you. I'm going to get you Dixon. It was a big old white boy from San Antonio and me and him was sitting side by side and he said, y'all get back in y'all's area and anyone want to try me just step out in that aisle. The aisle was about as wide as this table here, and so this red headed boy got ahold of it, I was about middle ways of the building myself and that boy from San Antonio said, "Dixon you don't need" I said, "well that boy is littler than me." He stepped out, but he beat him up and I wanted to go back in, you know, back in between them but I had done committed myself. I stayed here and take it, he was nailing that boy and he got that boy from San Antonio he just backed off. Then he looked at me and he drewed his little hand back and swung at me and I ducked down and he hit one of them big...he went to hollering like a wildcat.

**JG:** He hit his fist on the metal bed?

**GD:** Yes, they had them stacked in there. He hit his fist on it and I went to cackling. He was hollering like a wildcat and they carried to sick bay or something.

**LL:** Probably broke his hand.

**GD:** I imagine he did, but he was trying to nail me, but that ended that.

**JG:** Hey I wanted to ask y'all about Jay Boren too, but at the same time I don't want to go longer than y'all can. I saw you looking at your watch while ago.

**LL:** Well these two didn't have too much experience with Jay I don't think. I know Goldman didn't.

**GD:** I didn't have much. Me and Willie Massey run into him one time, but somebody had done cooled him down by then.

**LL:** They brought him in here I think in the forties, I think, as a control of people. And I never had too much dealings with him. Some of the other guys around town did but the one incident that I had anything with him, was someone had whistled at one of the girls here in town, up around the commissary or somewhere. I don't know where it happened at because I wasn't there. But anyway, my folks sent me up to a little soda water stand, as we called it back in those days. We had some visitors at home that night, "run up to the café and get three or four bottles of soda water." I think it might have been maybe 10 cents or so. So, when they sent me some place, I couldn't deviate in any manner. I had to go directly there, do what I was supposed to do, and return home. Any outside or somebody called me or something, that would have to wait but my thing go to it and come directly back. Don't waste time. So, I got the soda and came out of the café and Mr. Boren was sitting out there on the street in the car. And so he stopped me and made me get in the car and he was questioning me about who whistled at this girl. "I don't know," you know, I have no idea, but he was very persistent in his questioning and he kept at me about who did it, you know who did it, blah, blah, blah, blah. He was trying to bully me and it worked, scared the daylights out of me. But anyway, when he turned me loose, I was late getting home and I walked up on that porch that night and my daddy come at me with a belt and my grandfather stopped him, "hold it, let him explain why he didn't come back when he was supposed to." So, I explained to them what happened with Mr. Boren, and cleared myself up because they had heard some talk or something about some teenager doing something out in the community they weren't supposed to do. Later on, and I didn't have the privilege of questioning my folks about what they were doing or what they were thinking or what was going on. You're a kid, you were to be seen and not heard, you keep quiet and keep still. So, in my observation, I knew something serious was going on. Well my grandfather had sent for Jay Boren and Jay had a big old white stallion, 12 or 15 hands high.

**JG:** Your grandfathers name?

**LL:** Walter, W. G., I think most people referred to him as W. G. And Mr. Boren come high stepping up there, "you sent for me Walt?" and he was standing there with that shotgun sticking out. My grandfather was short, very short, maybe 5'2", Cleveland?

**CM:** Something like that.

**LL:** And, that shot gun...he was standing on the front porch, the porch sat about this high off the ground.

**JG:** About 3 feet off the ground.

**LL:** Yes, he standing on the porch with that shotgun sticking up over his head and he told him he said, "hey anytime you want to talk to my boy, you let me know and we will

make some arrangements to get it done.” “Don’t you stop him when he” you know, “he is on an errand for me, you need to ask him what he is doing or where he is going.” And Jay Boren said, “okay” and he wheeled that horse right on around and came back toward the railroad track. That is the only...and I have heard of other stories.

**JG:** Only direct.

**LL:** Only direct contact I had with Jay Boren or any of my family that I knew of. I had heard various stories about how he beat up somebody, you know.

**JG:** I think Jim Ligon told me he was pretty rough.

**LL:** He was supposedly yes, very rough.

**CM:** All you did if you got him cut off from that gun...

**LL:** You had him beat.

**CM:** Well, the reason he stopped mistreating black people in Diboll, Marcellus Jones and his wife, they got in a big old fuss fight and she ran down to her uncle’s house. Her uncle was named Willie Jones. She run down to Willie Jones house told Willie Jones that Marcellus jumped on her. So, Willie Jones wife took her in the room in there, and Willie Jones went and told Mr. Blount that he was tired of Marcellus Jones beating his niece. So, Jay Boren went to the house and Marcellus Jones and his daughter, his children were sitting up there watching TV. And so, Jay Boren come in there and he didn’t knock he just went on up in the house and he ask Marcellus why was he beating his wife. Marcellus said I ain’t laid hands on her, we got into a big fuss and the children told Jay Boren too. They said Daddy hadn’t hit Momma. So, to make a long story short, he told Marcellus to go out in the yard, he was behind Marcellus, and when Marcellus went down the steps, he hit Marcellus in the head with that flat black jack, knocked Marcellus down and started kicking him and beating him. And, he had a little Texas Ranger with him and to make a long story short Marcellus Jones called the FBI. He turned him in to the FBI so they came down here and asked questions about what happened. It was about 7 or 8 men out there behind a barrel, it was kind of cool and they were out there by this burn barrel and they saw this and wouldn’t none of them witness what they saw.

**JG:** They wouldn’t testify.

**CM:** They wouldn’t testify. So, it was a lady name Beulah Goff, she was out there in the dark, and she told them FBI people, she said, “I saw everything that went on and I’m willing to testify. I’ll tell y’all what happened.” And so they asked her and they went down there and talked to Arthur Temple and the FBI, in a certain sense, told them that if Marcellus wanted to file on him they would take it from there but Marcellus wouldn’t file on Arthur Temple. From then on until that day until Arthur Temple died, he always thanked Marcellus for not signing him up, you know.

**LL:** Signing a complaint.

**CM:** Yes, and Marcellus was about to lose the cleaners. They had to come down there and put a foreclosure sign on the cleaners he owned and he told them to call Arthur Temple. So, they called Arthur Temple and we don't know what Arthur Temple told him but they took all those foreclosure signs down. That is the way he stopped beating people up. Arthur Temple said he didn't know he was treating people like that over here.

**LL:** Yes, I heard that he had said that. Of course, my grandfather had a little influence here because during my growing up, my grandfather was Henry Temple's gardener, plus working at the mill. I used to follow my grandfather around, you know, like any kid his adult guardian or whatever, you know. My grandmother and grandfather raised me. He had probably some little minor privileges that you could do and say things, you know, because there was some doubt as to what my father's racial thing was. He looked like a Mexican with straight hair. His daddy was C. C. Ligon which was York Ligon, Robert's brother and Uncle York, Suzanne told us that Uncle York...

**JG:** This is Suzanne Waller at the Groveton museum.

**LL:** She told us that Uncle York was white, and I'm going well maybe he was over on that side of town, but over here where we live, when he come over on that mule and blowing that bugle, it was our Uncle, Uncle York Ligon.

**JG:** Now this is the same man that was Womack's boyhood friend?

**LL:** Yes.

**CM:** That was Uncle York. And Leamon talk about riding that mule. That is the strangest sight you ever seen. This great big old man was on a mule with no saddle and his feet was almost touching the ground.

**GD:** That was a donkey.

**CM:** No, it was a red mule.

**LL:** It was a small mule.

**CM:** Old Red they called him.

**LL:** He had his bugle around his neck on one side and he had what we called a hunting sack on the other side, you know. And sometimes he had a rifle with him and you know, that was the weirdest sight you ever seen. You could hear him coming around that lake area and he would be blowing that bugle man.

**CM:** And Jim Ligon, the bugle is still in the family. Jim Ligon's daughter got that bugle right now.

**GD:** No kidding?

**CM:** Yes.

**GD:** Well my daddy bought his land from some Ligon.

**LL:** It had to be C. C. or Uncle York.

**GD:** It must have been C. C.

**CM:** It was C. C. Ligon, at the house right now where Doc Dixon lives.

**GD:** Well that is where your grandfather lived, where Doc is living now.

**LL:** Yes.

**GD:** And back there where, you know, Sara Ann, she was [unintelligible] she lived back off up in there towards the clubhouse.

**LL:** Well now when we left Nigton we were living down on the Neches River, but we had been living up on the Apple Springs road up there.

**GD:** Yes, that is what I'm talking about, where Doc is.

**LL:** That was our property too.

**GD:** Yes, but I wanted to...

**LL:** Because my great-grandfather's home was in Trinity and he a great big old house over there. You could walk up the front steps and look all the way through to the back.

**GD:** Had that hall running through there.

**LL:** Yes.

**GD:** That is the way they built houses back in those days.

**LL:** Yes, and he had a library that was full of books, almost as big as Jonathan's office room over here. That thing was lined the walls with books and stuff. I never could ever understand or get anybody to tell me anything. I wanted those books, but I never knew what happened to them. That was the property my daddy owned when I retired, well after I retired. I lived in San Antonio ten years after I got out of the service, and then when I

came back here to Diboll before my grandmother passed away. I was living here in Diboll, I stayed here for quite a while taking care of her. History is a peculiar thing. You have to be able to read between the lines on some of this stuff. Suzanne and I got into some deep conversations about what was going on back then. Uncle York was white, no he wasn't he was black. Well he was mixed, well we think, and I'm going well you never knew because the grass was tall and the Smith's or Womack's property was bordering our property, and you don't know who was going or coming in that tall grass because it was too tall to see, you know. So, you never knew.

**CM:** Well you know, Jim Ligon...I have the papers now where Jim Ligon filed for that 160 acres of land over there and they had signed a letter saying, asking him would he trade 160 acres of land somewhere else. They had turned that into the old River Club over there. So rather than to disturb all this, they agreed to do this and instead of him considering it, he said he wanted his grandpa's land. So, the guy took the case and went to Oklahoma and Jim Ligon didn't hear from him and he told them he was going to call the legal man and the guy sent him all these papers. I got it at my house right now, and they sent everything back except the letter saying they would trade him some land.

**LL:** I looked at that historical thing over there, genealogy section over there in Groveton that Suzanne opens up, I looked in her books and it shows on one side that Robert C. and C. C. owned somewhere close to 400 acres of land and on the next page, without any documentation or transfer of paper work or anything it was the ownership of Southern Pine Lumber Company.

**CM:** Well when they went down to Houston, they took Uncle York Ligon down to Houston down there, and they knew somebody forged Uncle York Ligon. He had signed on his marriage license and everything else, all his legal papers, he signed an X. And on these papers to transfer that deed is wrote his name Robert Lee Ligon and they knew then someone had forged that because Uncle York never could read.

**LL:** Freddie Spencer told me he got shot over a pint of white lighting. So, I guess they had took him down there for that.

**CM:** Yes, they shot him.

**JG:** So, is that how Mr. York Ligon died somebody shot him?

**CM:** He didn't die!

**GD:** He died years later.

**CM:** They just shot him and see, they sending people to the penitentiary for boot-legging and the guy came down there and he kept worrying Uncle York about his wife needed some whiskey had a toothache. And in the meantime the sheriff was hid out there in the dark. So, Uncle York sat there and after a while he got up and went way around there and

come back and he had about a quarter of a pint of moonshine in a half pint jar, so when Uncle York give the guy the jar and the guy give Uncle York a dollar. He said, "what is this for?" And the sheriff came and arrested Uncle York. Uncle York broke the jar on a rock but that is how they got Old River Club.

**JG:** So, they set him up?

**CM:** Yes, they set him up.

**GD:** Well they do that today! It ain't changed!

**CM:** Carried him to Houston down there, but it's on record over in Groveton, that after they saw that somebody had signed the deed, they released Uncle York of all.

**LL:** I have a question on that.

**JG:** So that was Southern Pine Lumber Company you are talking about?

**CM:** Yes.

**LL:** I have a question on that stuff because when I was being drafted, I was classified as 1A, came out of Beaumont and came back up here and went to work at the Creosote plant. And I had to have a birth certificate and when I went to the courthouse, there was no record of birth for me. They told me that the court house caught fire and burned up all the paperwork up there. Suzanne seems to be able to come up with some records and some papers and stuff.

**GD:** You ain't got no birth certificate?

**LL:** I didn't then. My grandmother and the midwife had to go swear out an affidavit for the birth certificate to go in but then in my research, when I get on the computer I was able to get some stuff out of the Mormon Tabernacle, whatever that thing is up there.

**CM:** Salt Lake City.

**LL:** Salt Lake City. They have a book, that thing must be...I found a book at a city library in San Antonio and it must be almost 4 inches thick. Great big old giant book and the title on the cover of the book is "Ligon Family and Connections." This book goes all the way back to English, French, you know, the kings and queens of the countries, used to send their daughters... They try to keep everything blue blooded as they call it. This book has some records in it and I've read it, I've seen it once more on the internet. It supposedly goes all the way back to Pocahontas with the Ligon name, L-i-g-o-n. The slave ship that this man wrote about, was in the Coast Guard, what is his name? The Lord Ligonier is one of the slave ships that brought slaves over to this continent and supposedly C. C.'s mother, I don't know how true this is, or I can't verify it. She was

supposed to have been on a slave block in South Carolina or somewhere up there where they did that buying and selling.

**GD:** Processing?

**LL:** Yes, then I have a trail of her from that point on all the way down into Louisiana and when they came out of supposedly DeSoto Parish and came to Texas. So, I'm not sure about any of this, but the name is a very long history of the name. In England it is spelled L-y-g-o-n, French spelled something else, and supposed to have been a lot of French blood in that name. I haven't been able to come up with anything recently.

**GD:** Well the Ligon's had some Indian, they got mixed with the Indians.

**LL:** Well it was a mixture of French, and Indian and...

**GD:** I'm talking about American Indian.

**LL:** Yes, that is what I'm talking about.

**CM:** Well wherever you get males and females together, it don't make no difference how you don't like it or whatever, you are going to be, all of us mixed with something. There is no pure white race and there isn't any pure black race. We all got something. You can send off and get your DNA and it will tell you what percentage.

**GD:** Of you or whatever.

**CM:** Yes, it will tell you.

**GD:** I just leave mine. I'm going to do like Artie Dixon said we don't give a dog. It don't make no difference which was it is with me. That is like, I know my grandmother was half white and it showed, but all her boys come out looking like us, you know. And my grandfather was like us.

**LL:** Well my daddy had three sisters and there were four kids all total that came out of that group. Two of them were extremely light skinned and two of them were more like me.

**GD:** Well it can happen, like Dogan [Leonard Dixon, Jr.] he come out more...Dogan and Nelson came out lighter and some of them girls did too, but they died earlier on my grandma's side. Some of them early came out. B. K.'s mother...

**CM:** Mattie? Aunt Mattie?

**GD:** Yes, she was kind of bright. Well what I'm saying...

**LL:** Dogan wasn't that dark himself. He used to come to our house here in Diboll.

**GD:** When he come, he try to visit everybody in the community.

**LL:** In the area, he would come out of Philadelphia down here and he gave me a picture of him and Joe Louis together and I kept that thing. When I left home going into service it was left there and I haven't seen it since.

**CM:** Jonathan this Dogan they talking about, he is Goldman's Uncle and...

**GD:** He was on Life Magazine way back.

**LL:** He was Joe Louis's sparring partner.

**JG:** Okay what was his name?

**CM:** His name was Dogan, his name was Leonard Dixon, Jr.

**JG:** Leonard Dixon. Jr.

**GD:** I think you will find Dogan in the hall of fame.

**CM:** Well see, Philadelphia they have their own hall of fame and Ernestine has found the guy, and she told me today she is going to get in touch with this guy before he pass on, he is trying to get Dogan Dixon elected to the Philadelphia Hall of Fame.

**LL:** It shouldn't be too difficult.

**GD:** Somebody told me he already been in that.

**JG:** Now how is he related to you?

**GD:** He is my daddy's brother.

**JG:** Your daddy's brother, so your cousin [uncle].

**GD:** He was about 7 feet tall.

**JG:** How did he get hooked up with Joe Louis?

**CM:** He was in Philadelphia...

**GD:** He went up there and got with Nelson.

**CM:** ...and he was a good fighter and that is what they chose people who had the same kind of boxing style maybe.

**JG:** He grew up in Nigton though?

**CM:** Yes sir.

**JG:** But he got to Philadelphia.

**CM:** Yes, how that happened I don't know.

**GD:** Well I think through Nelson Dixon. Nelson Dixon and Jerry went all up through Ohio and then he went up and stayed with Nelson. Nelson came back and married Regina and he stayed in San Antonio. Dogan stayed, it was a long time before Dogan got married and she finally came down here. Her name was Hattie.

**CM:** I saw a picture of them somewhere, all this sparring partner Joe Louis had and man and Dogan Dixon standing head to shoulders above all them guys.

**LL:** He was a huge man.

**JG:** Dogan Dixon.

**GD:** Put Leonard too, Leonard Jr.

**LL:** Yes, that was his name, wasn't it?

**GD:** Yes, Leonard Jr. but I think it can be found as Dogan because Johnnie Sue told me she went up there and called his house that number. Somebody knew him and knew all about him but somebody else was living at that house.

**CM:** In Diboll they had...Jim Ligon's daddy had this honky tonk and some guy came...

**JG:** The Froggy Bottom?

**CM:** Yes.

**GD:** Wait a minute!

**CM:** The Foggy Bottom too.

**JG:** The Foggy Bottom, not Froggy, Foggy.

**GD:** Where was that Cleveland here in Diboll?

**CM:** Yes.

**LL:** Well it's going to be hard to determine where it was then because the town has moved south.

**GD:** I know, but I remember hearing the Foggy Bottom, that was supposed to be a bad name.

**CM:** The Foggy Bottom, yes that is right.

**LL:** Yes, me and Jim used to run, man that thing, he had papers in there and it was dark down them big old hallways you go down. Old man Jim, he had him a swing or something sitting out back and he had a big old wash pot back there. He would fry pork chops in that. He would pour a gallon of cooking oil and cook them. People told him man you better quit eating them pork chops like that it's going to kill you one of these days. He had some health problems, evidently blood pressure and so on. They couldn't control it like they do now.

**GD:** He frying them pork chops.

**LL:** Old man Jim, he loved him some pork chops, lord he loved them pork chops.

**CM:** He didn't trim that fat off either.

**GD:** I don't know what happened to my momma's wash pot but it done got lost.

**CM:** Somebody stole my momma's wash pot.

**GD:** That is what they done, they stole it.

**LL:** Everybody had a wash pot back then.

**CM:** I tell you something else happened to that Foggy Bottom. Uncle Jim Ligon started showing movies down there...

**LL:** Oh lord!

**CM:** ...in the Foggy Bottom.

**GD:** Showing movies?

**CM:** Yes, and black people stopped going to the white movie and somebody set it on fire. Somebody set Foggy Bottom on fire, burned up the equipment, sure did.

**LL:** Jim learned how to play a piano sitting up there.

**GD:** There is a lot I didn't know Cleveland. Uncle Jim Ligon owned the Foggy Bottom?

**CM:** Yes, Uncle Jim Ligon.

**LL:** The one you know about Jim Jr., he was a junior, his daddy's name was Jim.

**GD:** Oh okay, okay, I thought...this is the daddy okay.

**CM:** This is the daddy yes, and it is just so much history that went on. There was a boxer came here and they set up a boxing ring down there in Foggy Bottom and that guy was giving \$50 to anybody that could stay in the ring with him for three rounds. So, he just knocked guys out boy the first round, bow! And, Leamon's daddy, he heard about it and he went to Nigton and got Dogan Dixon and brought him over here.

**GD:** No kidding!

**CM:** The bell went off and Dogan Dixon hit that guy one time, didn't even last a round, knocked that guy cold, boy! He bullied up his way and he would get up there and shadow box and all Dogan Dixon and Henry Ligon would say he knocked him out in one round. He didn't even make a round up there.

**GD:** Dogan was powerful, I guarantee you.

**CM:** Yes, he was.

**JG:** Was he older than you?

**GD:** Oh yes, he was my uncle he was much older than me.

**JG:** Oh, your uncle okay.

**GD:** Me and him put on the gloves and he would let me tie up with him. He let me...that is all he had to do but I thought I was beating him up boy and he let me do that you know. Up there in front of my grandma's house we would get out there and do that.

**CM:** You thought you were really fighting him.

**GD:** Yes, I thought I had done it but I knew in my heart I knew better.

**CM:** Fairbanks Deason and Willie Massey was Dogan Dixons' nephew. We had a stage out there at Dixons and Dogan Dixon, he would get up there and shadow box and all. So, he put Willie Massey and Fairbanks in the ring and told them now don't hit each other. He spent a day showing them how to just throw a punch and hold it back. Well Willie Massey had just got a haircut and him and Fairbanks always competed against each other,

so Fairbanks couldn't resist. Willie Massey had his head down like that and instead of Fairbanks just tapping him, Fairbanks hit him. I mean knocked him...

**JG:** Did they have gloves on?

**CM:** Yes, they had gloves on, but Fairbanks knocked Willie Massey down. And so, Willie Massey got up and when Willie Massey get mad his nose flairs open like a bull. He hit Fairbanks Deason, knocked Fairbanks Deason down on the floor and instead of waiting until he got up he got down on him. (laughter) He was beating the hell out of him. He was beating the hell out of him. Dogan Dixon came over there and got Willie Massey, drug Willie Massey off of him, boy and picked Willie Massey up just like he was a little sandwich or something, boy. That tickled us, we were little old boys, man. Everything Willie Massey and Fairbanks did they competed against each other.

**GD:** Well me and your brother sparred on that same stage later, but we sparred, we didn't go because I was scared of him. I didn't hit him hard and he didn't hit me hard but we made it look pretty good. We would tie up every once in a while.

**LL:** They started boy scout troop over here and somehow in the process of forming this boy scout club, because we used to box and all, Joe Nathan Rogers, and Herman Jones were supposed to be the bullies of the school. They run me home every day. Joe Diamond had a stand, a café, right in front of the baseball park and the box factory quarters. Somehow or another he had an agreement with them when they cut off a broom handle or something you could get a truck load of that so they dumped it right behind Joe Diamonds café, he was using it for fuel.

**GD:** Wood.

**LL:** Yes, so Herman and Joe Nathan were going to beat me up that day. I was supposed to bring them a nickel to school, I didn't bring them nothing. They would out run me. If I could kind of stay within throwing distance of Cleveland running that was the fastest dude under Gods creation. I tell you what if I could stay within sight of him, Joe Nathan and Herman didn't have a chance. So I run up on top of this thing and they come around that corner man and I let them have it. I had them handles, cut off handles about that long.

**JG:** About a foot long.

**LL:** Yes, boy when they come around that corner, (throwing motion) I worked them dudes over. I didn't have no more trouble out of them.

**CM:** They run me home every day too.

**GD:** Herman Jones was a little pitcher in baseball, wasn't he?

**CM:** Yes, he wasn't no little pitcher.

**GD:** Yes, that is the one I was thinking about. He was kind of stocky build.

**LL:** Herman as a matter of fact he and his brother went to the Dodgers training thing for baseball.

**GD:** Yes, he was a pretty good pitcher for baseball.

**CM:** You know I hear them talk about who Big Jim and them guys going to the Negro League, but I got a book called *Only The Ball was White*.

**JG:** Only the ball was what?

**CM:** *Only The Ball Was White*. It is a history of the Negro League and nobody name in there that they told me, Fred Randolph, their name isn't in the book.

**GD:** Fred Randolph didn't go to no league.

**CM:** Well they tried to get him when he was 16 years old, they come down here.

**GD:** He was a good catcher, wasn't he?

**CM:** Yes, they came down here and asked his momma and she wouldn't let him go.

**LL:** I didn't ever remember his mother too well.

**CM:** I remember Mrs. Randolph.

**LL:** I didn't find out until man, we were old and we started this H. G. Temple Alumni Association, that A. V. and I were the same age. Fred put his age up to start to school and then that caused him to be drafted into the army for Korea.

**GD:** A. V. who?

**LL:** A. V. Lewis, Fred Lewis.

**CM:** A. V. was on the team that won state that year.

**LL:** Yes.

**CM:** Yes, we did, A. V., E. C. Williams,

**LL:** James Rhone.

**CM:** James Rhone, John Odom, and them two Allen boys.

**LL:** Herbert...not Herbert, Ed and Franklin.

**CM:** Herman and them used to run me home. I had my little nice shirt on...they tore it off of me one day and I went home and...

**LL:** I think they got their butts tore up for that too.

**CM:** I tore their butt up with them rocks. I went and piled me up...

**LL:** When we were...Cleveland somehow or another and I can't remember how this come about but we moved in Cleveland's house over there on the pipeline and it was me and Cleveland and Franklin, Tutt was his nickname.

**CM:** Yes.

**GD:** I remember old Tutt.

**LL:** We played Lone Ranger...this is pre-school man this is before we started to school and we played Lone Ranger and Tonto up and down the pipeline streets over there, just ripping and running and little pre-school boys, summer time, cut off overalls, you know, no shoes on, no shirt and just ripping and running up and down sawdust hill. You remember sawdust hill?

**CM:** Shoot yeah!

**JG:** Did y'all fish in the mill ponds any?

**CM:** Yes, we did!

**LL:** Yes, sir we did!

**CM:** Oh man you talking about fishing man, that mill pond and I would just like to slip out there with a cane pole and some worms.

**LL:** That thing is full of water moccasins now.

**CM:** I would just like to go out there one more time.

**GD:** If you catch a fish...

**JG:** Did y'all get the worms and stuff out of the trees or logs or?

**LL:** We dug them out.

**CM:** We dug them out of the ground and when they go and cut logs out in the woods, they got a worm called sawyers, you can hear them, and we would go peel that bark off and get them. We got grasshoppers, crickets, anything.

**LL:** Sometimes them housewives would go out there to the mill, man, and would come back with a two and half or five-gallon bucket full of perch.

**JG:** Was there catfish in there too?

**CM:** Yes.

**JG:** Catfish, perch and bass?

**CM:** No bass, but you know they drained that pond one time and got 135 or 140 pound catfish out of there.

**JG:** Yes, we got some pictures of that.

**GD:** What?

**CM:** You got some pictures?

**JG:** Yes.

**GD:** Boy that fish must have been a monster! It is some catfish that get big enough to swallow human beings in places.

**LL:** Yes, I read about those spoonbill cats up on Red River up there out of Denison, Texas.

**CM:** Them guys go stick their hands down in that hole.

**JG:** Yes, noodling.

**CM:** You don't see no black guys doing that! (laughter)

**LL:** I've seen catfish big enough to break a man's arm off and the strength of a ten or twelve-pound catfish. Do you know how strong that sucker's jaws are?

**CM:** You know when they get their arm out of there they just be laughing and grinning like I said, Lord no!

**LL:** Freshwater catfish don't really have no sharp teeth or anything.

**JG:** But they have enough.

**LL:** They got enough.

**GD:** Like a toad frog don't got no teeth, but he can hold something pretty good.

**CM:** My grandpa used to talk about going to set trot lines out, they use bull frogs for them trot lines and got some big old fish, too.

**JG:** Did anybody around the mill try to keep people from fishing or they just allowed it?

**LL:** Not back in those days no.

**CM:** Well if they had of they would have gotten beat to death by them women. Them women used to feed their family out of that mill pond.

**JG:** Really?

**CM:** They would put on a big pot of rice and some red beans and they go out there and that is what they fed their husbands.

**JG:** Do you remember who some of the big fisher women were?

**CM:** Well Lulu Mae Copeland.

**JG:** Copeland?

**CM:** Minnie Bell Maynard.

**JG:** Maynard.

**CM:** Mrs. Josie Smith.

**LL:** Yes, all of those.

**CM:** They used to take them cane poles and whip them snakes. (laughter)

**LL:** I seen Edda Goldman over there once or twice too.

**CC:** Oh yes, she ran the boarding house.

**JG:** Who is that?

**CM:** Edda Goldman.

**LL:** Edda Goldman, that is Freeman Goldman's momma wasn't it?

**CM:** Yes, Freeman Goldman was a Ligon though.

**LL:** So they tell me. They say some of the Garciels are Ligans, too.

**JG:** How did you get that first name Mr. Dixon, Goldman?

**GD:** Well my grandmother had a good friend Wilma Goldman.

**JG:** So from the surname, huh?

**GD:** So she named me and I didn't know, but I later on in life I said this is crazy.

**LL:** Too late to change it.

**GD:** Yes, in the Marines and everybody saying Goldman, I started laughing.

**JG:** Where is the gold, huh?

**GD:** Then I said, "where you from?" I said "I'm from a little old place about 150 people, a good community but it's going down and it's called Nigton, Texas. A little old country town community that is where I'm from. I ain't from New York and Kansas City, Missouri or Chicago. I said I'm from a little old town." See guys go in and lie about that. There was another boy come in there and he was from a place Sandy Hook, Mississippi. He was just like me and he told, I never had heard of Sandy Hook. Whenever we got out and that boy, one of the corpsmen, he was in the Navy he was our corpsmen, and that means he was our medic.

**CM:** There are some Marks live in Sandy Hook, Mississippi.

**GD:** You done heard of Sandy Hook?

**CM:** Yes, Solomon Mark was from there and I been intending to get my daughter to check that place out over there.

**GD:** Well that boy called around, that corpsmen, he called and trying to get together and when they called him somebody answered the phone and said he was in the graveyard. And he was a good guy, but he didn't drink or smoke or anything as I remember but I don't know whether he got killed or what happened. She said that is all she told them. Me and him was on the same...I was his assistant machine gun in Korea. If he would get tired I got up there and take over, you know. We would switch it out.

**LL:** I went to boot camp with a couple of guys that really struck me as kind of weird in the beginning. When we got into basic training in San Antonio, one of the guys had walked out of Europe through the Alps, the mountains when Hitler started taking over in

the middle of the '30s. I'm not sure, I can't remember what country he came from, but this guy was brilliant. But his folks, they walked across the mountains of Europe to get into this country. He joined the Air Force. I went through basic training with him. I went through basic training with a guy from New Orleans and his actual name was General St. Ann. His first name was General.

**GD:** That is a Mexican name, isn't it?

**LL:** This guy was as dark as I am. General St. Ann was a big old, must have been six foot four or five, something like that. He had...he was a peculiar individual. He couldn't sleep with clothes on. (laughter) Being in the military now, and it's against the law, sleep in the bare.

**GD:** I didn't know that!

**LL:** It's against the military law.

**GD:** Well I know some boys that were sleeping buck naked but I never thought nothing about it. I didn't but they did. (laughter)

**LL:** Cleveland will back me up on this because Cleveland went in the Air Force a little bit before I did. There were two laws the military had. If you were so ugly that you drew undo attention to yourself they would kick you out.

**GD:** Well they ought to have kicked me out then. (laughter)

**LL:** The other one was, it was against the law to sleep in the barracks naked, you know.

**GD:** Well I didn't know that, I really didn't. (laughter)

**LL:** Well I'm glad you didn't because as a Marine, you know, because they were always fighting. (laughter) Marines and the Navy were always fighting. They fought more than any two creatures on earth.

**GD:** What you mean?

**LL:** The Marines were fighters.

**GD:** I didn't fight.

**LL:** Yes, you did, yes you did too! Don't you tell me that!

**CM:** If that was the case, he was a Marine way before he got in there.

**LL:** I was dodging the Army and the draft so I enlisted in the Air Force right up there in Lufkin at that old Federal building up there. Went up there to take the test, the written test, to be a fighter pilot, passed them. When I got to San Antonio, and they took the physical, this right here is what kept me out of that.

**JG:** Pointing at his fingers.

**GD:** Well I didn't sign up for nothing.

**JG:** You signed up to leave, huh?

**CM:** I got a break, when I got to Houston, they gave us a test. The Air Force had just become a separate branch of service and they said if you made a high enough score, you could choose your career field. So I just...I had seen some guys from Diboll come home with their arm all up here in a sling and I knew right away I didn't want to go over there. So, I joined the Air Force and I don't regret it because we didn't have no bivouac and all that. When I got...I would always join the choir. They laugh at me...

**JG:** The choir?

**CM:** Yes!

**JG:** Singing huh?

**CM:** Yes, they laugh at me "you sissy you joining the choir" and every time they call me to go on guard duty my friend would call and say...

**JG:** You got choir practice.

**CM:** We had an engagement because we would go to different churches in town. I had to run real fast because sometimes them guys would be out there on bivouac, and I'd go off and go stay about two hours drink me some beer, and I would be on my way back to the barrack and I was rushing to get there because I was in that nice warm barracks. The guys would say man you supposed to be out here and this ain't my job to be out here. I say hey man you have to do what you do.

**LL:** They didn't give me that privilege, they didn't ask me nothing. They just, I took all those tests and the man said you are assigned to the medics. I said well do I get a choice, "no, get over there."

**GD:** That is the way they do when you sign on the dotted line, you belong to them.

**CM:** You ain't at your mamma's house now. Your mamma ain't here with you boy!

**GD:** We were in advanced training, we were at Camp Pendleton, a little way between San Diego and Oceanside I believe it is. But we were there, and so we go to Mexico and get two or three quarts of tequila and slip it in there. We had a board in that floor, we'd raise it up, and take it up and put our stuff up under that board on the floor in the tent. We would get on guard duty at night and I would be ready to go to guard duty because when you get ready to go you take you a big swig of that and you could walk. That was in Camp Pendleton.

**LL:** It was cold out there at night.

**GD:** It wasn't too cold in Camp Pendleton.

**LL:** You were full of that tequila. (laughter)

**GD:** We was walking guard duty and they would say walk, we have to walk two hours or four hours, however. I would walk four hours all the time because I could get me a big swig of that tequila and you know, I liked that guard duty, but before we went over there, we were getting ready to go to advanced training. It was a little bit...

**CM:** Jonathan what would be our best source...I haven't even brought it up to Leamon and Goldman, but for Memorial Day where would we go to get...we want to get everybody in Nigton that went into the military. We want to get their name. What is the best place to start at?

**JG:** For all time, not just a particular battle or particular war, just all times?

**CM:** No everybody that we can think of.

**GD:** Well you would have to start...

**LL:** Start at World War II.

**JG:** Probably World War I.

**GD:** World War I.

**CM:** Well World War I, we had one guy that went to France from Nigton, Harvey Burch.

**GD:** Harvey Burch.

**JG:** Well during the Wars they would always print who was serving and usually where they were from, but in times when it wasn't war time ...but there's other sources. I'll have to think about that. I tell you what let's...are y'all finished with the interview?

**CM:** Yes.

**JG:** We will go ahead and stop the recording for now. And hey man I appreciate y' all doing this. It's been really good.

**GD:** No problem.

**JG:** Let me go ahead and stop it.

**END OF INTERVIEW**