

An Interview with
**Mary Branson and
Laverne Barron**

at the Barron residence in
Doniphan, Missouri

22 August 1997

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PREFACE

The interview was recorded on Sony type I (normal bias) audio cassettes, using a Marantz PMD-222 manual recorder (set on automatic recording level) and a Shure VP64 omnidirectional microphone attached to a floor stand. The audio quality is good throughout.

The following transcript represents a faithful rendering of the entire oral history interview. Minor stylistic alterations -- none of factual consequence -- have been made as part of a general transcription policy. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Parentheses () are used to indicate laughter or a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation. Quotation marks [“ ”] indicate speech depicting dialogue, or words highlighted for the usual special purposes (such as indicating irony). Double dashes [--] and ellipses [. . .] are also used as a stylistic method in an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor N. Renae Farris.

[Time meter, 00:00:00. Begin tape one of two. Begin interview.]

RB: Now, what I'd like to do first is make sure I have your names correct and that it would be on the tape. And your name...?

LB: Laverne.

RB: Laverne? Laverne Branson?

LB: Barron.

RB: Oh, I'm sorry.

LB: Don't get our last names mixed up. (laughs)

MB: Yeah.

RB: You're Laverne Barron.

LB: Right.

RB: Your maiden name...?

LB: Was Shelby.

RB: Shelby.

LB: Mm-hmm.

RB: Okay. Laverne Shelby. And you two are sisters.

LB: Right.

RB: And your name, Mrs....?

MB: Mary Shelby, it used to be.

RB: Was Mary Shelby.

MB: Right.

RB: And now it's Mary Branson.

MB: Branson, right.

RB: Okay. Now, you two are sisters. May I have your birthdates?

MB: Yeah, mine's 1902.¹

RB: 1902?

MB: Right.

RB: What's the month?

MB: September the 27th.

RB: Okay, so that's Mary Branson...?

MB: Mary Branson.

RB: 1902.

MB: 1902.

RB: And Miss Laverne, what's...?

LB: Laverne Shelby. My birthday is September 18th, 1917.

RB: 1917? Okay, so you are a good bit older than [Laverne,] Mary.

MB: I'm the oldest in the family.

RB: Oldest in the family?

MB: Right.

RB: And how many did you all have?

MB: (chuckles) I had eight sisters and two brothers.

RB: Eight sisters and two brothers, so that was a good sized family, there.

¹ Mary A. Shelby Branson was born 27 September 1902 and died 16 August 1999.

MB: I mean there was eight of us girls. I'll take it that way. I had seven sisters.

RB: Now, Miss Laverne, where were you in the mix?

LB: I was seventh.

RB: You were the seventh child? And there were some then after you?

CB: That's "Barron."

RB: Barron?

CB: Barron. B-A-R-R-O-N.

RB: B-A-R-R-O-N. And you are Miss Mary Barron's husband? No?

LB: Uh-uh. You're getting us mixed! I'm Laverne.

RB: Okay.

LB: Clarence...

CB: I just _____ you was pronouncing it wrong, that's why I told you. Barron, B-A-R-R-O-N.

RB: Okay, alright.

CB: That's 110 percent English.

RB: Uh-huh. And your name again, sir?

CB: Clarence Barron.

RB: Clarence Barron, okay.

CB: I just butted in. You was pronouncing the whole thing wrong.

LB: (laughs)

- RB: I appreciate that! (Chuckling) You straighten me out as I go along if you would!
(laughs) I'd appreciate it!
- CB: I just _____ to tell you it's "Barron."
- RB: Okay, alright.
- CB: In fact, my name's on the door.
- RB: Okay. Alright.
- MB: Well, our names gets mixed up. (chuckles)
- RB: Now, let's talk a little bit about the Shelby family some. Who were your mom and dad?
What were their names?
- MB: Frank Shelby and Etta Shelby.
- RB: Where were they born?
- MB: My mother was borned around Martin, Tennessee, and my father was borned in
Kentucky around Cuba and Mayfield.
- RB: Alright. When did they first come to Missouri? Did they marry in...?
- MB: They married in Hickman, Kentucky. I was borned below Hickman, Kentucky. We
came to Missouri in 1919. The last day of January, 1919.
- RB: How old were you then? You were already...
- MB: I was sixteen.
- RB: Already sixteen, so you might remember that trip.
- MB: Yes, I do remember it very well. (laughs)
- RB: What was that trip like, now, in 19[19]? The last day of January, it was pretty cold, I bet.

MB: It was, but when we landed here it was a pretty warm day. But it turned cold that night, and I mean we had (laughing) cold ?fenders?, that winter!

RB: Why do you think they decided to move over here?

MB: Well, my dad had made several trips to Missouri to look for land. It was cheaper here than it was in Kentucky. And of course he was planning to raise the family and he wanted cheaper ground.

RB: Did he want a farm? Is that what his main...?

MB: Yeah, farm. And so we landed at Acorn, Missouri.

RB: Acorn?

MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: Like the tree?

LB: On the train.

MB: On the train.

RB: On the *train*, okay.

MB: Yes, and we moved. Got on the train at Clinton, Kentucky. And we came to Cairo, [Illinois] and crossed on the boat over to Bird's Point at the time, and spent the night in Poplar Bluff. And came down the next day at 11:00 where we landed in Acorn, Missouri.

[Time meter, 00:5:00]

RB: So from Bird's Point, now, to Poplar Bluff... What was the trip like, I wonder?

MB: Well, we caught the train there, you see. But they transferred us from the boat to the train. And we come on to Poplar Bluff.

RB: Do you recall whether you went through Hayti and Kennett to come over, or did you go through...? I just wonder...

MB: Well, just whatever route was just from Poplar Bluff to Bird's Point and then they transferred them to the boat to go other places, see, to go to Cairo. We crossed from Cairo to Bird's Point on the boat and then they transferred us from that to the train at Bird's Point.

RB: Right. Do you recall what the countryside looked like? Because it's changed so much, you know. Since that time they've put in drainage features down into the Bootheel.

MB: Well, they had nothing like that.

RB: What did it look like when you were crossing?

MB: It was just plain farm country. You know, there wasn't no farming in there. It seemed like it was just plain country.

RB: Like woods and...?

MB: Yeah. It was just woods and vacant fields.

RB: Did you see swamps and that kind of thing as you crossed over?

MB: No, I never noticed any swamps.

RB: Not that particular.

MB: No.

RB: So you all came in, and at that time the family wasn't very large.

LB: I was the baby.

MB: *[Referring to Laverne.]* Well, you see she was the baby. She was sitting on our lap. She was born in September and we left there in January.

RB: Uh-huh. So you don't recall the trip.

LB: (laughs) No.

MB: And as I say, my surroundings I don't remember a lot about because I was helping take care of the children. You know, I was the oldest and I looked after the smaller ones.

RB: And you all arrived, then, in Acorn. Acorn?

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Yes, A-C-O-R-N. They was just a railroad stop and post office there. That was where we got our mail first. 'Til they changed that.²

RB: Had your dad already picked out the property that...?

MB: He had bought the place before we moved and we had a place to go to. And so we moved our stock and household junk and all. And he brought a hundred bushels of shell corn to last him 'til crop time.

RB: What sort of stock did you have in that move?

MB: Well, he had a mare and a young colt (mule) and he had two more mules. So that's what we had when we...

RB: So he was ready to do some farming, then. He moved his farm stock.

² Acorn served as a postal office from 1902 to 1937. It served the town and railroad station of Sinsabaugh and the Slagle railroad switch. Located on State Route H approximately three or four miles east of Current View, it was very close to the Missouri-Arkansas line.

MB: Mm-hmm. He moved a mare and two mules. This young mule was the colt and another one. So we had to borrow a horse to bring us home (laughs) from one of the neighbors here, and there was several settlements here from Kentucky that *he knew*.

RB: Where was the property located exactly? Was it out from Acorn?

MB: At Purman, Purman, Missouri. You see, it's two miles from Current View. And there's where the home place is now. We lived 'til my dad died there.

RB: The same house is still there?

MB: No, they built...

LB: The one we built in '36 is there.

RB: Oh, okay, I see. Do you recall the house that you first moved into?

MB: Oh yes, very clearly! (chuckles)

RB: What did it look like? What sort of house was it?

MB: Well, it looked like a barn.

LB: (laughs)

MB: That's what it was built with, was just sawmill lumber and the barn boards was up and down, just like you'd build a barn.

LB: That's the way a lot of the houses were then.

MB: And there was only two rooms a-sitting there, and a half upstairs. There was a ceiling for floor upstairs and it wasn't sealed underneath. The house wasn't sealed at all. It had the two by fours in the corners, and just a window in each end, and a window in the front on each side of the door.

LB: And two front doors.

RB: It had two front doors?

MB: Two front doors, and one backdoor.

RB: There was a door to each room?

MB: Each room in front.

LB: Uh-huh.

RB: And it was just one room deep, I guess.

LB: Yeah, at that time.

MB: That's all just two rooms in like this, and it had two front doors and a backdoor.

LB: And a porch.

RB: It had a porch, front porch?

MB: No, it didn't when we moved here. (laughs)

LB: Well, that's from what I remember.

RB: Later on it had a porch.

MB: My dad built a porch on it.

LB: And back rooms, too, of course. More room.

MB: And a back room, a seven foot side room, clear across the back. And he put a porch on the east end of it and a kitchen on the west.

[Time meter, 00:09:58]

RB: So it must have been a pretty cool place to be, there at the end of January.

MB: And it was stripped just like you strip a barn, the house was, with a four-inch board.

RB: Right, covering the cracks.

MB: Yeah, and then that's all the ceiling or anything that was there.

RB: Did it have a fireplace in there?

LB: No.

MB: No, it had a stove.

LB: Had a flue.

MB: It a double flue for the two front rooms. And that's all there was there when we come there, and a little old platform to go in, fit across the two front doors. And it was a-sitting just like this. *[Apparently gestures]*

RB: (laughs)

MB: And the backdoor was the same way.

RB: So your first impressions of that new house...

MB: I thought I'd got to the jumping off place. (laughs)

RB: Thought that was where you had arrived!

MB: That's right!

RB: (laughs)

MB: And I didn't know what to think about it.

RB: So you were not necessarily so excited about that country as you moved in.

MB: No, it was just woods. There was a woods lot in front of the house, just plain woods. The oak bushes was so high and thick of oak leaves that you couldn't see from here to the street, through it.

RB: Had it been a farm before?

MB: Yeah, the north forty acres was an old farm place, and this house was there and there was an old run down barn there. As I say, that's just what there was. Ready to fall down, all of it.

RB: But the ground was broken and everything? It was ready to work in the spring? No, he had to do *a lot* of work?

MB: He had to clear twenty acres to have any corn at all that year. He had four acres of cotton on the north side of the farm. That was there, and there was a little corner of woods on that. So they had to clear the twenty acres. See, that was just slashed in through there, the timber was. And this one 40 [acre section] was... He bought eighty acres, and this one 40 was new ground. It had just been slashed and the ties took out of it, and he had to clean that all up, and get ties made out of timber that was left that was big enough for ties, and clear it.

RB: Did he cut the ties himself or did he have other people...?

MB: No, he hired people to do that and I picked up roots enough to fill this room, or more.
(Laughs)

LB: More.

RB: Roots, you mean?

MB: I mean roots where they get it ready for farming.

LB: They plow down in the ground when they start plowing. Special plow.

MB: All that was big enough, we piled and burned. And then when he broke the ground, why, we went over it and picked up roots again, and piled them and burned them.

RB: Did it take some additional pulling to get those roots out? I'm sure that was a task.

LB: Definitely!

MB: Some of them were, yes.

RB: What sort of plow was he using then to turn...?

LB: It had a cutter on them.

MB: A lot of times he used a double team to a one horse plow, turning plow. That's all we had to work with was the one horse breaking plow, or a double with two horses hooked to it, which he did most of the time at breaking this new ground. That and a single harrow would go between the rows and a double shovel. Now, that was our farming tools.

RB: That was the farming tools at that time.

MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: Now, when you say that the trees were slashed...

LB: Where they could cut ties.

MB: You see, they bought the tie timber. Tie men bought the timber. They cut all the big trees and took all the logs, you know, that would saw, out -- lumber -- and sold that. And then made ties out of the main logs, you know, the bigger ones from the logs they took to make lumber out of. They made ties out of them.

RB: But some of the trees that were still standing...

[Time meter, 00:14:56]

MB: And then you see, there was a lot of limbs, great big limbs. You know, a lot of them would be big enough to make a tie out of.

LB: And they done that by hand.

MB: And they done that by hand, you see. So my dad hired men that would hew ties. And took all the timber that was that size and made ties out of them and sold them.

RB: That was mostly oak?

MB: Yes, most all the timber. And there was a whole big section down in there that was just sold like from... Real estate men would sell land off of it, you see. So many acres, you know. And it was blocked off in mile-length east and west and a half a mile north and south. And it was that way for a big section that the tie company had bought.

RB: Did that land end up making better corn or better cotton land?

LB: About equal.

MB: Well, it was about equal, I think.

RB: Was it pretty good...?

LB: Pretty good.

MB: Yeah, my dad, the first year he lived there made a crop off that twenty acres. He made more than enough to make his crop the next year. So he just built a wire pen and put it in that and put a shed over it because he didn't have room to house it.

RB: Now, you wouldn't call it bottomlands?

LB: No, had hills.

MB: No, it was hills.

RB: Was it kind of hilly?

LB: Next to the bottoms.

MB: It was just next to the Arkansas Black River, you know, and all that.

RB: He didn't have any trouble getting enough water and that kind...? For the crop.

MB: No, we had a good well.

RB: Good well.

MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: Was the well there when you got there?

MB: Well was there when we went there in this old farm, on this farmland.

RB: What did the neighborhood look like? Did you have a nearby house? Did you have any other buildings in the neighborhood?

MB: Well, a quarter of a mile from us, we had to go a quarter of a mile to get our mail and so there was a nice house there. And that's how close our neighbor was; that's the closest neighbor we had. And then road that went to Success, Arkansas... You see, we was five miles from Success.

RB: Was that the closest town?

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: That was the closest town. And Doniphan was the next. And it's about twelve miles, I guess.

LB: Mm-hmm.

RB: So did you think you were living in Missouri or Arkansas? (laughs)

- LB: We were only about a mile and a quarter from the line!
- MB: You see, we were right close to the line. And you see the Arkansas line comes in there in at Current View. And we was just right straight through from that, about a mile.
- RB: Did you end up going to Success more often than Doniphan? That was the closest...
- LB: Mm-hmm.
- MB: Oh, yes.
- LB: Oh, yeah.
- MB: Yes, we did most of our shopping and trading...
- LB: Until in the late '20's. And then after we got a car, we come to Doniphan more.
- RB: Now, when you first moved in again, that was in 19...? What was year it?
- LB: 19.
- RB: 1919, and you didn't have a car at that time.
- MB: Oh, Lord, there wasn't no cars in the...! There was one car I guess in the whole neighborhood, and that was at Current View. And we was just out of one mud hole up to axle deep ?end?...
- LB: Even with the wagon.
- MB: Yeah, to the other.
- LB: I imagine you remember a little of that. (laughs)
- GB: Yes, uh-huh.
- MB: Well, that's the kind the roads were.
- RB: The road itself from Purman to Success... Is the original road still down there?

LB: The original road is still there but it's not traveled that much. But it's a pretty good road, not bad. We still go that way.

MB: It's not a bad road.

LB: No.

MB: They keep up the roads pretty good down in there *now*...

LB: Yeah, things have changed.

MB: ...but at that time nobody worked the roads unless you did it individually.

RB: Right, right.

MB: My dad always tried to work his road up and he kept it good.

RB: Now, when you all were going to Success, you had to go through... Did you have to go through Current View or was Current View...?

LB: No, uh-uh, uh-uh.

MB: No, no.

LB: That's out of the way.

MB: No, you see Current View is about...

[Apparently all are looking at map]

RB: There's Purman here.

MB: Okay.

LB: We went more or less down in... From Purman, we went straight south.

RB: I see.

LB: Straight south, and then it made a curve into...

[Time meter, 00:20:02]

MB: Success.

RB: Oh, I see.

LB: And that road yet... You can still come out of Success and when you make a strong bend there you'll see a road that comes straight ahead, that's it. It comes straight through.

RB: But if you wanted to go to Doniphan, was this Highway E, was that pretty well the same road?

LB: No, it wasn't there, honey. (chuckles)

RB: It wasn't there?

MB: There was no road. You just rode out through the woods. See, there wasn't no real road. They had a way they went, but as I say if the mud hole was too big they drove out around it. See what I mean? (chuckles)

RB: There was a trail...?

LB: My dad and both my brothers worked on that highway. It was called a "farm-to-market" road. And they had teams and hand slip-scrapers, and that's the way that road was built.

RB: The one from Doniphan?

MB: E, uh-huh.

LB: Yeah. To Current View.

RB: Highway E that you are talking about?

LB: To Current View, yeah.

RB: That looks like a pretty straight road coming down...

LB: It is.

MB: It is; it is.

LB: It is. It's a good road.

MB: But that wasn't the road we traveled to start with.

LB: Uh-uh.

RB: To start with?

MB and LB: No.

RB: Not at all?

LB: Part of it was, but not...

MB: Yeah, part of it. We went on part of it, but then we turned out into the woods. (chuckles)

RB: Right! So your dad had enough shell beans...

MB: Shell corn.

RB: Shell corn to start out with, and then he grew enough... But you had to buy some goods and that kind of thing. You had to go to Success.

MB: Yes.

RB: Is that where the church was?

MB: No, we had no church.

RB: No church?

MB: No church except the Baptist church. New Hope Church is about two miles from Purman, north.

LB: Straight north.

MB: And that's the only church that was there. There was an old, old church just a mile from us, east, and they called it the 'old' Baptist Church.

LB: By the school where we went to school.

MB: And our schoolhouse was there.

RB: So you did have a schoolhouse there.

MB: We had a schoolhouse there and we had one at Greenwood. That was up this side coming to town.

LB: North.

MB: North of us.

RB: Were you able to go to school then? You were a grown girl.

MB: I was in the eighth grade when I left Kentucky. I went to Missouri school about... I guess six months, and we had a young teacher from here and it was his first school [teaching assignment] and he was scared to death of girls.

LB: (chuckling)

MB: And so I didn't go to school anymore! (laughs) So that's the way it was. There was only four of us in class, and two of them were grown boys. They was big as you guys, tall as you guys.

[Time meter, 00:22:58. Some unrelated background conversation between Clarence and Laverne Barron, omitted.]

RB: But now, you had some other sisters coming along then...

MB: Oh, yeah, they...

RB: And you had just been an infant as you moved in.

LB: Mm-hmm, yes. Right.

RB: You grew up in that house?

LB: Yes, sure did.

MB: We *all* grew up in that house...

[Time meter, 00:23:26. Some unrelated intermittent background conversation between Clarence and Laverne Barron, omitted.]

MB: ... and my dad died in the same place. The house burned, the old house burned. The old house burned, let's see, in.... What year was that?

LB: What, hon?

MB: Burned, the house burned.

LB: It burned in '35.

MB: '35.

LB: No, it burned in '36. It burned in January '36.

MB: No, uh-uh.

LB: That was the year I married. I know it was!

RB: This is the same house that you originally had moved into?

LB: No. Oh! The one that burned, yeah! The one that burned was, but then it burned January the 7th, in '36.

MB: Now, honey, I don't think you're right there.

LB: I know I'm right, Mary.

MB: Well, our dad died in '37.

LB: That's right.

MB: Yeah.

LB: That's right.

[Time meter, 00:24:21. Some unrelated intermittent background conversation between Clarence Barron and Gene Braschler, omitted.]

MB: But the house burned and then they built a rock house, and the rock house is still standing.

RB: So your dad then started to build a... Was he an older fellow by that time?

LB: He was in his fifties.

MB: He was fifty-nine when he died.

LB: He was fifty-eight when the house burned.

RB: So when he died [at] fifty-nine, that was 1937?

LB and MB: Mm-hmm.

MB: 1937. April of it.

[Time meter, 00:25:00]

RB: So he decided to build a rock house, then.

MB: Yes.

RB: He had a lot of rock locally that he used?

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Yeah, they picked up on different farms around.

LB: And they usually piled them up when they picked them up off the ground. Well, they gave them to him to get them out of the way. And of course we had plenty, too, you know.

RB: Was it a pretty thick-walled house? What sort of rock was it?

LB: It was right close to a foot thick.

RB: A foot thick wall!

MB: It was just a regular Missouri rock, (chuckling) is what it was!

LB: It's still there. I was just down there recently. And it don't look like the same place, period.

MB: No.

LB: They've redone the outside part of the house and added on a little to it.

MB: And then they bulldozed off the timber that was in front of the house.

LB: Yeah.

MB: And it's growing up again, so it don't look like the same place.

LB: Messed... It don't look that pretty now. It was beautiful then.

RB: When they first built that rock house was it one story or two?

LB: Two story.

RB: Two story house? Uh-huh, that's nice. Did it have a porch already?

LB: Had a porch on each end, and they was solid concrete. I helped build the house, I know.

RB: So by that time you had already...

LB: I married as soon as [we] finished the house. I never did live in it.

MB: And he only lived in it two years.

RB: Himself?

LB and MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: Now, when did you get married, Miss Mary? When were you first married? You were sixteen by...

MB: I was twenty-one years old when I married.

RB: You were twenty-one, so you stayed just a... Well, only about four or five years, I guess, at the house after you moved to Missouri. Then you married. Did you move away or did you stay in that same neighborhood?

MB: I went to St. Louis when I got married. I married a man in St. Louis.

RB: What was his name?

MB: Urell Ward. U-R-E-L-L.

RB: And moved to St. Louis. So that was a pretty big move, I guess, at that time.

MB: Yeah, but I had worked up there one year, for one winter.

RB: Did you end up coming back to this area?

MB: I come back to home and stayed home from... I guess I came back in... Along in the first of the year, and I stayed then 'til October the 15th, is when I got married.

RB: Did you spend most of your life at St. Louis or...?

MB: No, only three years.

RB: Three years, uh-huh.

MB: Yes.

RB: Did you end up coming back to...?

MB: I come back and lived with my mom and dad, and I had two children.

RB: Then you remarried again, though, at one point.

MB: Yes, after my children was through one year of high school I got married a second time.

RB: And did you settle again...?

MB: Down in there, yeah. Our farms joined with my mother's.

RB: So you were at certain times...

MB: I was the first house this side of Purman. That's where I lived with my second husband.

RB: So you stayed down there a good bit, even before you got married the second time, you were with your family while...

MB: I went to work for the depot agent down here, H. A. Tanner, for him and his wife. She was sick. And I kept house for them for four years. And I come there in about the 32nd year. And I stayed four years with them. And I've worked in homes all around downtown up until I got married.

RB: Was the farm still producing at that time?

MB: Sure! Sure!

LB: Mm-hmm. Still is now.

MB: Yeah!

RB: Who was farming? Now, [let's] see, your dad died in '37. But he farmed all the way up until...

MB: My son and him was the only... And he was twelve years old when my dad died. He had lived with my mother and dad all that time. And of course then when he died, why, they had a crop started -- he died in April -- and they had a crop started, so I quit work and went home and stayed and helped him with the crop. Then I said I'd take the children

then, [and] I got an apartment. And the children and I lived in town 'til they finished school. That's about the end of that. (chuckles)

RB: Right. But by the time then that, Miss Laverne, that you come up it was time to go to school for instance. Had there been changes in the community? Did you still have the same school?

LB: Yeah, I went to the same school as she did.

RB: Same school as she did?

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Yeah.

LB: All of us girls went to the same school. Every one of us.

MB: And the boys, too!

LB: Yeah. All of us went to the same school.

MB: All of them went to the same school, you see. My dad lived there in the same place, and the school was just a mile east of us.

RB: What was it like? A big school or just a...?

MB: Oh, just a country school.

LB: Average

RB: One room or...?

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Yeah, one room school was all.

RB: One room school?

MB: We didn't have but one room schools *then*.

RB: So you had the different age groups in the same class. Is that...?

LB: Same room.

MB: Well, you see, they had all grades...

LB: All eight.

MB: All eight grades was in one room. That's all...

LB: But later they changed it to six grades.

MB: Yeah.

LB: They alternated the years on the fifth and the seventh and the sixth and the eighth. One year they had the fifth and the seventh. The next year they'd have the sixth and the eighth.

RB: Oh!

LB: And if you didn't fall in there to go straight, you'd skip from the fourth up one year to the sixth, see?

MB: Up one grade.

RB: Now, after the eight grade...

[Time meter, 00:31:21. End side one, tape one of two.]

[Time meter, 00:00:00. Begin side two, tape one of two.]

RB: After you got through with the eighth grade, then you went to Doniphan to high school?

LB and MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: What was it called, the Doniphan...?

LB: Doniphan High School

MB: Doniphan High School, is just what it is.

LB: Like now.

RB: How many grades did it have? Did it go to the twelfth or to the eleventh?

LB: Mm-hmm.

RB: The twelfth grade?

MB: Yeah, the twelfth.

RB: Were you able then to finish?

LB: No, I didn't go but one year.

RB: One year?

LB: We had to stay away from home. You couldn't stay at home and go because we didn't have that good a transportation. There were no buses then!

MB: There was no buses for school then.

[Time meter, 00:00:40. Some unrelated intermittent background conversation between Clarence Barron and Gene Braschler, then Clarence Barron and Laverne Barron, omitted.]

MB: So the ones that graduated in the country, if they come to town they usually had to get someplace they could board for... You know, do chores for your board.

LB: Or rent a room. And some of them went together and rented rooms...

MB: And then somebody would come through the country and pick them up, you know.

RB: Is that how you did? Did you have to room with someone for that one year?

LB: I worked for my board, yeah.

RB: I see, uh-huh.

MB: That's what everybody did then.

RB: Right. But now you were still pretty young, though, I guess, after that first year then.

LB: Sure!

RB: What was the next step? Did you go to work? [Did you] continue to work?

LB: I worked at home. I was needed at home and I... He said, "I can't..." He said, "If you're going to teach, I'll send you to school." Because they had to buy books and what we needed. And of course there were several at home besides me.

MB: And money was tight then! (chuckles)

LB: And that was when things was pretty scarce. In the '30s.

MB: And you didn't make big wages then.

LB: That was '32 and '33. So I told him I didn't want to be a schoolteacher, I wanted to be a nurse. He said, "Well, I can't afford to send you to college." See, them days you got a teacher's certificate for one year of school. From high school. When you graduated from high school, if you had taken that kind of course, well, that's what you could have. You could teach one year if you got out of school with your teacher's certificate.

RB: But you had to continue on if you wanted...

LB: Be something else.

MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: ... some other type of thing, profession.

MB: Mm-hmm, yeah.

LB: Some other, yeah. Right.

RB: And that wasn't in the script! (laughs)

LB: No! (laughing) So I didn't go!

RB: So you went back home and there was plenty to do.

LB: Plenty!

RB: Now, was your mom still around?

LB: Oh, yes! Mother lived longer than Dad.

RB: She did, huh?

MB: My mother lived to be eighty-three.

LB: She was eighty-three.

RB: Eighty-three years old. Did she stay in that same place throughout her life?

LB: Yeah, most of it. The last few years she lived in town.

MB: The last few years she moved to town.

RB: Miss Laverne, when were you first married, then?

LB: May '36.

RB: In May '36?

LB: Mm-hmm.

RB: And was that...?

LB: To Pritchard.

RB: Pritchard, uh-huh. Okay.

RB: And was it a local fellow that you...?

LB: No, he lived at Gatewood.

RB: Oh! Gatewood.

LB: Mm-hmm.

RB: Was that a pretty good ways away, then?

LB: Yeah, it was quite a walk.

MB: You had to come to Doniphan and then across the river. (laughs)

LB: You see, it's about eighteen miles from here to Gatewood.

RB: How did you meet?

LB: Well, we communicated by writing a whole lot, and he'd come down occasionally.

RB: What was his line of work?

LB: Well, he was raised on a farm just like the rest of us. We married and we went to California.

RB: California? The state of?

LB: Yeah!

RB: Okay. And that was in what year, '3...?

LB: '36.

RB: '36.

LB: Uh-huh. We went out there in August. We married in May and went out there in August.

RB: So that was in the middle of the Depression.

LB: It was.

RB: And there was hard times...

LB: Yes, you're not kidding! (laughs)

MB: (laughs)

LB: You know, don't you? (laughs)

RB: You bet!

LB: We pooled our resources and bought a car and drove to New Mexico. We had started to New Mexico to live. He had a brother that lived there, and I didn't like it. It was hotter than blue blazes there and I didn't like it (chuckling) down there, and I don't think he was too crazy about it. So my sister and her husband lived in California. They wrote and told us if we'd come out there he'd get a job out there. So we had to sell our car to have some money. So we did that, and got a bus and went to California. We was in the L.A. [Los Angeles] area.

RB: So one of your sisters had already moved out there?

LB: Yeah, older than I.

RB: Had they moved during the Depression, too?

[Time meter, 00:05:02]

LB: Yes, they'd gone about a year before, a few months or something like that.

RB: Where were they living then?

LB: They were living at Torrance.

RB: Is that closer to Los...?

LB: It's just south of L.A.

RB: South of L.A.?

LB: Yeah, kind of like a suburb. (chuckles)

RB: What kind of work were you able find?

LB: It was working in a foundry where they made soil pipe. It was, you know, castings. So that's what they did for awhile. They worked at a brickyard first, and then in the winter when it was rainy they couldn't work at that, where they made brick. And that was an interesting thing to see, to watch them make the brick. After they'd cut them mud slabs, you know... They cut them with piano wires, is what they did. They'd come through on a conveyor and that went through and cut that, and then they stacked them and took them out in the yard and stacked them in a kiln, made a kiln. If you know what that is?

RB: Yes, ma'am.

LB: Okay. Then they turned the gas on and heated them. They'd get *red* hot. They had to bake them. So that's the way they made them.

RB: So there was more work going on in California at that time than there was in Ripley County?

LB: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MB: Everybody...

LB: Everybody that could went someplace else.

MB: They went to California.

LB: California to get a job, the younger folks. You know.

RB: Right. How long did you end up staying?

LB: We stayed about a year or a little more. We came back and tried to farm. That never did suit me. I never did like it, so we went *back* to California, and we stayed out there two or three years that time. I was there during the war [World War Two] and we both done war work. I worked in a factory, [and] so did he.

[Time meter, 00:07:06. Some unrelated intermittent background conversation between Clarence Barron and Gene Braschler, omitted.]

LB: No, I was making rivets for airplanes.

RB: During the war?

LB: Yeah!

RB: So the men were off at war and you were...

LB: The ones that they took. The ones that had children, they wouldn't let them go 'til they took the younger ones that wasn't married. So my husband never did have to go. My brother-in-law didn't either. So we was both doing war work. They was a-making some kind of equipment that went on the ships. 'Cause my husband drove a truck with that stuff on it and took them down to the ships at Long Beach.

RB: So you were a "Rosie the Riveter" during the war?

LB: (laughs) I made the rivets! I used to hear them girls talking about "bucking rivets," and I didn't know what in the world they was talking about. Then they told me how they did it. It was kind of interesting. They put the rivet from the outside, and it was the one that held the thing in the back where they beat against it, see. [*claps hands to imitate the beating of the rivet*] To make it splatter out. So I finally found out what that meant. (chuckling)

RB: They called it...?

LB: They called it “bucking the rivets.”

RB: “Bucking the rivets.”

LB: Mm-hmm.

RB: So somebody had to be...

LB: On the inside of the plane holding that thing against it. It was kind of interesting. Then after we come back here we stayed for, oh, about four or five years and we went to St. Louis to work. We stayed there from... I guess we went in ‘50 and we stayed ‘til ‘82.

RB: ‘82?

LB: Uh-huh.

RB: Is that when you moved back?

LB: Back here. I moved right across the street, on the corner.

RB: Were you remarried at that time?

LB: No.

RB: Clarence is...?

LB: We’ve only been together five years.

RB: Okay, I understand.

LB: We married about five years ago, in July.

RB: So do you have a lot of family still here?

LB: Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah. Yeah, all of them mostly was around here.

RB: So that was a good enough reason to move back.

LB: Right.

RB: I've talked to several people here already that have ended up moving back.

MB: They call it "going home." (laughs)

RB: Going home.

LB: Yeah! Yeah, I worked for the...

MB: (laughing) Isn't that right, mister?

GB: Amen.

LB: I worked from '50 'til '82 where they made vending machines.

RB: What kind?

LB: Vending machines.

RB: Oh, vending machines.

LB: All kinds. That was my work.

RB: They would make vending machines, huh?

LB: We'd make them. We made parts for vending machines. The first place I worked for about twenty years.

[Time meter, 00:10:03]

The last ten I worked where we assembled them.

RB: What companies were they?

LB: National Rejectors was the first one. That is where we made the mechanism that goes on the vending machines. And we also, while I was working there, created [or] invented the bill changer.

RB: Oh, uh-huh!

LB: It was quite an interesting job.

RB: What was your role there? What was your particular job?

LB: I was mostly a machine operator. And the last ten years I was an assembler on the boxes and that sort of thing. Because our place moved to Hot Springs for cheaper labor. So that left... They come up and took my machine, my parts, and loaded it on the truck and it was gone! So finally they had to close down because of that. Then I got on at National Vendors, and that's where I retired from. We made a lot of parts for them because they were just across the alley from us, when I was working for Rejectors. But the last place was where we'd make the big boxes like you see now that sits outside and all that kind of stuff.

RB: So one of the themes that I'm picking up here is that times got pretty rough in Ripley County at a certain time.

LB: *Oh, yes!*

MB: You're not kidding! (chuckles)

RB: And a lot of people did end up moving out.

LB: The '30s and part of the '40s was *very, very, rough* for a lot of people. *Wasn't it?*

MB and LB: (laughing)

GB: You bet, you bet. It was almost as bad as the boll weevil down in Georgia.

MB: Ain't that the truth!

LB: It was terrible, really.

RB: Let's go back just for a moment now, when you were first over here. I know it was a *tough* time to build the farm up, to clear the land and that kind of thing. Was there anything at all that had to do with entertainment?

LB: Oh, we had a lot of entertainment.

MB: We made our own entertainment. (laughs)

RB: What kind would that be? Music?

MB: Oh, we'd have music.

LB: Musicals.

MB: And parties. You know, young people have to get together somehow (chuckling) or some way!

LB: Pie suppers. We had lots of pie suppers. Schools, you know. All the schools had pie suppers.

RB: How did that work, a pie supper like that here in Ripley County?

LB: The girls took the pies; the boys bought them. The one that bought them got to eat pie with them. And then there was always two or three cakes. And we had cake walks. We made sure we could walk all the way around that room. And the boy paid so much and got him a girl to walk with him. So that's the way that went.

MB: That's how they raised their money.

LB: That's raising their money.

GB: Did they put up their money for the prettiest girl there?

LB and MB: Oh, yeah! They had that, too!

GB: (chuckling) That was competitive, wasn't it?

LB: Oh, yeah!

MB: Yeah!

RB: How was that now? They put the money for the prettiest girl?

MB: Mm-hmm.

LB: And the guys would bid on it, see? He knows more about that, I imagine, (laughing) than I do.

MB: Yeah, he can tell you about that.

GB: My question: Did it ever end up in a fight or anything like that?

MB: No!

GB: Was it always peaceful?

LB: No, we never had any confusion.

GB: (chuckling) Okay!

MB: You know, we didn't have many fights in that. No, we didn't.

LB: No, we was lucky. It wasn't a fighting community.

MB: Everybody got along.

GB: Great, great.

MB: Yeah, and had good times.

RB: Was dancing part of it?

MB: Oh, yeah!

LB: Oh, yeah, they had dances. In their homes, they'd clean out a whole room and invite their friends.

RB: Did you all have any at your house every now and then? Dances?

LB: No, we didn't have any dancing. Dad wouldn't let us dance. We had parties, though.

MB: But it was all the same thing.

LB: More or less, but...

MB: Only we did our singing instead of having music.

RB: Right.

LB: We'd sing the song and you'd change...

MB: Why, we'd would sing our songs and go the same route you would on dancing.

LB: Did you ever do that?

GB: Oh, yeah. "Circle Eight" and "London."

MB: (chuckling) Why, yes, he did. A lot of times.

RB: In other words, you all would have music parties, but was there any instrument at all?

LB: No.

RB: No instrument?

LB: Not at ours.

MB: Well, that music... A lot of times they would come and play music, you know. They'd have violins, and guitars or banjos and different things, but they'd just make music.

RB: Right. But sometimes in your singing you would not have any music other than your voice.

LB: _____+ Mm-hmm.

MB: Just our voices. But we followed through with the same thing as the dancing. Ain't that right?

LB: But it was different words. Different things, you know.

RB: Do you recall any of the songs at all that you would sing at that time?

[Time meter, 00:15:00]

GB: "Circle Eight" and "London" was probably one of them.

LB: Right, "Circle Eight." Yeah.

GB: _____ taught you to square dance later.

MB: Yeah.

LB: Yeah. Oh, golly, that's been years ago. (laughs)

RB: How about religious songs? Did you have those, too, or was that part of your...?

LB: No, that was church.

MB: Oh, we'd get together and have...

LB: Singing, yeah.

MB: ... singing, and playing the organ and things like that, and all sing together like we did at church.

RB: At church, uh-huh.

MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: But these other songs were more entertainment songs.

LB: That's right!

MB: Yes.

RB: And they would have...

LB: It was like square dances, really. It was more like square dancing _____.

MB: Like "Skip to my Lou", you know, was one of our songs.

RB: Do you remember who you thought was the better musician around here? Or any real good fiddlers? Do you recall any names of people who played in this area?

LB: Hmm. Not in *this* area. Later I can tell you who played a lot and was good, and that was Hugh and Murray Pritchard.³ Now, they played for a lot of dances. And they were real good.

RB: Did they live right around here?

LB: They lived over in Oregon County.

MB: They lived at Gatewood.

LB: That was the Gatewood area.

RB: But they would play in a pretty wide area?

LB: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

RB: They traveled some?

LB: Yeah.

RB: What years was that?

LB: That was in the '30s.

RB: In the '30s?

³ Hugh F. Pritchard and Dr. Murray Thomas Pritchard. Murray Pritchard's obituary may be found in the Jefferson City *News-Tribune*, 14 February 2005 issue (died 12 February 2005.)

LB: Yeah, and some of it was in the '40s.

RB: Did they play string music?

LB: Mm-hmm. Murray played the violin and Hugh played the guitar. Murray still plays.

GB: He's very talented!

LB: Yes, he is!

RB: Oh, so he's still around?

LB: They had a big thing out at Gatewood, two, three Saturdays ago, and Murray played. I don't know how he played so long. It was hot in there.

GB: He came out of the Army and went back through and become a medical officer, I believe.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

LB: Yes, he did. He was taking that when he went in the service. See, he was in prison camp two years or more. Why, he was in there longer than that.

RB: So he's still a pretty popular musician.

LB: Oh, very much so, yes! Yeah.

RB: Did they have any square dances around here still today in Doniphan?

LB: I don't know. I really don't know.

RB: But in those days, though, your dad had something... Didn't he not...? He wasn't crazy about dancing, is that it or...?

MB: Oh, he just wouldn't let us dance. That was a period "no"!

LB: (chuckling)

MB: That was an absolute no! We didn't go to dances. We could go to parties, but we couldn't go to dances. They danced in his time, see...

LB: And he had a thing about it for some reason.

MB: ... and he had his own reason for that. He never explained that to us, but... (laughs)

GB: They had a dance place pretty close to them there, Oliver Miller.

LB: Oh, yeah!

MB: Oh, yes.

LB: I remember Oliver's place...

MB: There at Current View.

LB: ...but *we* didn't go.

GB: The place would get out of hand sometimes, so they didn't let nice girls go to that place.

MB: No, they didn't go.

LB: That's right! That was the *whole* thing.

RB: I see.

MB: I went one time. They had parties, one time at Oliver's, in his home, and we got to go to that party. And it rained so hard that night I didn't get home. (laughs)

LB: But see, usually they drank quite a bit.

MB: Yeah, and that's why he didn't like it, was the drinking.

LB: At the dances like that there was drinking and we just didn't go around that.

MB: And that was the reason he wouldn't allow us to go to dances. He said there was always drunks and the fights before the thing was over, and he just wasn't going to let us go

through that. He wasn't going to have it, no way. But we could go to parties alright.

(chuckling) And we done the same thing they done at dances only it was just singing and...

LB: Instead of music.

MB: Going to the same thing.

RB: But at least they didn't have alcohol.

LB: No!

MB: There wasn't no drinking.

LB: No.

MB: There was no nothing going on like that. And there wasn't no fights. Nothing like that.

LB: Everybody just had a good time.

MB: Just went for a good time. And these parties would be at different homes, you know. And so that's...

RB: Now, in general, during the week's time you had a lot of work to do on the farm and everything. Were there special days during the week? What was a Sunday like, for instance?

LB: We went to church.

MB: (chuckles) We went church on Sundays.

LB: Every Sunday.

RB: Did you have to go a long ways?

LB: About three miles.

MB: And if we went to parties, we went through the week. After our work was done at home and the chores done up, you could go to the party, see. But you worked from sunup 'til sundown. So you didn't have much time. (laughs)

RB: There wasn't much time to do the partying, then?

LB: No.

MB: No, at least that is the way it was at our house.

RB: Now, Sunday: church was about three miles and at first there was no car, was there?

[Time meter, 00:20:05]

LB and MB: No!

MB: You went in a wagon or a buggy, whatever you had. Or walked.

LB: We had one of those two-seated buggies when I was a little kid.

MB: And we had a one-seated buggy.

RB: But then the family started getting larger, didn't they? So could they all fit in a buggy?

MB: (laughs)

LB: No, no, we had a wagon. By that time, we used a wagon.

MB: Well, by that time, you see, we had horses to ride. The boys had a horse apiece; they rode horses, and they went their way.

LB: Us girls rode horses, too.

MB: And we all rode horses, yeah. We rode horses same as the boys or whenever it was necessary.

RB: Right, right.

MB: [If] my dad needed a plow point or something and I had to go to the blacksmith's shop to Success, why, I got on a horse and tied them on back of the saddle and [I'd] take them for them to be sharpened and bring them home. But they didn't stop in the field to go do that, see.

RB: Right, right. They continued to work.

MB: Yes. If they wasn't using this plow, why, they was using something else or doing something else while we was gone.

LB: But later he had his own shop and he sharpened his own tools.

RB: Oh, he did? Did he have a forge?

MB: Mm-hmm.

LB: Yeah, he had a forge. (laughing) I've turned that thing many a time.

RB: Uh-huh? So that was one of your jobs was to keep...?

LB: Turn the blower.

MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: Keep the bellows hot. I mean the fire.

MB: And turn the grinder while he sharpened stuff.

RB: It was a hand-crank grinder?

MB: Yeah.

LB: You better believe it.

MB: Just about so big around. (chuckles)

RB: Did he already have that knowledge of how to use a forge and that before he came or...?

MB: I don't know about that. I just know he did it, that's all I know. (laughs)

RB: If he learned how to do it, then he could do it.

MB: Yeah, yeah.

LB: He had a great big anvil. That thing was that long.

[Someone in room issues a long whistle.]

LB: Big anvil, and he had his different tools he needed. Vise and all that kind of stuff.

RB: Did he raise mules? In other words, breed mules and that or did he just buy...?

LB: Just what he used.

MB: Just what he used for the farm, is all.

RB: So he most often probably was buying?

MB: This was a brood mare that he brought here with him.

LB: All the kids would ride her that could get on her. She was as gentle as a dog! I've even walked underneath her, she was that gentle. Yeah.

RB: One thing we've been talking about since I've been here [is] a little bit about the Current River. Did you all ever go to the river?

MB: Oh, yeah!

LB: We went swimming in that many a time.

MB: Yeah, we'd take dinner to church lots of times and go down on the river and spread our dinner with all that wanted to go and have our picnics on Sunday afternoon.

LB: Yeah!

MB: And the kids [would] swim and had their fun.

LB: Had a good time.

RB: What was in the picnic basket?

MB: Oh, everything. (laughs)

LB: Whatever you wanted.

MB: There'd be all kinds of meats, and baked goods of all kinds and...

LB: Fruit.

MB: ... fruit and everything. Just whatever... We grew what we'd eat mostly. And we'd all fix just a picnic dinner, each family would, and then we'd just spread it all together.

LB: It wasn't sandwiches! (laughs)

MB: No, there wasn't no sandwiches.

RB: It was Sunday dinner!

LB: It was dinner! (laughs)

MB: It was Sunday dinner.

RB: So it was more than one family [that] would go out there?

MB: Oh, yes!

LB: Oh, yeah!

MB: Yes, maybe there'd be three or four families in the church. You'd say, "Well, next Sunday we'll have a picnic dinner on the river." And we'd cook and fix and take it to church with us and then go on to the river and spread it after church, and then swim and spend the afternoon visiting. So that's the recreations we had.

RB: That's right, and so swimming in the Current... How about fishing; was it important?

LB: Dad loved to fish.

MB: Yeah.

LB: But whenever he got a chance he could go fishing, a lot of times we'd camp on the river, down close to north of Current View there, around Merrell place.

RB: Did you all end up eating a lot of fish?

LB: Oh my, yes.

RB: How did you prepare it mostly?

LB: Fried.

MB: On the campfire. Clean the fish right there and cook them and eat them. And we'd take other vegetables. Picnic dinner, you might say. And then we'd fry the fish that they'd catch. Sometimes they didn't catch too much, but... (chuckles)

GB: That was the Landrum and Lorene Colley place.

LB: Yeah, that Merrell Farm, uh-huh.

GB: You don't happen to remember that old boat out there that Landrum used for a feed bunk for years? That enormously big john boat?

MB: Yeah. Yeah, I remember that.

RB: Did you ever see it in the water, that boat that was used as a feed...?

[Time meter, 00:25:03]

MB: No, I never did see it, but I saw it in the barn where he had it, or out where he had it.

RB: What sort of boats do you remember? What sort of boats that you remember on the river?

LB: Just great big long boats, is all I can tell you!

MB: I called them “skiffs.” That’s what we called them in Kentucky. See, I lived right on the Mississippi River until we moved up in the hills from where I was born. And just called them skiffs then, and now...

LB: I think they call them “john boats” here.

MB: Yeah, they did here. But they just called them skiffs at that time. And I never saw one with a motor on it *then*, but after I moved up here they did. They fastened onto the... I called them skiffs, but they wasn’t skiffs. They called them john boats and different things, but I never knew much about that, and they just fastened a motor on them.

RB: What sort of fish was your favorite to eat that you all would...?

MB: I really didn’t have much favorite. I like a catfish and I liked crappie. All the kinds you catch here I like! (laughs)

RB: You like them, huh?

MB: I like any kind of a fish, except the grindle.⁴ (laughs) I don’t like them!

RB: You don’t like the grindles?

MB: No.

RB: That’s not good?

MB: (chuckling) Well, it’s only your taste.

RB: Well, that’s an ugly fish, I’ll say that for them.

LB: (laughs)

MB: (chuckles) Well, the meat in it is soft. It’s not a firm meat, and I like a firm meat.

⁴ Grindle is a local name for bowfish. Pronounced “grinnell”.

RB: Right, right. When you were cooking fish, did you ever fix any kind of a stew or anything like that?

LB: No, we never...

MB: No, we didn't. We just always fried them out like that.

RB: How about other things that live along the river? Turtles?

MB: Oh, yeah. I've cleaned many a turtle. (laughs)

LB: They're good.

RB: Uh-huh, I agree with you.

MB: I like turtle.

RB: Did they have big snapping turtles, or what kind?

MB: Oh, yeah, they had them too!

RB: Is that the kind that mostly that you'd...? That you all would...? Who would catch them? Your dad?

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Dad and the men in the group would go fishing, and now whatever they caught, we cleaned. (laughs)

RB: How would you fix that turtle now? I mean how was it cooked?

MB: We'd fry it.

RB: You fried it, too?

MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: You didn't fix a turtle stew or turtle soup?

MB: Oh, you can fix that, but we didn't take the time to do that. We fried them. (laughs)

RB: Fried them.

MB: Yes.

RB: How about frogs?

LB: Oh, yeah.

MB: There're great! (laughs)

RB: You're all in favor of frogs, huh? (laughs)

MB: Oh, yeah!

RB: Would they eat just the legs of the frogs?

LB: Mm-hmm.

RB: His back legs?

MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: They never would catch a big enough one that you'd fry the whole thing?

MB: Oh, I fried them... At *home* I'd take the frog... I'd clean the whole thing. I didn't lose any of it when I cleaned them for myself.

RB: Right.

MB: I cleaned the whole frog.

LB: You had some awful big ones in the ponds.

MB: We'd have them in the ponds and we'd catch them at the house. Why, we just skinned the whole frog and cooked the whole thing.

RB: How about game? Did you end up eating much game?

MB: (laughing) Anything we could get a-hold of! Yeah, we raised squirrels out there in that woods lot in front of our house and things like that.

RB: How about squirrels, now? Was that mostly fried, too?

LB: If they was young enough.

MB: Uh-huh, if they were young squirrels, we fried them. And if they were a little bit tough, why, we always stewed them. A lot of times stewed them or we'd...

LB: _____ stewed them then. I'd roll them in flour and fry them. I like them fried.
(chuckles)

GB: You had plenty of swamp rabbits over there.

LB: No, they was in the bottoms. We never had many of them.

MB: We didn't have any swamp rabbits where *we* were.

LB: No, we just had the bunnies.

MB: But in the bottom between us and Acorn, about three miles, see, they would have had jackrabbits down in there. And they'd hunt them sometimes, in the wintertime.

RB: So you'd occasionally then, you'd end up with a squirrel stew.

MB: Yeah.

RB: What did you use to...?

MB: We'd make squirrel and dumplings.

RB: Dumplings?

MB: Uh-huh.

RB: Okay.

MB: Or we did. I don't know how he did, but we had squirrel and dumplings a lot.

RB: And the dumplings were made with just the flour dough...

LB and MB: Mm-hmm.

RB: ... that you'd make up and then...?

MB: We took the flour and the salt and the pepper and poured a hot broth out of where they was boiled and stir it up like that. And then they wouldn't cook apart when you dropped them in the... Then you'd roll them out, and cut them and break them off and put them in this hot boiling broth, and they wouldn't cook apart so bad that way.

RB: And so it was the same idea as a chicken and dumpling...

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Chicken... Yeah, same thing.

RB: ... but it was squirrel that was...

LB: But you made it different. You made your dumplings different. We did.

RB: For squirrels you mean, than you would for...?

MB: I wasn't the dumpling maker. They always cooked apart for me.

LB: (laughs)

MB: And I made noodles, instead of dumplings, because I couldn't make them stay together.

LB: She put too much shortening in them. (laughs)

MB: Hmm?

LB: You put too much shortening in them! (laughs) That'd make them fall apart.

MB: Well, anyway, they always come apart for me, so I made noodles instead of dumplings.

GB: Yours were more like noodles, rolled out like.

MB: Yes.

GB: And yours were dropped in, the dumplings?

LB: Yeah.

MB: And you know, they're kind of dry anyway. And of course, I made egg noodles and they was made mostly with just water, you know.

RB: But there's a difference between the chicken dumpling and the squirrel dumpling? How would...?

MB: Well, the difference in the flavor, of course.

RB: Oh!

LB: You make them about the same.

MB: See, that's the difference, is in the flavor. You make your dumplings alike you want to, but the flavor is in the broth.

RB: Right. How about larger game like deer?

MB: Oh, yeah.

RB: And you all would roast that or just cook it in the...?

LB: I never cooked deer. I was never was one of them kind. (chuckles) My husband killed *one* little deer, the spike, and he said, "I don't like to kill them; I don't like to see them die."

MB: Oh, I've cooked a lot of deer but you _____+. (chuckles) But I cooked mine in a pressure cooker, see. And you've always got...

[Time meter, 00:31:33. End side two, tape one of two.]

[Time meter, 00:00:00. Begin side one, tape two of two.]

MB: _____+.

GB: Is that right?

MB: Yes.

LB: But years back they lived close to...

MB: You know where the Black River is?

GB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Well, they was right on the hill before you went down there. That's where the Hawkins' lived.

GB: Right.

LB: It's a rock house there now.

MB: Yes.

LB: But years *back* they lived close to our school, Cyclone School. And we went to school with them. That's where we got acquainted.

MB: And my dad and Mr. Hawkins was great buddies in fishing.

LB: They fished together a lot.

MB: And they fished together a lot.

LB: They caught a big catfish in Black River right there at the bridge, from where Hawkins lived, and that thing was...

MB: Twenty-five pounds. And later then later on in about... Well, the same summer, George caught one that was thirty-five pound. So they kidded one another about their fishing, you know.

GB: _____+ sizes.

MB: Yeah.

GB: How about Orville Kysar?

LB: You know he just died.

GB: He just died, and I intended to get over and interview him because people told me that Orville had a storehouse of knowledge about Current View.

LB: I guess he did! He grew up there!

MB: There's where he was born.

LB: Mm-hmm.

GB: He was in college... When I was in the university he was up there, and I intended to keep up with him, but I just...

MB: Now, his uncle was the fiddler in the community.

GB: Right.

LB: Yeah. Yeah, he was.

RB: What was his name then?

GB: Kysar. Orville Kysar. He went with a young gal, when we were in school, from Ashland and I... See, her mother was one of the prime schoolteachers from Boone County area, and I've been up there several times and I've never asked what happened to Nancy. That

was the lady that he... He dated up her up there, but he came back here and married somebody else _____. But I didn't keep up with him. I tried to sometimes, but you know.

MB: Well, we never did get acquainted with his wife.

LB: I never did see the lady.

MB: I saw her several times, but she wasn't friendly.

LB: Mm-mm.

MB: She wasn't outgoing like...

GB: Well, that may be why I never got around to _____.

MB: Uh-huh. Well, she wasn't outgoing and if she went to a crowd you never heard a word out of her. She took no part in anything we had to do. I just met her a couple of times, that way. And that was the way she was: she was kind of offish, you know, stand offish.

GB: Well, it was sad when I came back and heard that Orville was not well.

MB: Yes.

GB: In fact, he was younger, I think, than I, I believe. He wasn't very old when he died. _____.

MB: No.

LB: Mm-mm.

GB: But I never got around to... We sent word back and forth a time or two, but I never got around to talking to him.

MB: But he was outgoing, yeah.

RB: And what was his relationship to Orville? I mean to the fiddle player?

LB: That was his uncle. Bill was his uncle. Bill was Orville's uncle.

MB: You see, when they come here they came from north Missouri *here* and settled right there in Current View. Their house is still standing.

LB: Right out from the church house.

MB: Right out from the church house.

LB: Tall house.

MB: Yeah.

GB: See, I was very much like you folks. We were sheltered. In fact, our generation... I've often told my dad and mother... Apparently you saw so much of square dances. They were against square dancing, too.

MB: They were like that.

GB: But when the rumors of war came along, I was still here and young, you know, and so I'd learn to call square dancing just by playing the games. It changed the whole thing. We started riding horses more and the old things become popular, so we opened a new armory up here. We'd square dance in there, and a lot of times we'd call for maybe four or five sets going at one time, you know.

MB: Yes, so you went through that strip.

LB: Let's see. Now, who was your dad?

GB: B. Weaver, "Boone." He was the youngest one of the Braschler boys. Weaver Braschler or B. Weaver. Or Boone, they called him most of the times.

LB: You know Charles and Ellen Featherston?

GB: Yes, uh-huh.

LB: Well, Ellen and I have been close friends since we was little kids. And we still keep in touch and visit one another a lot.

MB: And you see, she was born down in that part of the country.

LB: She grew up [at] Purman.

GB: Well, you mentioned “Giant” or “Dellas”? He sort of followed Dad around and that’s why I got started fishing with him. He liked to fish and river rat. Always on the river.

LB: Well, did you remember the Jordan boys?

GB: Oh, yeah.

MB: See, they lived down in there too.

LB: Well, one of my sisters married Jack.

GB: Well, sure now. I’ve been almost in touch with...

LB: Iris.

GB: Uh-huh.

MB: I bet you have.

[Time meter, 00:04:59]

GB: In fact, I always laugh, to get people to talking talking, I tell them that they’re not “Jordan” down there, they’re “Jerden.”

LB: (Laughs)

MB: Yeah!

- GB: When old Landrum Colley used to say, “Bill Jerden”...
- LB: Yeah, it was “Jerden.” They never said “Jordan.” They always said “Jerden.”
- GB: You see Landrum... Lorene and I were... I’m not really related to the Merrells, but Pattersons and the Merrells were intermarried so much that we always kidded each other about being cousins. So actually when I started researching the area, I came back and Lorene had the old... At one time she had the Merrell bible, which I could have copied completely. And unfortunately, you know, you don’t...
- MB: You don’t do those things. Don’t think about them.
- LB: And you’re sorry you don’t.
- GB: I copied some of it. And another one... Landrum would sit down... We’d be quail hunting, and he’d get tired and he’d say, “Let’s sit down over [at] Pope Chapel there.” You know. He’d tell me all about Pope Chapel. And you know, I was interested but not as much as I was around over across where the ?school? was, at Davis Cut-off area and stuff like that, you know. So I didn’t listen enough.
- MB: See, Landrum is from my dad’s part of the country in Kentucky. See? And Landrum and I are about the same age. And Lorene and I were great friends from the time I moved here until she died.
- GB: Well, it’s a small world.
- LB: It is.
- MB: It sure is when you get to talking about it.

RB: One thing I wanted to ask: What was the name of your church that you had there that you all went to?

LB: Church of Christ at Current View.

RB: At Current View. That's the one that you all...

MB: Yes.

LB: Mm-hmm.

RB: And that was a couple of miles from the house?

LB: It was about three miles.

RB: About three miles.

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Mm-hmm. Yeah, we bought one of the old store buildings, off down the road, and the church members moved that by team up the hill to where it's at and set it. It was an old store building.

LB: It was pretty tall; they cut it down. And then Andy Christian cut it down again. And it's not a big, tall building anymore. It's average. And they have added on to it some.

GB: They mentioned Andy Christian. Now, how about Clay Smith? Did you...?

MB: Yeah.

LB: Oh yeah, he was a swell person.

GB: Everybody says that.

MB: Yeah, he was.

LB: He was great.

GB: He rented from us for awhile. We had two places over across the river, and he came over. I know my mom and her sister, my aunt Elsa Harper, they thought the world of Clay Smith. They thought he was just...

LB: You couldn't beat him.

MB: Andy's folks moved over here across the river. They lived in the Merrell house, you know, for awhile.

LB: That's where they moved to, when they moved to our area.

MB: That's when they first moved here.

GB: Now, the Merrells were really... In my opinion, they were the first settlers in that country.

MB: Yeah, I think they were.

GB: The old Will Merrell house stood on our side of the river. In fact the Braschlers bought from the Merrells, and the Merrells moved on across the river, and we ...

LB: The Kelleys, I think, were the first ones that bought.

GB: The Kelleys, uh-huh.

LB: The Kelleys. According to the history, I believe that my sister has... Iris. See, she's related to that part of the family. They're related to the Jordans. And if I understand right, they had the first land in that area.

GB: Anytime... Now that you mention your sister, anytime that she -- or anybody, for that matter -- has material... Of course, we have a historical society here locally, and we publish a quarterly, and we're always looking for something new to write.

LB: Well, I imagine... I think she has quite a bit of the...

MB: She got a lot of the history from down in around there.

LB: ...old history of the Kelleys.

GB: You mentioned your connection to the Jordans now... I just picked up... We picked up through *them* some of old Doc [John] Humes' papers that hadn't been published and were not known previously. I've got about, I think... I don't know how many pages I have, but he made a note there one time that he had written 1,600 pages, and of course that's a lot more than has ever become _____.

LB: That's a lot.

GB: And I know he interviewed my grandmother about my great-grandfather, and I've never seen that in writing, so I'm still looking for material that ____ Doc Hume.

LB: Now, who could have his records? See, he was related to the Prestons, you know. Did you ever know the Prestons?

GB: I knew the name, just about... I don't remember if I knew...

MB: Preston married his sister.

LB: Yeah, I know.

GB: That's about the extent of my knowledge of the Prestons, knowing the name and perhaps...

[Time meter, 00:09:56]

I remember when I was very young, but I remember when he came over and my grandmother first telling my mother that he came over to interview her about her father

who was the Confederate captain that he was trying to get information on. And so I'm naturally interested in anything I can dig up.

LB: It's good to go back, if you can find people that have lived long enough that they remember a lot of that. But that's the problem. A lot of people haven't. (chuckles)

GB: You folks came of a different background, so I can tell this before you. I hadn't told Ray yet. I'd started to, but in reading... See, Dr. Hume, the way he collected material was he would go and treat people medically and then interview some of the older people while he was there.

MB: Right.

GB: So... You may not agree with me, but in my opinion it was kind of like my dad. My dad said, "Well, Ripley County was settled by some bond servants and some people that weren't quite what you'd expect out of people."

LB: Mm-hmm.

MB: Yeah.

GB: And of course, if you look back in the first... *Liquor was* the big thing.

LB: Sure!

MB: Oh, yeah. It was a great thing at that time.

GB: I mean, everybody sold, made whisky. And sold and traded it. It was the...

LB: Right.

MB: Right. It was rough in here. (laughs)

GB: So you know, not to condemn those people completely...

MB: No.

GB: ... but still there's some of them that you have reread.

LB: You know who's who. (laughs)

GB: Right.

MB: Yeah, to know who they are.

GB: And he interviewed two brothers. And this is the one that tickled me. We have a regular interview. And they didn't agree with each other.

[Time meter, 00:11:35. Unrelated comment by Clarence Barron in background, omitted.]

GB: But they didn't agree at all, and their stories... One of them was just under liable, that he would tell a tale. Well, the funny part, when they interviewed him, he told about the Merrells and their horseracing and everything, but the Daltons over here had told the same story and named the same...

LB: Same parties.

GB: Yeah! (laughs) And it was different, so I had to say, "Well, you've got to kind of..."

Even though you've got records of some of the first settlers here, you need to look at it a little.

MB: You have to do that.

LB: You've got to check them out good! (laughs)

MB: And I got that through Lorene. You know, I heard a lot of that from her. And there was quite an accident on that. (laughs)

RB: Just because it's in print doesn't mean it's true.

GB: Right!

LB: (laughs)

MB: No, not all of it. Not all of it.

GB: Right, you to still look through it.

MB: You need to kind of weed it out a little bit. (chuckles) So you probably won't make heads or tails of any of what we've said this morning!

RB: You know, that could be... You know, some people wonder about oral history, whether it compares to written history. But there can be just as much truth in oral history as there is in written history.

LB and MB: Right.

RB: And just as many lies! (laughs)

LB: (laughs) You're right.

MB: And you can just figure there is some of them in that, too. Yeah, it goes along with it.

GB: Well, history is sort of like... I believe it was E. W. Nelson. [He] was a writer, early in the west, about wildlife -- which was my field -- and somewhere everything wasn't known back then, our biologists didn't know everything either, you know, and he made some kind of statement, "You've to look through a lot of gravel to find a few grains of gold."

MB: Right.

LB: That's for sure!

GB: That's about the way it is.

LB: That's for sure. And two people can tell you about the same thing, but they won't say it in the same words.

GB: This is true. In fact, we used to have a party game that we played at parties... Talking about parties, that's one of them we played. You know, we'd circle up the big circle and somebody would tell something and you'd see how it'd come out then.

LB: Yeah! (laughs)

MB: Yeah.

GB: When it got all the way around, it was always different! (laughs)

RB: So Current View though had... You say you used an old store that was down there for the church.

LB: It was Buckskull years before we moved there. That was the name of the community.

MB: That was the name of the town at that time, and it was quite a little town of it at that time.

LB: Yeah, it had great big buildings! When I was a kid, I remember those great big buildings. In fact, we'd gone to [a] fishing trip one night and it come up a storm like you wouldn't believe! I was a little kid, and we come to one of those old store buildings that was not being used anymore, but it still had those great big posters [with] pictures of ladies on it. Do you remember ever seeing any of them? They're about this wide and about this long. And that was advertising. Well, they had them hanging in the store. They had never destroyed them. And when it would lightning, all I could see was them women!
(laughs) I was a little kid; I was scared to death! (laughing) I'll never forget it!

[Time meter, 00:15:02]

RB: Did you all find shelter in there?

LB: Oh yeah, we stayed the rest of the night in there.

MB: You see, when we come here that town had just died, and there was vacant buildings with windows out of them, you know. And when we started to get together about fixing a church or getting together with a church, we met in one of those little houses. It didn't matter where, you know. If it had windows out of it or not, we just had a board and a block up for us to sit on, that was our seats. And we'd just pick out a house and meet in that until we all got together to buy this old building.

LB: It's one of them buildings they bought for the church house.

MB: And that's what they got for the church house.

GB: Right. It was a _____+.

MB: And there was a house that set right across the road from the church now. It was an old house without any windows in it. And we met in that one summer, and had a meeting in there one summer. And in the summer while there we'd stretch a tent and have a meeting in the tent. Arbor, you know. Or either just the men would drive some posts and put brush over the top of it to shade it and that was our... And we put boards and blocks, and we had our meeting there, up there by the schoolhouse.

LB: Did you ever see a brush arbor?

RB: I've heard of them. I've never seen it.

LB: You've never seen one?

MB: They just drove four poles, you know, as big as they wanted it, and braced it in between.
And then cut brush and put...

LB: The limbs, they put on top.

RB: And that was shade?

MB and LB: That was the shelter.

GB: I guess the last one they had [was] out [U.S. Route] 160 here, before you get to Ponder out in...⁵ Not much out of Doniphan.

LB: I remember seeing that thing.

GB: They had had one there with... I think it... I'm not sure, but it was after my wife and I married. It was there. It was something for people to talk about, anyway.

MB: Yeah, mm-hmm.

LB: Mm-hmm, I remember that one.

RB: Now, going back to Buckskull... How did it change its name to Current View? The town died off?

MB: Yeah, it did.

RB: And then Current View is something that's come up...

MB: And at that time they had a hotel there. It was a two story building.

RB: Do you recall hearing...?

MB: And Lorene Colley's brother, Cecil, they said was born in that building. And that was just north in that flat there by Walters' house. If you know where that was, and I'm sure

⁵ Ponder is off of State Route 142. Perhaps Mr. Braschler is referring to the spot where 142 branches off from 160, which is near Doniphan.

you do. Well, it was in that flat. When we came here, it was still standing and it had no windows in it. And on the hill, next to where the store is now, there was houses set this a-way and they was just boxed houses, but they had no windows in them, and that was the way the town had died out, see.

LB: People just moved away.

MB: And then they renamed it Current View, and I don't know what the reason was for that.

GB: That was what I was hoping Ray would ask. This is what Orville Kysar supposedly had that he wanted to tell me. And of course, I knew two things there, that Buckskull, there had been some history there, differences. One version says that somebody had found a pair of antlers locked together and brought them up there and they tacked them up on the building and called it "Buckskull."

LB: I remember hearing that story, too.

GB: And the other one is very similar, concerning one buck skull. The Current View naming is where the disagreement was. A lot of folks believe that the Confederates... Well, they were camped on the other side part of the time, and the Yankees were camped on this side.

MB: Yeah.

GB: But they claimed the Confederates picked it up from the Yankees because there were using it... You know, there's a little area right there that's high.

MB: Yeah, it is. Yeah.

LB: Uh-huh.

GB: And that was the... You could view the Current [River] there across Pitman's Ferry and across toward _____.

LB: Mm-hmm. *Beautiful* from that point.

GB: Right. There's two versions however, and that's what I was hoping that maybe you had heard.

MB: And you see the old tram road goes through there, too.

GB: Right. Ordell Gibson has collected some great relics out of the river there where that old...

LB: Is that right?

GB: Uh-huh, where it crossed in, where they had the... They apparently dumped a lot of materials from their lumber industry there, and in the winter there, it's a good walleye fishing hole. But you can also old axles and whatnot.

[Time meter, 00:20:02]

So Ordell got to fishing around there with a magnet, and he just came up with two axes that to me that are a great find there. You know, one of them is a double bit and one of them is a single bit, you know what I'm talking about. The double bit, I believe, the axe was apparently... The body of it was forged, and then the cutting blade was folded back over welded back on to that. And it's a... Dr. Price has cleaned them both up, and to me they're really a valuable find. They'd be good in a museum, you know. But that's interesting. Very interesting country there.

LB: There's quite a bit of good interesting history in this area.

RB: I wonder why Buckskull failed, or why it went down?

MB: Well, I never did hear that.

LB: It might have been during that war!

MB: But it was during the war that it did...

LB: Did everything.

MB: Yeah, that's when it failed, was during the war.

GB: Right. You know, the whole area in here... Now, you get on down in the fertile soil, but even some of it... [The] discovery that they could grow rice in there is saving it, because it wasn't really the best soil for corn and beans and stuff like that. It's great for rice, but still up in the hills here then, there was a good civilization here and good people...

MB: Yes.

GB: ... but the Civil War sort of took two ways. It took the farms, what little they built up, and then right afterwards it took the timber with no thought of replacing it, which was I think... They call the... Whatever your timber is that's going to stay that way, they call it the "climax forest." And there's some debate on what... Even in the short leaf pine areas, whether or not it was going to stay for a long time or whether it would gradually go back to something else. Well, they just learned in recent years that the thing to do is to put everything back in short leaf pine, and that makes it the most productive.

LB and MB: Mm-hmm.

GB: But that's a long time, too! Especially...

LB: That's a long production!

GB: Right! When you got places like his home town down in Louisiana where that stuff grows twice as fast, and they thought of that years and years ago. So you got a lot of competition.

LB: So that's where you're from?

RB: Yes, ma'am, mm-hmm.

MB: Well, I see.

RB: My family's from Acadia Parish; it's in south-central Louisiana. Pretty far south. Where they eat turtles. (laughs)

LB: Nothing wrong with that!

MB: Yeah, that's alright. It's good eating. (laughs)

RB: It is.

GB: We were talking last evening, those so-called Cajuns, they're not so distantly related to our group that came across the way your folks came.

LB: Mm-hmm.

GB: You know, more or less came across from Tennessee and...

LB: Now, where was your people from?

GB: Well, my mother's folks came the same pattern. They settled first in the Carolinas, and came across the same as ninety percent of the rest of the people came in here. My Braschler folks came from Texas, really. My great-grandfather didn't go through the New York system. He went directly to New Orleans, and my grandfather always said he was born in Mexico. It depends on how you feel about the war, being born.

MB: So they come from all kind.

LB: Different directions.

GB: Right. Yes, they were *mostly* southerners, although there was one of my great-uncles that joined the Union and fought on the... So we did have splits in both families during the Civil War, you know, but... We probably... What time is it?

RB: It is 11:30 now.

GB: Well, we get to visiting...

LB: (laughs)

RB: That's right!

GB: ...and talk all day, but we need to get on, I suspect.

RB: Well, I sure want to thank you all very much. Anything to add, a last comment? We have an opportunity to... What was the biggest change that you've seen in your life, Miss Mary? You've lived a long life. What was the most exceptional change that you've seen in all your years?

[Time meter, 00:24:21. Two conversations going on simultaneously. For the purposes of transcript flow, they have been separated.]

CB: Yeah, Laverne messed up. She married an old flatlander.

GB: (laughs)

CB: I'm from Pemiscot County.

[Conversation between Brassieur and Branson continues]

MB: I don't know. I've just seen it...

RB: You've seen the airplanes, the rocket ships...

MB: Aw, yeah, I've seen that. And I just from [the age of a] kid and all, I've always looked to the skies. My dad always said I bird hunted or something like that. (laughs) He said I was a bird hunter more than anything else.

[Time meter, 00:24:57]

But you remember a lot of little things, but don't you get it all together. I said I was never a writer or anything like that. It's just all in my head and that was all. (laughs)

LB: Yeah, she's going to have a birthday next month.

RB: Oh, boy!

LB: Be ninety-five.

RB: Ninety-five years old! And you're really looking very, very...

LB: We both got a birthday next month.

MB: Yeah, hers is the 13th and mine's the 27th.

LB: No, mine's the 17th.

MB: 17th?

LB: Yeah. Iris' is the 13th.

MB: Iris' is the 13th.

LB: There's four of us girls' birthdays in September. (laughs)

MB: We've got four of us in September. So it's kind of hard to keep them separated. For me, anyway.

RB: And are a lot of the sisters still alive, then?

LB: All but one.

RB: Uh-huh?

GB: That's great.

MB: That's the only one that's not with us.

LB: Her name was Spell. Lexie Spell.⁶

MB: And our brothers died young, both of them.

LB: You know Leon Spell?

GB: Mm-hmm.

LB: That's our nephew.

GB: Well, that's great.

RB: That's a long-lived family.

LB: Yeah. My dad's cousin lived to be 103.

RB: *Wow!*

LB: I got her picture sitting right here.

[Time meter, 00:26:11. Two conversations going on simultaneously. For the purposes of transcript flow, they have been separated.]

GB: You know, your dad, though, and your brothers... You know, that has to be stress. That can kill off a lot of people young. Because you know, it was the stress of... Your dad had to have a lot of stress.

MB: Well, you see, my grandfather, his dad died young, too.

GB: Right.

⁶ Lexie Clara Spell died 25 November 1984. For her obituary, see the Doniphan Herald, 29 November 1984, page 5. It lists her surviving sisters as follows: Mary Branson, Laverne Pritchard, Iris Jordan, Maybelle Martin, Bonnie Montgomery, Mescal West, and Maxine Shirley. No surviving brothers were noted, so apparently they had died prior to November 1984.

MB: And see, I don't never remember seeing him. They said that he taught me to walk. And he died while...

GB: Well, it was a high price for the first people in here to pay. I'm not saying it wasn't a hard life for the women, but for the men it had to be a lot of stress because otherwise they were out _____, you know.

[Conversation between Brassieur and Laverne Barron continues]

LB: This was her hundredth birthday picture.

RB: And what is her name?

LB: That was my dad's cousin, our second cousin.

RB: Okay.

LB: She remembers _____, near Mayfield.

RB: A beautiful woman. Wow!

LB: _____+ We was over there to see her for her hundredth birthday. She come in and she was dressed in a bright pink suit. My sister said, "My goodness, _____, you look awful pretty and cheerful! She said, "I wear these bright colors so they won't know how old I am!" (laughs)

RB: (laughs) A hundred and three!

GB: Now, this is your mother?

LB: No, that's my dad's cousin. She was a hundred when that was made. We saw her that year.

GB: She looked alert.

LB: And she was *sharp as a tack!*

RB: But now, your dad didn't end up living that long, and so...

LB: No.

MB: No, he was fifty-nine.

RB: What was his problem? Did he have a s[ickness]?

MB: He had pernicious malaria.

RB: Malaria! Oh!

GB: Malaria killed him.

LB: He worked down there around Acorn, around them swamps. He bought some land down there and that's what happened.

GB: Malaria was _____.

MB: Bought land when he shouldn't have bought it.

LB: He didn't need it. His family were gone.

MB: Right.

GB: You had to take a lot of quinine and Atabrine.⁷ Atabrine was the big one.

LB: His big workers was gone. (Chuckling) He didn't have many left!

MB: And he couldn't realize that he couldn't do what we all did. See what I mean? In farming. And it was a shock to him, and he never did get over it.

GB: I bet you did the same thing we did, though. You'd sit around at night and fill capsules out of a bulk quinine jar and _____+.

LB and MB: Oh, yeah!

⁷ A brand name for a synthetic quinine substitute. Also known as quinacrine.

LB: We did that too.

MB: We done that too!

RB: Quinine? You had to take quinine to keep the...

MB: Yeah, to keep down malaria.

RB: And the mosquitoes were pretty bad?

MB: Oh, yes.

RB: Well, did you have screens on the windows?

LB: Oh, yeah!

MB: We had screens on our windows and our doors, and a lot of times we'd put an oil flannel cloth in an old dish or something that wasn't no good, and burned sulfur on it [to] keep the mosquitoes away.

RB: But you at least... You did have screens, though.

MB: Oh, yeah!

LB: Yeah!

RB: Even at the first?

MB: Oh, yeah. Oh, we fought flies all the time, and a lot of times before a meal...

GB: Sure! Peach tree limb, _____+. Yeah.

MB: ... we'd flog them out with an apron or a tea towel or a peach tree limb or something like that, and flog them out the door.

LB: Yeah, before they got that spray stuff after World War Two, why, it was rough!

MB: Yeah, it was!

LB: Oh, my!

RB: The mosquitoes were bad?

MB: Mosquitoes and flies would be bad.

LB: When it would be rainy, the flies would get under the porch and it would be black.

MB: Just black on the ceilings!

LB: And if you opened the door, naturally they'd come in if they could.

MB: They're going to fly right in.

LB: It was rough!

MB: So then before we had got ready to put our meals on the table, we flogged them flies out of that dining area so we could eat our dinner in peace without eating flies with it.

(laughs)

RB: And you had to take like a peach tree limb and that...?

MB: Yes, or take a tea towel or your apron.

LB: Anything you could move.

MB: Anything you could grab up and flog them out.

GB: But have dinner on the ground on Sunday, and that's where the peach tree limb

_____+.

LB: _____+.

MB: Yeah, that's where the peach tree come from. Over the table, keep flies off the table.

LB: There wasn't no other way of doing it!

MB: No! No.

RB: That was the good old days then. (laughs)

[Time meter, 00:30:00]

LB: Yeah. Good for what? (laughs heartily)

MB: Oh, yeah. Good old days is rough.

LB: We existed.

MB: Yeah.

LB: We had some good times; we had to have to survive.

MB: Well, we didn't know any better. (chuckling) We just thought it was good times and it was, but I'd hate to go back through it. And I know you would, too.

LB: Yeah.

GB: I was unfortunate, my brother and I -- he died last year -- but we had malaria together. Of course, we had a relatively new house and screens, but we'd get out on the river and forget about the mosquitoes. You know, that's probably how we got it. In fact, it was rough on a lot of people.

MB: Yeah, it was, and especially if we had sick folks.

LB: My husband grew up about the same way we did, 'cause he lived down there around south of Kennett.

RB: Right in Pemiscot County.

LB: Yeah.

RB: Steele? Down in there?

LB: Yeah, east of Steele.

RB: I know they had mosquitoes down there.

LB: Yeah.

RB: (chuckles) That is the lowland!

LB: He helped clear that up.

GB: In recent years... Of course, we lived in Atlanta a long time and come back up here, but we liked to drive across that new Dyersburg bridge and come in through there. You go from the most beautiful scenery in the world across the river there and into that Hayti Heights area, and of course it's been in the news lately...

[Time meter, 00:31.24. End side one, tape two of two. End of interview.]