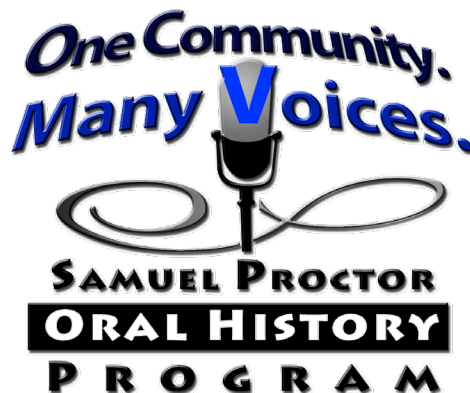


Isaac McGhee

Poarch Creek Project
CRK-018

Interview by:

Dr. J. Anthony Paredes
August 7, 1972



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CRK 018 Isaac McGhee
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project
Interviewed by J. Anthony Paredes on August 7, 1972
1 hour, 29 minutes | 63 pages

Abstract: Isaac McGhee speaks about traditions of fishing for rockfish and hunting pigeons, and how they changed when White people came into the area. He discusses methods of preserving meat and vegetables, and the process of making baskets and lighting fires without matches. He speaks about the history of Lynn McGhee's grant land, the people who lived on it, and legal struggles over its taxation and sale. He speaks about his work as a foreman and clearing timber. He recounts story of John Rolin killing a man at a frolic, and other fights that occurred at frolics. The interview concludes with Isaac discussing several details of daily life, including raising wild cattle, building beds, and funerals.

Keywords: [Poarch Band of Creek Indians; Lynn McGhee; Alabama--Poarch; Hunting and gathering; Land tenure]

ORAL HISTORY

P R O G R A M

University of Florida

CRK-018

Interviewee: Isaac McGhee

Interviewer: Dr. J. Anthony Paredes

Date: August 7, 1972

P: This is August the seventh, and this is another interview with Mr. Isaac McGhee.

Isaac, one time you were telling me about you remember your mother talking about when they used to go over fishing for rockfish. Would you tell about that?

M: Yeah. That was on Little River. They'd get a bunch up in the morning and had the wagon, go in your wagon, go over there and get that's where you catch them rockfish. Old Uncle Bill McGhee, that's Papa's brother, he had a gig. He'd gig them some nights while they was over there. He'd catch them in the gills like that and said they'd hang down, their tails would drag the ground. Rockfish. All right, then when they'd stay in there about maybe a week, two weeks, they'd take the bodies off the wagon and turn them up there and dance on the . . .

P: They'd dance on their wagons turned upside . . . ?

M: They'd stay over there sometimes for two weeks.

P: What did they stay in, sleep in while they're over there?

M: In the wagon. Some of them had covers over them, you know, just like—you've seen them, I reckon, what with that top on them just like a truck. Well, they put on and sleep in there. Fish in the morning . . .

P: And what would they do the rest of the time?

M: Frolic, frolic. [Laughter]

P: Would they bring the fish back home with them to here?

M: Yes, yeah. Yes, sir.

P: How did they keep the fish from spoiling?

M: They'd put them on salt. After the white man commenced to coming in here and commenced to dynamite them, they left. Now, you'll see some little bitty ones. You can go to any creek, or any kind of creek that you want, watching a while and you'll see some little rockfish just about that long. But you never see them more bigger. They come in here and went to dynamiting them, you see, and they soon left. The same way with them pigeons.

P: Tell me about that. You started telling me about that one time.

M: Well, pigeons come here, they come off of Alabama River, commence to coming over in the evening time bout after one o'clock. From one o'clock on to sundown, they darken the sun. Just like that, just darken the sun. There might have been couple of them days where they had a sack looked just like a mail sack. They'd go over there and kill just as many as they wanted. Sitting on them low bushes, you know, just break down limbs. You'd come in there, there'd be so many of them, well they'd just break their limbs. When they get settled down, all they had to do just go in there, tap as many as they wanted, put them in a sack, bring them back home. The white man commencing coming in here with them guns, then they're doing it for sport, you know, killing [inaudible] shooting. But they got to going so high then, Papa and them never did get anymore hardly. They didn't have nothing like they had. Just one old musket we had, I reckon he must have brought that out of the army. A regular old musket, long gun. You make a stick

out of a fat lighter and ram your powder down in there Then put your shot in there and put paper wadding in on it. Then, come time, she'd go off like a cannon.

P: But that was the only gun you had.

M: Yeah, that's the onliest one they had. Because later on, then they commenced to coming in here and building up Atmore, they commenced to putting guns in there. First thing you know some of them got them a gun, what was able to buy one, why they got them a gun.

P: Now when they would go tap those pigeons, what would they tap them with?

M: Stick. Take a stick. Any kind of stick, just knock them off the roost.

P: But you say you never saw the pigeons like that.

M: I didn't see them, I didn't get to see them. But Papa and them went over and got many of them. If they'd have stayed on here like it is now with deep freeze, why, they could have filled up a deep freeze in no time. But see, they commence to—the white man come in there, come in here, got to shooting and then they got to roosting so high. They went back and all went off and never did come back no more.

P: Did you remember your parents ever talking about a way, after they'd got the pigeons, preserving them or saving them?

M: Yeah, they cured them just like curing meat. Just like salt them down and put them in a basket or something like that. Salt them down. Just like I can go out there and kill you a hog now if it weren't hot, and salt it down. Then let it stay

there about nine days, take it out, wash it and hang it up. It'd look just like white meat you buy, this salt meat you buy now in these stores. I've killed a many of them, cut them up, just salt it down and let it stay in that box for nine days. Then take it out and salt it, and hang it up.

P: How about drying beef? Could you tell me about that, how you do that?

M: Just cut it up, have your wire stretched, and put it on some posts. You build your fire under here, if you want it barbequed-like, but you just dry it enough to keep it all right. Mama'd stretch a wire up there, in there, and then she'd slash it up all in pieces just like about your hand, like that. Take all the bones out of it. She slashed it up and then lay it up on that wire. It'd dry out just as nice and pretty as you wanted to see. Well they'd do that maybe for three or four days, and it wouldn't spoil. Make no difference where you put it, you could hang it over the kitchen or anywhere you want it, on a nail, behind the stove, or anywhere. But you had to take a knife then and cut it up into little pieces like that, and put it—now, if you're going to cook it for breakfast, slice it up there, and pour you some hot water over it. Let that set till the morning, then you got something good to eat, buddy. Then she'd cook rice and done fry that. It's done soft again. Now you then see it's done stayed in that water all night. Boy, you've got something worth eating.

P: Do you remember anybody ever wrapping it up in corn shucks?

M: No, didn't know nothing about that. They just stay there, did put it in a sack.

P: In a sack?

M: That's right, hang it up maybe anywhere they wanted. Around the stove, upside down.

P: Do you remember people ever fixing deer meat that way?

M: No, I never did see no deer meat fixed that way.

P: How did people keep the deer meat? What did they do to it to keep it?

M: He didn't—Papa went ahead and he could pick out a little one. Maybe just like killing goats, there's so many down there at Papa's old homestead. I remember, she would show you where Levi stayed. Papa had a house, I reckon about hardly half a mile up in that field, down there to that way to [inaudible]. They had a trail beat through the head of that grass just about that wide. Papa had a little dog with him. If you hear a dog running up on that hill, that's what they're running. He'd go down there and hide in them bushes and tell Mama, say old lady cook the bread, said I'm going to get us a deer. He'd get that old musket, shoot, and come back with a little deer. Why, you pick out a little one, just any kind you wanted. Three or four messes is all you'd get out of a little deer.

P: So you didn't have to preserve it in any way?

M: No. Anytime you wanted a deer, you'd go out and get them a little one. He could kill any kind in them days. Doe or buck or any kind he wanted, but now you can't.

[Break in Recording]

P: Another thing you told me about one time was how your Papa used to make potato bins or potato pits, a place to keep potatoes. Would you tell how he made those?

M: Yes. We'd dig out potatoes, you know, and then might dig us a little round hole about four foot across that way. Straw it right in the bottom, put a lot of straw in the bottom. Then we'd pour maybe about fifteen or twenty bushels in that bed, and then fix us maybe or six of if we made a good lot of them. We'd make us about five or six beds like that, pour our taters, then we'd go off and skin a pine tree with bark, maybe four foot high like that. Then we'd stand it up around them taters like that, all the way round just like that.

P: Oh, I see. So the bark was on top of the ground?

M: That's right, that's right, that's right.

P: How would you get into it to get the potatoes?

M: When we got ready to open one of them banks, well we'd take a hatchet or something and bust this bark, this bark right here on this side. Just big enough to get our hand in and get them till we'd eaten nearly about all of them. You could reach your hand up in there and get them like that. Well, then when you get it, there's about all you could reach, we'd pull this bark off and got up just about half of them on that side. We'd just get out what we could and put our bark back over them like that, and throw the straw back on.

P: So he would take sheets of pine bark?

M: Yes, that's pine bark, from off a tree. They used to have some big trees in them days. Well, they'd die, you know, some of them would. Lightning hit some of them, well it stayed there so long, its juice would run out. Why you could cut down all the way around that bark like that, four foot long, then you split it down just like that paper like that, and get it started. Then hull off of that tree just like you see that paper there. Then you got whole pieces come off. By then you take your axe and split it right down there where you got two pieces. You just stand them up 'round the potatoes just like that and four feet you'd be way up like this. Then maybe it wouldn't take but about four or five pieces that wide before you got enough there for one bed of potatoes. Maybe you put thirty bushels in that bed if it's a big 'un. Maybe you got three or four beds like, you wouldn't maybe have to get but maybe fifteen or twenty pieces before you got enough to go round just like that.

P: And they'd come together at the top?

M: Yeah, we'd come round just like this. Then when we'd get to the top of it, you cut a piece then, maybe two foot long, what you call a cap. Just hold your hand there and I'll show you. Just like that's your bed of taters. Why, we'd cut a piece then to put over the top of it just like that.

P: Lay it over the top.

M: Lay it over the top, that's right. Then we'd put a clod of dirt or set a bucket up there and put dirt in it, that way it wouldn't blow.

P: I see. So the bark wasn't down inside the ground, it was on top of the ground.

M: That's right, that's right, that's right. To keep the wind off them taters. And now I know them taters in there brother, just as solid as the day you put it there.

P: How long would they keep that way?

M: From one year to another, that's right. But now you can't hardly keep them.

P: How about corn? How'd you keep corn?

M: We did make a crib for corn and it stayed there all right, too, corn would.

P: Tell me how you make a corn crib.

M: Out of poles. Notch them . . . put them up there, notch them. Get you some block to put it just like building a house, but you wouldn't make them that big. Then you get you some little old planks for flooring—we'd split boards, though, out of pine trees, to floor them with. But then, Papa used to make pumpkins way back in his day, he'd maybe make enough pumpkin to put five or six different big pumpkins in the crib in the shucks.

P: Now would the corn crib be built up off the ground a little bit?

M: Yeah, built up off the ground, put it on blocks, just like you do a house. When you get ready to gather your corn, well sometimes it'd be after Christmas before we gathered our corn.

P: You'd leave it standing in the field?

M: That's right, that's right. Then we'd get it gathered, if we had any hogs, we'd put them in our potato patch, let them go through our corn, get what was left. By then

they'd be fat enough to kill. All you had to do then was put them in a pen, maybe put them on a floored pen, and clean them out good. By then you've got something worth eating.

P: Did the rats and mice ever get in the corn cribs?

M: Yeah. We always kept plenty of cats around. [Laughter]

P: Do you remember people making scarecrows to put out in the fields?

M: That's right, that's right, absolutely, absolutely. Made a many one. Sometimes, in fact, a stick would make legs just like a man, put an old coat over of it, and get an old hat. Then put, made another one to that, looked just like a gun running out.

P: And that'd keep the crows away, huh? Do you remember whether people ever used to say, on an evening, sit out in their cornfields and shoo the crows off?

M: Yes, sir. They done that, too.

P: Would they ever build anything to sit on out there?

M: No.

P: They just stand out in the field?

Unidentified male: Shoo them off.

M: That's right.

P: You were talking about your papa would tell your mother to put the bread on. When you were a boy, did you eat much white bread?

M: White bread?

P: Was it cornbread you ate?

M: Cornbread, cornbread. We got biscuits maybe once a day for breakfast.

P: Uh-huh. But cornbread was the main thing?

M: Cornbread. That's right. We made our own bread, and then we commenced to making our own rye. What little money we'd make through the week, we'd buy sugar, coffee, and flour. Maybe a sack of flour. But she wouldn't cook it regular, you know, else you couldn't get it just like you can now.

P: How would you make your money?

M: Working about for people just like I was telling you about that man, Old Man **A.G.** Down there, we used to work for him. Then we come on up here to Old Man Moore. We'd work for him and clean up that land out there. All 'round in about.

P: Another thing you told me about one time was making baskets. Could you talk about that for a while?

M: I got white oak. I was working with a colored fellow, and he had split them just like splitting out a wagon, it looked near about like an old hide string when you got them split. Then when you gonna get them split, you make the bottom. You wattle them just like wattling these pickets over and around, over and under, just like that. Did you ever see any pickets wattled in there?

P: No.

M: Well, that's just the way you make a basket. I'd say that'd be your bottom. You start about right here, see this? Till you get your bottom. All right, this is your bottom. Now for this here bottom, you keep on till you get your bottom. Then this is as tall as you wanted it, might leave that one out just the way's you can see. Then this here is a piece of your string. I want it to be long in there. Why, then you take the heart out of that white oak and make the rib for your basket. Then this here string all the way around, you see—all it has to do is just go over there and run back through this hole. Then that back down there, you know, just like that. When you run through here, come around this and run it back through there. That ties every one of them, just as tight as **the dickens back there**. [Laughter]

P: How'd you get into making baskets in the first place?

M: Colored fella. I got in with a colored fellow. Me and him was farming together for Hall. Mr. **Hall got me to go up there and the other half didn't know how I got it from**. I learned how to make them 'bout as good as he did. I can make them now if I had to.

P: Were you the only one learned how to make baskets?

M: Sure was.

P: One time, another story I remember you told me I'd like to get on tape was how one time someplace, and I've forgotten where it was, you made fire without matches.

M: **That was over there on with Old Man John Presley.** Old Man Presley was working there, these log camps down here, and he stayed over there in an old house on **Algee** land. We called it **Algee land** and I don't know whose it was, coulda been ours.

P: Called it the what land?

M: Just an old house built on that land. In them days we could cut a timber tree anywhere we wanted and never heard nothing about it. It might have been our land, we don't know. They claimed the Indian owned a lot of land back in this country. All right. After Old Man Presley was working them camps, his wife was scared to stay there with them children come up bad weather. Got at me to come and he'd come at me every night to go to stay all night with them. One morning it commenced to thundering that way before daylight, just like it coming a storm. I got up to build a fire and there weren't no matches. So I opened the shell, that gun shell. She had some lint cotton there, I take an old pot lid where she had cooking on and lay a fire up on it. I take me a knife— butcher knife—I take that cotton sitting out there, just like that. I'd take my knife, take that lid there, and see that sparks coming off of that lid, but never would hit my cotton. I'd move my cotton a little bit. If a spark hit that, phew, you'd have a fire there before you could turn your head. [Laughter]

P: How did you know to do that?

M: That was the onliest thing we know. We know that, to do that. We've done that a many a time.

P: You have?

M: Yes sir.

P: We did it without matches, you know, and there weren't but one little store in Atmore. That was where he was hauling that turpentine, when I telling you 'bout Papa. Had that turpentine still and we hauled out timber in Atmore. Used to put timber and turpentine. Fellow leased it. Well, then after a while he put up a store there, and that's the only store that was in Atmore.

P: So many times you didn't have any matches?

M: No, no sir. Then these old big dead trees I was telling you about, what this bark would come off on them potatoes. Why they'd rot and have this sap on the skins and just die. We'd go out and sit them in trees was close to the house on fire that night where we could get fire next morning.

P: I see. But you wouldn't have to make fire again in the morning?

M: No, no, unh-uh. Just go out there to that dead tree and get you a piece of that rotten wood while it was burning.

P: And it would burn all night out there?

M: That's right. Some of them would burn down, burn there for three or four weeks.

That's the . . .

P: And that way in the morning, you just go out and get some of that fire.

M: That's right, that's right, that's right.

P: Do you remember any other ways people used to make fire besides with a pot lid and a—

M: No, that's the onliest way. I had a brother, he stayed over on the other side of the creek where Papa built him a house, his own little homestead. Well he'd do the same thing. He'd set a tree afire. That's right, now. We're talking about somebody been through the roughs. We been through the roughs.

P: Tell me again about how your papa got his homestead and what happened to it and how the cemetery came to be there.

M: I don't know how he got it, but he homesteaded it. Homesteaded it, back in them days, you could get a homestead and just homestead it. Well after he got the homestead and got it cleaned up, he farmed it. Cleaned up over half of it and farmed it. Well then he farmed it a long time. Oh, long time. Oh, us boys...he done mortgaged it before I got big enough to farm, me and **A.G.** and **Ron**, but all this oldest bunch . . . we farmed the thing. Made all our corn, potatoes, peas we wanted. After a while he commenced to mortgage it to Old Man Jack Curtis. Old Man Curtis. Well,\ just like everybody else, you know, things kept a-getting so high and higher and the first thing you know it's so far in debt to you. You never could see your way out. So he told Old Man Curtis one day, says Mr. Curtis, I don't see no way in the world of paying you. I'll just have to let you **cut close me out**. He said, I do want you to give me one acre for a graveyard. Says, I want to be buried way in this corner here. He showed him where he wanted to be buried.

He said all right, Uncle Joe, says, I'll sure deed it to you, and that's what he done. He deeded him that acre, and that's where our graveyard is right now.

P: And that's that that graveyard still there today. Uh-huh. Now I'd like for you, if you could, to think back to when you were a youngster and tell me the story of Lynn McGhee as best you can remember, the way it was told to you when you were a young fellow.

M: We was over on the Alabama River one time, cutting cross ties. Manning McCarthy, I don't know whether you knowed him or not—

P: What was the name again?

M: Manning McCarthy, all right. We got to talking there one evening about it, and way after a while, he said, you see that trail there? Says that's where they piloted Old Man Lynn McGhee through the swamp when he come bowling from Montgomery into Mobile with the president. I said, shucking is that it? I said, well that's my great-granddaddy. He said, **look-a-here** Isaac, don't tell me that. I said, yes sir. And I said, now another thing—well, then they was trying to take that land away from us then when he told that. It looked like that man got so nervous about it after he told that. Well I seen that night he give him a section of land down here at Headapadida. I said, I'm heir to that section of land. It looked like that fellow got just as nervous as he could. He said, well please. I said, that's my great-grandpa. He said, Old Man Lynn McGhee's your great-grandfather? Yes sir. That's right. That's my great-grandpa. But he was such a brave soldier, that's the

reason the president gave him the job of piloting the president in from Montgomery into Mobile.

P: Now which president was that?

M: I don't know what his name was, but I think it was about the first president that they had.

P: And so Lynn McGhee piloted him from Montgomery to Mobile?

M: That's right, that's right, that's right.

P: And Lynn McGhee was a soldier and . . .

M: Yeah, he was such a brave soldier, the president gave him that homestead.

P: And that's how there came to be a lot of Indians living in here?

M: That's right, that's right, that's right. That's the reason he said there never was to be even taxes, as long as grass grows and water runs. But see after we all got to growing up a lot of them married into the McGhee family and found out they could get a hold to him. Old Man Fred McCall over here, he the one started it. He married some of—**oh God, why can't you think of his wife**—was Old Man Lynn's daughter. All right, he found out he could maybe have a chance to see if he couldn't win that land. He kept writing to Washington to see if he could get a deed to it. They sent him a deed back, claimed it was just a little old abstract deed. Couldn't be made, but it did show him what it would take. Boy, that wouldn't do him. He kept on writing, kept on writing. Not only him. There's some more done that, too. Some outsiders commenced to doing that very thing, trying

to rule us out from getting this land and absolutely they done it. They'd keep on till he got to where he claimed there's taxes paid on it. Me and Brother Lee and Henry Rolin, we went to Bay Minette down to see Old Man Lawyer Stone. Lee asked, he said, Mr. Stone, you know anything about this grant land that the president granted to Old Man Lynn McGhee? He said, yes, yes, yes, but said, I ain't going to tell you what I know, but I'm going to tell you 'bout what the President of the United States said. He went up there and got an old, big law book. I reckon it was that long and about that thick. He turned it over about a little ways, something like that, and read it off to Lee. He said, here it is right here, Lee. Granted to Old Man Lynn McGhee and his heirs, long as grass grows and water runs. Never will be taxable as long as grass grows and water runs. But long as there's a McGhee born from Old Man Lynn McGhee's family, that's his land. See, after they commenced to—well I figured out there's just someone pulled their pockets up. This Old Man Fred McCawley, these here big fellows in Washington, a lot of them done it, in my opinion. That's the way it runs in my mind. After they found out, you know, oh they kept writing and writing. They trying to say, it's taxable, it's taxable. That's how come me and Lee to go down to Old Man Stone's, just to see whether he not. And if I could find that book, I'd get it here.

P: How did you know Old Man Stone?

M: Oh, he worked many a case right there in Atmore for us. Caught a girl one night committing adultery. Some of our folks. So we got that lawyer, Stone, to defend the case. [Laughter]

P: Was he a good lawyer?

M: Woo! There weren't no better up in this country than he was. So that morning when they decided the case, he cleared that fellow before you could turn 'round. Yeah.

P: The fellow was one of your folks, you say?

M: No, the girl was. She was with a white man. When they called the case, he said, I'm going to beat your case. I know what I'm talking about. Says, I'll beat it. For twenty-five dollars, he says, all right, call the case. Now judge says, I'm gonna take this thing into consideration. He said, what if me and you was both over at the briar patch picking blackberries and we fall off in there. Could you swear which briar scratched you the deepest? He said no, so I find the defendant not guilty. He was right, won't he?

P: Now what exactly did he mean by that?

M: Well, he wanted to screw her, you know. [Laughter] But if you fall off in the briar patch, you couldn't swear which briar scratched you the deepest, could you?

P: No. So he got him off. He got him cleared on that, uh-huh. Back to the grant land, could you just tell me, thinking back when you were a boy—you grew up on your papa's homestead. Who were some of the—

M: Go down there and up there, too. We stayed up here biggest portion of our time on Uncle Dick's place while he was on the old homestead.

P: I was going to ask if you if you could just tell me the names of all the people that were living on the grant land at that time.

M: This old man, that's Papa's brother. Old Man Dick McGhee and Old Man Bill McGhee, he got on it along toward the last. But I'll tell you why I showed you down yonder where they had that flat that time. But after a while he come up through here and got on it. Then some of Papa's sisters stayed with Old Uncle Dick on that grant land. Papa homesteaded down there. Reason he didn't build up here, and he homesteaded down there. Come on up here every Sunday, we'd come up there, we had church up there at the church house just right back yonder in them bushes. The Baptists are the ones. We had a Missionary Baptist Church. We all belonged to that Missionary Baptist Church then. We'd come up there to church every Sunday, and then we'd go to Uncle Dick's down there some Sundays and eat dinner. By then we kept a-moving it around and moving it round, until we made us one right back and down there in that field where I was showing you. And then sometimes—

P: Over in Hog Fork, you mean?

M: That's right. We'd go from there then back down to Papa's. Bell Creek and all around had—

P: But in the early times, the only church was over here at Headpadida?

M: That's right, that's right, till we built us one.

P: Do you remember, speaking of churches, whether your parents talked about what church they went to when they were little children?

M: Baptist church. That's the Baptist they brought up. That's what I was saying, there are a whole lot of old forehead people who were brought up under Missionary Baptist Church. Well then after they built this church up here, the Baptist church, they raised us up. We was grown people, but we had to come to that church. That's the onliest church there was around in here nearly 'bout till they commenced to coming in here and building churches just like they did everything. Then after a while they commenced to coming in all kinds of denominations. That's reason there's so many.

P: Do you remember the old people, when you were a boy, ever talking about a time before there was any church in here?

M: No, I don't believe I did.

P: There's always a Baptist church in there? Uh-huh. Besides your Uncle Dick, who else lived on the grant land and his sisters and so forth?

M: Old Man Will McGhee. That's Old Man Bill McGhee's son. Will McGhee, he raised his settlement right over there on that hill. Back then, he farmed it. He farmed every bit of that land, nearly about. That's what me and Lee went down there for, to see if we could . . . and he told Lee, he said, if you want to get any rent out of that land, you go back and tell Will not to stick a plow in that ground till you rent it. Then every year if he wants to rent it, charge him so much a year till he won't be able to pay it and there won't nobody farm it. But Lee didn't do it, you

see, he just talked to Old Man Will McGhee about it till he just let him have it. That's the reason we ain't got none of it to that today. We just let Old Man Will done as he pleased, near abouts. There come a storm, blowed some of that big timber down. It was just thick as hair, it was big timber. When it blowed it down, he thought he was smart enough—being he lived on it, you know—to get all that timber and not give us a dime of it. So he had done sold and then had a ramp pulled out there to McCullough, Old Man Joe Day's saw mill. So me and A.G. went to town. He went to the law and asked him could he have—Old Man Will stopped and said, I'll write you out an **attachment**. I'll dare any of them to cut a log. You go put that on them logs, and I'll guarantee you there weren't nobody saw down there. Old Man Joe Day like to have a heart attack. [laughter] He went out there and stuck it on there. A.G. says, I wished you'd have done that before I got all this messed up. But he said, you know, they didn't not let us know. He said, I could have stopped him. All right. He had so many on then. Old Man Will McGhee then hunted A.G.—that is my brother, A.G., me and him . . . he found A.G. and told him, he says, now A.G., if you'll let me cut up them what I got on the ramp, he says, I'll take that for my part, and I'll give y'all ten dollars apiece if that satisfies you. Well, he went round then to all our brothers and sisters to see. But yet that was just the old people, like me and my brother and sister. I reckon there's 100 children then was heir to that property. They didn't get a dime, you see. See what I mean? All right? He told him yeah, says, I'll do that, Old Man Will. But from now on, don't you never cut nothing else off of that grant land.

P: He told that to Will?

M: Yes sir, mm-hmm. Will McGhee. Had done went out, had it all about cut before we ever knowed anything about it.

P: That was this grant land here at Headapadida.

M: Yes.

P: What about grant land over in Baldwin County? Do you know anything about that?

M: No, don't know nothing about that.

P: What about up at Huxford?

M: Yeah, they claim that's some of it. That's where Neil McGhee's boy, that's where he raised his bunch when they said that was some of the same land that they gave Old Man Lynn McGhee. But I didn't know much about that.

P: And they gave that to Lynn McGhee because he piloted the president? Uh-huh. Now, I've asked you this before, but not on tape. What do you know about the Rolin family, where the Rolin family came from?

M: I don't know much about them.

P: You mentioned one time you thought they came from Red Hill or someplace.

M: Yeah, I did. That is where a lot of them was raised, up there. Red Hill, you see that old lady stayed there, Magdalene, her mother, and her sister, and another one. There's three women stayed there all their lives and raised a family—just like a man come in there the night. Them women stayed there by themselves.

This one would get a baby and maybe the next and maybe the next, some of them raised three and four children. Old Lady Peg—now, Lee married her oldest daughter. She won't marry . . . Henry and Jim and her daughter . . . she had four children. We don't know who the daddy was, but anyhow, she had four children. Then Aunt Lena's mother, that one's down here, Magdalene, George's mother. Her mothers had—let's see two brothers and two sisters. There's four of them. This other old lady had three. All them women stayed there together, made a living for their selves, never did marry.

P: And they lived at Red Hill?

M: That's right. Went by the name of Red Hill.

P: Do you know it got the name Red Hill?

M: It's the Red Hill there, you went down on the spring. It's steep as back in there, but they still had to go from here to that tree from the house, but we had to go down a deep hill like that just as red as . . .

P: It was a red hill.

M: That's right, that's right. That's the reason they named it Red Hill. [Laughter]

P: One other thing that you were telling me about one time, a long time ago. I think I might have got some of this on tape. But you were telling me that years ago there used to be people who were medicine men in here, knew how to doctor people. Would you talk about some of those people and what they did?

M: Who was done it?

P: Yeah. Who were some people who were medicine men, that knew how to cure people?

M: Never did get no lye.

P: But they knew how to make herbs and things like that. Uh-huh. Who were some people, years ago, who did that?

M: My brother was one of them, and my brother's son, but he never did get no . . .

P: Your brother Frazier?

M: Yeah, Frazier. But he never did get no lye. And so Charlie, my brother's son, he comes over here . . . but him and Frazier stayed out in Mississippi, I reckon for four or five years. And they had lye and sell it anywhere except Alabama. All right. When they come back to Alabama and lye was so high till they couldn't get them right then, didn't have enough money. I went with him one time down in Atmore there and sold some. He could get money, he could sell that thing. Made out of herbs, all out of the woods.

P: Who did Frazier learn it from?

M: Learned hisself. I had to go right over there on Bell Creek over there where Brother David used to live and get you all the yellowroot. You ever see those 360 cards you get in your drugstore?

P: No.

M: Three-sixty, they call it. That looks just like it, and that's what it's made out of, yellowroot. You can go over there and make you a dose. I'll get you some of that thing and make you a tea of it. Buddy, it'll work you before you get your britches down there. That's right.

P: It cleans you out, huh?

M: I reckon. You can get that thing out in the woods right now, will do you just as much good as a doctor will if you know about what to get.

P: If you know what to get, that's right.

M: But Norman, he got too bold with his. And they caught him. Put him in jail in Brewton. Like I say, he stayed in there a couple days and they sent us word. They's fixing to send him off next evening at two o'clock. So me and Old Man Will McGhee and A.G. went up there and I give a note on a cow and calf to Charlie Hall for twenty-five dollars. We was going to pay twenty-five dollars apiece to keep him from going off. When Will told me, he said, actually, if you mortgage one of your cows to Charlie Hall for twenty-five dollars and help us out, he says, I'll see it you won't lose your cow. I said, all right. So I got in the car and went with them to Brewton and I went and mortgaged that cow for the twenty-five dollars, cow and calf. We went up there that evening and the sheriff told us, don't y'all go down there till—he said, he's just eating dinner. He said, don't y'all go down there. He said, we fixing to send Sport off. But he said, y'all come here, and just don't go down there anymore, 'cause I'm getting ready to go down there with you. So we went down there and eased up down there and he was brushing

up the jail house, you know. Says to us, I supposed to come after you. Man, I looked at that man I was so glad till he didn't know what—but anyhow, I lost my cow and calf on it.

P: They didn't see that you kept it, huh.

M: No, they didn't. Really didn't come to the agreement, he didn't pay me at all.

P: Where were they going to send Sport?

M: Uh, what is that name? I know where it was, up above—Kilby. Kilby.

P: Kilby? Is there a jail up there or what?

M: No, that's where they done send the prisoners. **Depends where you are, they still come to Kilby, what's up through there now.**

P: But Norman—or Sport, as you call him—got too bold with it.

M: Got too bold with it, that's right, that's right.

P: When we were coming over here, you were talking about how you used to work the hands in the field, even though you can't read and write the way you—tell me about that again.

M: All I had to do was weigh the cotton. And I had them numbered. The first one weighed, I'd give them a number, next one weighed, I'd give them a number. They knowed their number. Well, when I weighed the cotton, figured it up—everybody by his number. I gave him his number, then he go to up to Charlie Hall and he'd pay him off. All by that number.

P: How did you get started working for Charlie Hall as a foreman?

M: There was a whole bunch of us working for him. Let's see—about six or seven of us worked for him about fifteen, twenty years. Some of them stayed with him for twenty-five years.

P: Were you working on halves or just—

M: Yeah, yes sir. There was three years he never did pay us for nothing. [Laughter]

P: Well how'd you live?

M: Oh, we just lived. We was trading over there—there was a store, an old colored man had a store then, and he told the old colored man, said, now you carry them on, let them get any groceries, and he said, for our settlement, I'll come over here pay you up. Well, it's three years he didn't give us a settlement, and that old man never got his pay. Nothing. It's like the old man and his name was Grady Rabb. He says, boy, I don't think hard of y'all a bit. He says, I was looking to Charlie Hall for that money.

P: And the storekeeper didn't get his money either? Hmm. I know I've asked you this before, but since I've been interviewing you, maybe you've remembered some. But do you remember how to count or say even a few words in the Indian language?

M: No, I sure don't. But Papa tried to learn us that very word. But we never did learn that.

P: I've heard that the word for thank you was *mvto*. Do you remember that? Does that ring a bell? Thank you was *mvto*, that you'd thank somebody way. Does that ring a bell with you?

M: I believe that's one of them, but then he could call a milk cow, he'd call it different from us, but I never could learn them.

P: You couldn't learn them?

M: Nuh-uh, I never did learn us. Before, there weren't nobody growing in that country but just us. Well, after four years he'd clean up a field, take us a cornstalk, get maybe fifteen or twenty of us boys out. Get us one of them cornstalk over our shoulder, show us how to march, just like they did in that war, you know.

P: Did you boys ever play any ball games of any kind? You played football?

M: Baseball, most of. But we never did go from home, we'd always play around the house.

P: Did ever make your own bats or did you get some bats?

M: We'd make them bats. Cut a little hickory tree about that big around, you know, peel it down, let it sit. Boy, you got one better than you can buy. [Laughter]

P: What'd you use for a ball?

M: Make them out of a wool. I know they used to spin this wool, make thread out of it. We'd take some of that around that, get us one of those little old Indian rubber balls about that big around. That thing'd bounce higher than this house.

P: But back even when you were a boy you played baseball, huh?

M: That's right, that's right.

P: Do you remember any other kind of games you used to play?

M: Marbles. We played marbles on a Sunday, every Sunday. Us boys, big boys.

P: Did you make your own marbles?

M: Nuh-uh, nuh-uh. But we coulda made them. We used to take this here clay dirt, and wet them, ball them up and put them in the fire and burn them. They'd last a pretty good while, but after a while they'd give it down. You hit one too hard, they'd bust.

P: Uh-huh.

M: Mm-hmm.

P: Do you remember people ever making pots out of that clay dirt or anything like that?

M: No. But I went to the factory one time where they was making them.

P: Oh, you did? Where was that factory?

M: Down here at Daphne.

P: Daphne?

M: Mm-hmm, out from Mobile. Make anything out of mud. You could make a pot there before you turned . . . they had a machine out there, like where you had to make it, but had a machine in there . . . but anyhow, they had a horse out there turning that thing just like a cane mill. When he gets that mud mixed up, why, a fellow was out there tending to it. Cut him off, maybe three or four pounds, biggest you get, put it on a table he had. Then when he'd get to that, put a pound of that dirt to make a jug. Then he'd put it on that machine. She'd go around like a spinning wheel there. He had something to go in that bottom just like that, you know, make the bottom. Then he'd hold it up on its side and cover it up just like that. That thing'd run around just like a spinning wheel, till he got a pot he wanted. Then he'd cut it over this table and he'd take another piece of that mud over there, stick on it and make the handle. Well then he had some dippers, he commended to dip on that thing. Set it up on a long plank, and he got that house full in his burner. Put about 500 in there and burn them. He'd just tear down a kiln of them when we was down there. We went down there to Bill O'Neil. He was in the war with Papa, Bill O'Neil. He lived out from Pensacola at Daphne. Papa wanted to see him so bad, so we went down there one . . . left for him on a Saturday, and Sunday we drove up to Bill O'Neil's house, right on up.

P: Did you go in a wagon?

M: Yeah, a wagon. When we got there, his old lady knowed Papa. Says, ain't that there Joe? 'Cause they called Papa Joe McGhee. She talked to us, and she

hugged Papa just like it had been her brother. Papa asked her, where is that Bill at? Said, he's drunk. He's stayed drunk nearly all this time. Says, wait till he gets sober, I'll let you go in there and talk with him. But they had another big house about as close from here to your car, to the one she was living' in. He stayed in there. She says, just go open that door, says, unload your stuff in there. There'll be a good bed in there, y'all can stay in the end and he in the other one, drunk. He'll get all right after a while. Sure enough he did, that evening, just before dark. They just glad as to meet one another, it was just like meeting your brother. That's right.

P: Because they had been together in the war.

M: That's right, there you are. You get one of them old war veterans out and stay in the war with them, boy it's just like meeting your brother. Huh?

P: Yeah. Did y'all, when you were a boy, ever go on other long trips like that?

M: No, never did. I never did leave home hardly, till I went to the war.

P: Then where did you go?

M: You mean the war?

P: Mm-hmm.

M: I went to North Carolina.

P: That's the furthest you ever been away from home?

M: That's right.

[Second tape begins]

P: About how you cleaned up land for people. Who were the people you cleaned up land for?

M: Old Man Tunie Wainwright was Old Man Luck Wainwright's son. We cleaned up all that I was showing you out there for his son, Old Man Tunie Wainwright.

P: Who were the others?

M: Dr. Moore, the first old doctor come to this country. Cleaned all this up right in front of his house, cleaned out there [inaudible] . . . Wainwright's wanted to come in.

P: And how much did they pay you?

M: Five dollars an acre.

P: That was virgin timber at that time?

M: That's right, that's right.

P: Did you get to keep the timber?

M: Huh?

P: Did you get to keep the timber?

M: Yes, keep it. And that's what—they old dead logs—lighted logs some of them would be thirty foot too. Near about nothing, old big limbs sticking up on them like that. Lighters.

P: You got to keep those and take them home?

M: No, we'd burn them up.

P: You'd burn them up?

M: Papa had an old drill with a hole in the handle, and as far as I reckon, the drill was about that long and had a hole in here where we get us the handle and turn it down like that, you know. Drill a hole in one of them old long logs—just a little before we'd knock off—cut maybe about ten foot that long from here to that door yonder. Bore holes in, we'd go about four yards. I know we'd bore four holes in one tree, big around as that door nearly about two lighters. They'd bore it about that deep, put three holes in it, but we'd go along behind them just before knocking off time, haul them chips back in there, and get us about three of them old big oldest lighters and put up there. Well, we fired then before we knocked off. In one of them holes he drilled, we'd fire. Come back the next morning, there'd be mud into—every one of them would be mud into. All we had to then is get is pry and pry them out of the ground. Pry it with a stick.

P: So you'd burn them in two that way, then—

M: Burn them in two in the nights. Pure lighter.

P: While they were still standing up?

M: Huh?

P: While they were still standing in the ground, you mean?

M: No, they had done fell, lowered down, laying there.

P: Well, why did he burn them in two? I don't understand that.

M: How did he burn them in two?

P: Why did he burn them in two?

M: I don't know. You could burn them up, cleaning up that ground.

P: Oh, they were too big to move otherwise.

M: Yeah, that's right. Well, then we'd—all we had to do was get us a big pryer to pull—you know, and them big old odd limbs was in the ground maybe three or four foot deep. Pry them up and get two of them together. Why, they'd burn up—all we had to do was keep them pushed together. These lighters, you see, it didn't take nothing to burn them up.

P: And that's how you cleared it, was mainly by burning it?

M: Huh?

P: You cleared that land by burning it?

M: Yeah, it was meant to burn. And we could have saved the lot back in them days, if I'd have thought then that this was going to happen. They lived this long. We'd have lighters right today.

P: Uh-huh, but you burned it all up.

M: Burnt it up and piled it up. Now me and momma and maybe two or three of us boys would tie knots all in it, and when we'd shot fire in one of them things even before we'd leave there. You'd say that fire of ours looked like a big town later. Them fat lighters, you know, they just looked like the world was on fire.

P: Were those some of, Dr. Moore and Mr. Wainwright, were those some of the first white people to come in here?

M: That's right. That was the first doctor to come in, Old Man Dr. Moore.

P: But they were also some of the first white people, you say?

M: That's right, that's right.

P: You told me once that long years ago it seemed like the white people were afraid of the Indians. Would you talk about that some?

M: That's right. [Laughter] We'd pick cotton over here on Lon Bowman on Curtis's farm, and that one family there, they were scared of the Indian folks 'cause they'd have been back.

P: What were they scared of?

M: They'd said that were scared that they'd pick them in the head with that tomahawk. That's what got them scared. [Laughter] But no, we never did bother nobody as long as they didn't bother us. But they's mean back in them days, but they never did bother just as long as you don't bother them, you was all right. Now if you was back in them days, you'd said anything out of the way, you'd had them to fight.

P: Did you, back long years ago, did you see many fights?

M: Oh, go down this frolics, you'd see them coming out with their nose bleeding. [laughter]

P: That's at the frolics, huh?

M: Yeah. Their lips busted! But they wouldn't say anything, Fred Walker wouldn't let them use a knife like that if, then like one of them start to shoot . . . [inaudible] let them fight with their fists and best man win.

P: Fred Walker wouldn't let them fight, huh?

M: No [inaudible]. But he'd let them fight all right, but they'd dig down and take their knives or see if they had anything like a gun on them and let them fight fair with their fists.

P: What would they fight for?

M: Just got mad at one another. Get mad and that's all I could see.

P: You told me a funny story one time about how you almost got in trouble with the law over drinking at a frolic or something. You want to tell that story again?

M: Yeah, I was raw back in them days. It was down here at Brother Lee's—it was on his place. But that's before I went to the Army. Had a frolic out there for me that night and I was going to leave the next week. Some of them come there selling liquor and there's five of us who got drunk. I reckon got drunk as a [inaudible], I didn't know nothing, but laying there and the first thing I was opening my knife. Cut at a woman. I ain't seen that knife yet. Somebody's got that knife and I never did know where my knife went. So J.D. Presley had a car there—that J.D., that was Dave's boy. J.D.—his name just like Dave, only Dave was named Dave Percy—well, his name was J.D., too. He called him Dave Percy, but that is Dave's name. But J.D., that is Dave's boy. He weren't grown, he had drove his daddy's car down there and after I got so drunk, I don't know how he got me

in that car, but he got me in that car, and carried me down there to my sister and put me to bed.

P: Did you say that the law came after you then?

M: Yeah, they hunting me and if it hadn't been for him, they'd have gotten me to go out before I'd have made a fifth one. They come there that night selling liquor, and we got a little too much of it.

P: Where'd he come from, selling that liquor?

M: Across Escambia over there, Old Man George Emmons and his brother...Gordy Emmons.

P: Did he used to sell a lot of liquor to the folks out here?

M: Yeah. Especially they did.

P: Was there ever anybody killed at a frolic?

M: No. Only one man, John Rolin, up there at Huxford.

P: And he got killed at a frolic?

M: Yes sir.

P: Tell me how that happened.

M: Old Man John Rolin killed Will Carver. He had a log rolling one day and a quilting. Well he went there and frolicked and well when they have them working like that, they'd frolic there all night and wouldn't nobody get hurt. But this here Carver boy, Will Carver, he

went to Atmore that day, see, and got him a coffin. He must have knowed he was going to get killed. And see if it fit him. Then come back there to that night, just about dark— well, they had done everything, ate supper. Fixing to go to frolic and why, they did frolic. Just a going, had a good time. When he got there and he got too much liquor in him, he commenced to cussing. Old Man John Rolin had taken him out to the gate and, you can stay here just as long as anybody. Go in there and enjoy yourself, but the one thing I don't allow is you cussing before them women folk. All right, all right. He went back in there and walked back in there and before long, of course, he was at the same thing again. He tried him the third time. The next time he was taking him out there and he gave him a slash across there and cut that throat from ear to ear. He would have killed this boy, but he just grabbed him up to get at him with his knife and just grazed the skin right across his stomach and grabbed him up and throwed him over the picket.

P: And that was John Rolin.

M: John Rolin. Old man, at that.

P: Was he one that lived up at Red Hill, too?

M: Yeah, yeah. He lived out at Red Hill, too. Raised his family there, thereabouts. Not right at Red Hill, but he's down a piece from Red Hill. And then he knowed he had killed him so he left home that night. He knowed they was bound to catch him. All right? Old Man Steadham, these boys' daddy, Old Man John Steadham, he had taken it on himself. Old man, that's what I said about a man being good and honest, he can get friends to help him. Friends will go along before any of your money will. Why, Old Man John, being a good man, and old man too, Old Man Steadham had taken it on hisself. He had to pay

for, I reckon . . . as long as they had law that I reckon. But anyhow, back in them days, there's not many people in here that voted. There weren't many people in here. But every time he'd get a man that voted and knowed Old Man John Rolin, he'd go and he'd put his name down there. He had this whole thing filled out in about two weeks, until when he came to move, wouldn't do nothing but turn him out. But anyhow when they caught him—he stayed in the woods two weeks, Old Man John Rolin stayed in the woods two weeks, and hid his gun when Old Man Fountain come at him. But he told Old Man Fountain that night, called him up, said, now, I know you ain't raised here but right back of state farm used to be a school house. All the old children back in them days went to that school out there out in the woods. And had a post office there, called—I know the name but I can't think of it—but anyhow, there's where they went to school. He wrote a note and put in that mailbox—Old Man Fountain, he was sheriff—where'd he'd be at and he'd meet him, said, I'mma tell you now, Mr. Fountain, if you bring anybody with you, see, you're not going back alive. He said, if you can come by yourself then I'll give up with you. Told him right where he'd meet him at and so there branched near about to the back of that school house. I can go show you the branch where it near about comes to that school house. But anyhow, says, if you come by yourself, he says, I'm ready to give up to you. He said, all right, Mr. Rolin, he says, I'll be by myself. All right, come on. I said you'd better come by yourself. So he come that night to the head of the low branch where's he's to meet him at and hollered, whistled. After a while, Old Man John Rolin out the swamp answered. He kept getting a little closer until he got up close enough to talk with and said who's with you? Said, nobody. Don't you lie, he says, if you do, I've got my gun ready. If there ain't nobody with you, I'm coming out and give

up. All right, come on out, he said, there ain't nobody with me. I wouldn't tell you a lie for nothing, but come on out. Everybody thought well of him. He says, come on out. He says, there ain't a soul with me. Come on out and give up. He told Old Man Fountain to take his gun. He said, you take my gun and keep it till I come back. If I don't never come back, you can have that gun. But anyhow, Old Man Fountain take it out there to them logs—them old big dead logs, like I was telling you about—and jug it up under one of them logs. Let it stay there till Old Man—they had his trial and sent him off for a little bit until Old Man Steadham got that paper and got it around and got them to sign it and he turned him out.

P: He got people to sign that paper and they turned him loose.

M: Turned him loose, turned him loose. That's right, that's right.

P: How long ago was that, that that happened?

M: How long it was before it happened?

P: I mean, how many years ago was it that happened?

M: It's been a long time.

P: A long time.

M: That's right, that's right.

P: You were telling me one time about how they had a frolic someplace. There was a colored fellow there who said he could eat fire and stuff like that. Where was that?

M: Right down yonder where I tried to show you where Old Man Lynn McGhee lived. And Old Man Fred Walker and my brother, Frazier. Them—Seals, we went to touch on them but they stuck to them that night bad as they were. Fred Walker and Frazier cut one of them till they fell just like you'd have cut a hog. And he's bloody, so bloody you couldn't hardly tell what he's made of.

P: And that was a Sealy he cut on?

M: Seal.

P: A seal?

M: Seal.

P: Was Seal Indian or what?

M: No, he was a white man.

P: Why did he cut on him?

M: Huh?

P: Why did they cut Seal?

M: He's the one that started the fight. They beat another boy, of course—back in them days you don't want to bother Indians, they wouldn't bother you. But if you ever made one mad, buddy, it's just like fighting—going to getting in a war.

P: Like it was like what?

M: Getting in wars with him.

P: Getting in a war?

M: Yeah, the whole bunch would get up on you. [Laughter] They worked him over, buddy. Bill Walker, that's a brother of Fred's, and Seal, in these . . . Woods. Sidney Woods and Albert Woods, they're brother. Albert Woods was Sidney's brother. Sidney was Lela's daddy, you know, you never did see Lela [inaudible], Old Uncle Bill's daughter married herself a Woods, and had one child, Lela. That is one Brooks married. Why, she married three or four times, I believe. She married Brooks and then she married Levi and first one and another, but that is—her daddy was a Woods, Sidney Wood and Albert Woods. Well, they was there that night, too, when they got and went to fighting. Bill Walker, he started running over. Albert Woods shot at Old Man Bill, just did burn the skin on his stomach, along there a little bit. As Frazier turned around and knocked the pistol of his hand and cut that finger near about off. It honed down, just like that. When he nicked that pistol, knocked it out of his hand, he cut that joint, just leaving the finger hung down just like that. He had two fingers near about the same mark on it. When he's chipping boxes, a wasp stung him time and he dropped his axe and cut one them the same way. That night, when he knocked that pistol out of his hand, done the same thing on that, too. When he knocked that pistol out, Albert Woods left running. Sidney run out there to get on his horse, go on his horse backwards and couldn't stop it. [Laughter] That's right, that's right.

P: Sat on his horse backwards.

M: Backwards. So scared to go he got on his horse backwards.

P: But the Seals were the ones that got cut up on the . . .

M: Yeah, got cut bad. That's right, that's right.

P: Did the law come in there on that one?

M: No, unh-uh.

P: Nobody ever said anything about it, huh?

M: Didn't say nothing about it. Well, he's the cause of it himself. And if he had let on, just like I was telling you, he'd have gotten by and not gotten hurt.

P: What did the women folks do when fighting started like that?

M: They'd try to separate them, some of them would. Some of them would take you to the butcher.

P: Take what?

M: To the butcher. [Laughter] Some of them can't stand hot grease now.

P: Can't stand hot grease? [Laughter]. Let me ask you one other thing, if you can think back. Do you remember your mama or your papa ever telling you bedtime stories of any kind?

M: Bed stories? No, he'd always say a prayer. He'd make us come down to the fire, that's why I say that people these days raising their children often forget to learn them how to pray. Say a little prayer, then go to bed. He said, lie me down and take my rest. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord the soul to keep. Amen. We had to say that every night before we laid down.

P: And that's how you'd go to bed.

M: That's right. The President of the United States, when they win that war, they give them their druthers. They could stay here or they could go to Oklahoma. There's a few of them stayed here, some of them went to Oklahoma. Them what went to Oklahoma got their salary and what stayed here ain't never got nothing. That's the reason Calvin had such a time getting that thing straightened out. There's some in Oklahoma, some here. When they come out to find out they was going to get it, there was a lawyer taken them out there to Oklahoma and he about to get their part for them. But every time they'd come back, Calvin kept on fooling with that thing so long till they agreed to pay us off for nine million acres of land. Well, then that'd be divided between that bunch that was in Oklahoma and these down here. These in Oklahoma and these what's here never did get nothing but all the rest of them been paid off except the Creek Nation of the Indian tribal people.

P: When you were a boy, did always know that you were a Creek Indian?

M: Yeah.

P: One time, they tried to get some money on a Cherokee thing, didn't they?

M: They did. Old fellow had a lawyer to that effect but he didn't know nothing. [Laughter]

P: He didn't know that these weren't Cherokee Indians. Did you remember ever hearing of anybody, any old people that had gone to Oklahoma and then came back here? Who was somebody that you knew of like that?

M: Let's see . . . went up there, commenced to go on a visit and come back?

P: Uh-huh.

M: Yeah, there's Old Man McCawley, one of them. Fred McCawley.

P: Was he Indian?

M: No, he married an Indian girl. I tell you, it was Old Man Lynn McGhee's daughter. That's the reason he kept fighting for that land so bad. When he's the onliest one that went to Washington, they tell me, back in them days.

P: Do remember whether there was any people ever came through here when you were a boy, trying to get those that had stayed to go on to Oklahoma?

M: Come through here three or four, writing us up. Made out to get some money for it. I had to sell my shotgun one time to get my five dollars made out. He had a lawyer with him then. And so, we ain't got nothing yet.

P: That's really too bad.

M: That's right, that's right. Then we had an old preacher, John Beck, the first Baptist preacher after this here church got tore up. Come out here to Bell Creek and preached out there for us twenty-five years. Well, he knowed all about it, he was older than we was. He's as old as Papa was, I reckon he knows all about that old Indian war we was in. All right. He knowed that they had taken that land. Well, he made out that he'd work it up for so much. But he's wasn't . . . but anyhow, when Calvin went to Washington, he found that Old Man Brother Beck, the preacher, Baptist preacher had wrote them all up. But Cherokee, that's what it said.

P: He wrote them up as Cherokee.

M: Cherokee, that's right.

P: Why was it—do you think, just sort of generally—why was it that the Indian people here, they didn't keep up their Indian language like the ones that went to Oklahoma did?

M: They never did it learn it, that I knows of. Didn't but one have it as I know of, and that was Papa. He the onliest one out here talking that language. Why, he was the oldest man that was Indian.

P: But he talked English good, too?

M: That's right.

P: And he tried to teach you, but you couldn't learn?

M: That's right, that's right. A cow and a rooster and all like that what he'd call, but I can't think what he call it now, but he could tell us, you know, what they called them as they went by. All such as that, lots of things. But we never did learn it after he died, you know.

P: Did he try to teach you to count, did you say?

M: Huh?

P: Did he ever try to teach you to count in Indian?

M: Unh-uh.

P: He didn't?

M: Just learning how to try to talk. Never did work.

P: But he didn't have anybody he could talk Indian to?

M: No, no.

P: Your mother didn't talk it?

M: Unh-uh. He's the onliest man I know could talk it.

P: That was long years ago.

M: Yeah. That's before his boys all married off.

P: Tell me a little bit about who Ellick McGhee was.

M: [Inaudible]

P: Okay. Ellick McGhee was brother to—

M: Old Lady Peg and Aunt Jane Rolin. That is they brother. And Old Man John McGhee.

P: And John McGhee, who was he to you?

M: What was he to me?

P: Yeah.

M: I don't know. He married mama's sister, what would that be?

P: I don't know.

M: He married mama's sister.

P: Where did he live?

M: Out to Bell Creek, not far from where he lived back across over there.

P: Do you remember Ellick McGhee?

M: Yeah.

P: Was he ever a kind of a leader of the group?

M: Hmm-mm, no.

P: He never acted like a chief or anything?

M: All he believed in was hunting.

P: Hunting, huh?

M: That little old horse he'd ride from Red Hill down there. Ay, oh, boys, y'all meeting up there to Rube Steadham in the morning and we'll hunt back. Well, I knowed they'd all meet up there and hunt from there, make it back down to Papa's old homestead, hunting through the woods. Get back down there, they'd have a couple of deers and squirrels all over the place. [Laughter] As high as sixteen guns in Papa's rack. They'd stay all night there, sleep around the crib, some of them would. Go hunting the next day.

P: One other thing I remember you told me about I'd like to get on tape was when you told me how they used to drive those big, wild cattle through the woods. Tell me about that again.

M: That's right. Well, Uncle Dick and Uncle Dave, you know they had a big lot of them among them, Uncle Bill. Every year they'd pin them up, you know to swab them. He'd have them woods full of about maybe fifteen or twenty men helping him round up them

cattle and pen them up. Maybe they wouldn't get them all penned, but they'd pen up a bunch today and swab them, turn them out and go back to another fork, get another bunch the next day, till they get them all swabbed.

P: What would they swab them with?

M: Knife. Just cut the tail off. They have their tails grow long.

P: What about the horns on those cattle?

M: They never did cut none of them off.

P: Didn't they have big horns?

M: Oh, some of them, I reckon, why, they was about that long. They couldn't have got through the woods now if they had been back in them days.

P: What kind of cattle did you call those?

M: Regular old woods cows.

P: Woods cows.

M: Some of them would give about a pint of milk, some about a cup full.

P: And once they rounded them all up, did they ever take them and sell them someplace?

M: Never did till they raised them. After Old Man give them money for it, he branded them on the jaw. They'd brand them on the jaw, then they got back to the neck, back to the shoulder, back to the side, back to the hip. When they get back to the jaw here, you know how old that udder was. And that for commenced to selling them off for auction,

and he sold some for high as eleven years old for auction. But Lord, them things had horns.

P: But mainly people would just kill them and eat them?

M: What?

P: Mainly they were just to kill them and eat them, or milk them, or what?

M: We'd milk them, but they wouldn't never kill them. But if they'd been here these days you wouldn't hardly had seed left. People would kill them.

P: What about hogs in the woods, did you kill those?

M: Yeah, you kill wild hogs. There used to be plenty of them here. Used to catch them in our lot down there, haul them up, and pen them.

P: Well, I guess I can't think of any more today to ask you about.

[Interview break]

P: These are a few more questions, after listening to the tape that I'm going to ask Mr. McGhee. Why was it that they swabbed the cattle? Why did they swab the cattle?

M: Well, I really don't know, unless they like to switch that tail around sometimes. It'd get flying up around a bush or a tree or something like that and couldn't get it loose.

P: You mentioned that there was a lady who used to make beds out of their hair?

M: Yeah. 'Cause when they'd swab them, you had so many, why, he'd take that thing and make a mattress out of them.

P: Who was that?

M: Aunt Matt Gibson, Uncle Gibb's wife. Wash that hair, put it in a wash pot, and boil it, and then make her a mattress out of it. Lay that thing down there, I slept on them many a night.

P: What would she cover it with?

M: Tickings. We'd make it just like you're fixing for cotton and put it in there. That's right.

P: Did you remember people building their own beds?

M: Yeah, yes sir. Yes, sir.

P: What did they use for springs when they'd build their own beds?

M: Lot of them didn't have none, just make them thick with cotton, you know, like that, and put them up. They'd be about that high. Well, every morning then you'd get up and do up that bed like that, knock it up, it'd be just as soft as it be, just like . . .

P: Well, what would the mattress be lying on?

M: Boards on . . . get a bedstead, and cut you some boards that were just long enough to go across that bedstead and not any spring. Get up on there and sleep.

P: Several times you've mentioned, at the frolics, knives that people had. What kind of knives were these had back in those days?

M: Pocket knives, just like there is now. But they're made out of better metal than there is now. You can't hardly get a knife now sharp enough to cut a stick with. But them days,

you could work on your shoe there and you're ready for shaving. That's right. I had one, I've got one now, it wouldn't cut a stick.

P: You said, listening to the tape, you said that they had this frolic for you because you were getting ready to go to the Army. What were some other occasions that they'd have frolics for?

M: Used to give a rail splitting, a log rolling, something like that and have a frolic. Maybe done a quilting. Women would be quilting while they'd split rails or rolling logs, something like that.

P: Tell me, what was log rolling? How did that go?

M: Just like I was telling you, showing that land. Well, maybe you wanted to—you bought a piece of land here and wanted to farm it, you go out there and maybe get you a set of saws, go up in there and saw them logs up. Everything down what you wanted off of that land, well, now you'd have a log rolling. What you call a log rolling. Then you get maybe twenty-five, thirty hands, and go in there, get you some good sticks. I know Papa and them used to trim them up out of oak. Little old hickory nut trees, about that big around. But I seen Frank Gibson and Brother Lynn reach down and get one of them things. Papa just let them dry them out on the fire, you know, and let them get [inaudible]. You know, you couldn't hardly break one, look like to me. I've seen Frank and Lynn reach down to get one of them logs would be so heavy it would pop that stick just like breaking a pipe stem.

P: And then at night after you've finished the log rolling, then you'd have a frolic.

M: All night long.

P: Now, what was a quilting like?

M: Well, it was just a quilting, making a quilt, you know. You'd get up there and quilt that quilt, the women would. Some are cooking dinner and some are making that quilt.

P: What would they make the quilts on? Did they have a frame or something?

M: Yeah, just had a frame . . . what'd I call a one, two out of a slat lumber. Then bore holes in there. Every time they'd get that reached so far as they could, you'd roll that round that frame and get it finished.

P: And what is a rail-splitting that you mentioned?

M: Just go out there and pick our timber, that's what I said. Whoever that land belonged to back in them days, they could go out there and cut a tree anywhere you wanted and nothing said. Now you go out there and cut one, you have to pay for it. But in them days, Charlie, I had a brother, could pick you out a rail tree. Buddy, if it didn't split, there was something bad wrong.

P: He could tell them.

M: Yeah, that's right.

P: So, times when they'd have frolics would be like for a log-rolling or a quilting?

M: That's right.

P: And they had one for you when you was getting ready to go to the Army. Did they ever have those for other people getting ready to go to the Army?

M: Huh-uh, I's the onliest one.

P: What about when somebody got married?

M: Just marry and that's all.

P: They didn't have a frolic for that.

M: Most of them married in the church, something like that.

P: Years ago, were the funeral any different from what they have now? When somebody died, were funerals any different years ago?

M: No, about like it is now. Of course, I believe—well, yeah there's a little difference. They wouldn't never carry them to the church house, back in them days. If you died, they'd bring you back home. But now, they got where they carry you to the church house, then they brings all the flowers and things and put them in church house with you.

P: Well, back in them days, when they brought the person that died home, what did they do there?

M: When did they do that?

P: When they brought the person to the house, to his house, why did they bring him to the house? What did they do when they got him to the house?

M: They sit up with him all night till they got ready to bury him the next day. I kept Mama there to the house till they got ready to bury her.

P: When they were waiting before they buried the person, did they sing or anything?

M: Yeah, maybe sometimes they'd have a singing, you know, before they carried him off. Maybe the preacher then meet you to the graveyard, and preach the funeral. But back in them days, they didn't have no law, but it's against the law now to bury a person without your preachers' funeral.

P: Nowadays it's what?

M: You got to have a preacher to preach his funeral. But back in them days they didn't care, they just sung you a song and one thing another like that.

P: So some people were buried without a preacher there?

M: That's right, that's right, that's right.

P: They'd just sing a song, and—

M: That's right. Put them in the ground. Now that's against the law.

P: What kind of songs did they sing?

M: They'd sing some good old familiar hymn, like way back in them days, Amazing Grace, and all such songs way back in them days.

P: I've heard that sometimes at a funeral about here, I've never seen it but I've heard some talk about how at a funeral when the people go by to pay their last respects, they'll put their hand on somebody's head or something like that? Have you ever seen that?

M: I've seen it, but I didn't know what it meant.

P: You've just seen people do that?

M: Mm-hmm.

P: And you have no idea what that means?

M: Mm-mm, hmm-mm. Then another thing, they'd all go walk around and pick up a little of that dirt up and put it in the grave like that. That's another thing they'd do way back in old days, way back then.

P: Well, I had one other question I wanted to ask you. I've been meaning to ask you and forgotten about it. Do you remember, long years ago, seeing people cook on something like a table outside?

M: Made a scaffold. I've made scaffolds about that high, then pen it up like a bunk and pour it full of dirt. Then Mama'd cook up behind that. That'd keep her from stooping down so low, you see.

P: Uh-huh. And that'd be out in the yard?

M: Out in the yard, that's right.

P: Would she cook on that in the wintertime sometime?

M: No, not in winter. But it's when it gets hot like it is now, well, we'd go out there and cook. She'd go out there and cook, maybe under a shade tree or something like that. But when it's bad weather, we'd go in the house. But when it's so hot and it ain't any raining, we'd go out there and cook.

P: Would she keep any of her pots and pans out there?

M: Yes sir. Put them on that thing, stay just as dry, made a little scaffold like this. Put them on just like this book is here.

P: So you build a little scaffold beside it?

M: That's right.

P: Put them underneath there and they stay dry.

M: That's right.

P: And that's the way some people used to cook years ago.

M: That's right, that's right. I know I made one at Aunt Nettie's, that's Mama's sister, out there built—had cooking in a big chimney like that but you had to stoop over there, way down near the pots. Why, we had a chimney big enough and wide enough, say now it's coming way on up to face here. Here's the bottom part of it way down here. It's made about that high. You'll throw this in here, and then fill that full of dirt where you can cook in that chimney and you don't have to stoop so low. Just like it were, you see, you stooped so till sometimes they couldn't do just as good.

P: I guess back in those days, a lot of houses had dirt floors.

M: Yes, that's right, that's right.

P: Now, your daddy's house didn't have a dirt floor, did it?

M: No, we didn't have nothing in it.

P: What did people use for brooms back in those days? Brooms, what'd they use for brooms?

M: We'd go out in this field where they had to go that grewed that there old broomsage, you call it. Broomsage. Then you go out that night, get a wad of it about that wrapped around with a string, and that's just as good as one of these bought brooms. Sometimes you'd get these long pine straws out of a pine, make a big wad like that, and tie a string around it good and tight, and put you a nail in a broom handle. Then when you tie that straw good and tight, why, then you take that broom handle and part that straw when you think that's about right and you stick it down through that and that's another good broom. That's what we'd use.

P: Can you think of—

M: You'd find a way to get by. [Laughter]

P: What was that again?

M: I said, you'd fine some way to get by if you don't know no better. That's one thing I';; say about the Indian folk. We ain't got no education. None of them didn't go to school, none of them didn't get no educating. If you can get by an Indian, he knows more than anybody else near about when it comes down to just like we're talking right now. I could figure you out something quick as powder. Just how to get by. That's right.

P: Now you mentioned Indian folk didn't get much education. You said there used to be a little schoolhouse out in the woods. Did some of the Indian folks go to those?

M: That's right.

P: But they didn't go to school with white folks, or did they?

M: Yeah, they went with them till they come up. Right up there and then commenced to getting separated. Some of them built schoolrooms and moved about, first one place, then another.

P: But back long years ago, the white folks and the Indians would go to school together?

M: That's right, that's right.

P: But then later on, the Indians started going to school by themselves?

M: That's right, that's right, that's right. That's right.

P: And then finally they got this school over here.

M: Calvin had to fight like five hundred, though, for that school. And then now it's about to go dead right now, after Calvin died. If Calvin had been living, that school would have been right there today, with all them grown girls and children right there today.

P: But you—

M: One thing Calvin stuck to.

P: That was what?

M: I said, that's one good thing Calvin done.

P: Was get that school?

M: That's right. And then, after he died, see how quick it started to go down just as sure as it wasn't here.

P: But you say even though a lot of the older Indian folks didn't get much education—

M: No, huh-uh, no sir. My mama didn't know "A" from a "B." She didn't know "A" from a "B," but she could pile a bale of cotton. She'd picked many a bale of cotton, take her a bunch and pile it out on the ground over there Lon Bowman's right across there from where we was out there this evening. About a mile over there in that field for Lon Bowman. Eyes on the ground, three or four bales a week. If she had that weight, if a woman asked, she'd tell them, when you go to weigh that cotton there, I want you to holler loud enough where I can hear that weight. If she could figure it up for half a cent, you couldn't beat her out of half a cent, and she didn't know "A" from "B."

P: But she could figure out that weighing cotton.

M: Lord have mercy, I reckon she could. And back in them days, you know, you go to town, get cloth maybe for eight and nine cents, a bit like they called it, a bit. Do you know how much a bit is?

P: No, I don't.

M: What they called a bit back in them days was twelve cents. Why, she'd tie—maybe she'd get ten yards of cloth at twelve cents. By the time you get it rolled up, she had it figured up just what was coming. You couldn't beat her out of a penny, half a penny, to save your life.

P: She could do her figures.

M: Yeah, in her head. And didn't from "A" from "B."

P: Wonder how she learned how to do that?

M: That's what I don't know. Guessing that the good Lord gave it to her. That's right. That's what I'm saying now. If you've got it in your heart to do a thing, well, the good Lord'll help you out with it. He'll give you knowledge and understanding just how to do that thing. He knows what we need better than we do, don't he?

P: He sure does.

M: That's right, that's right. That's the reason, I say, I believe—I know it must have been the good Lord. She didn't know "A" from "B" but she got that cotton weighed and if she heard that weight, makes no difference what it was, if you got it figured up and she could. If he beat her, she could show him right where he made a mistake. Didn't know "A" from "B". Buying a cloth in them days, you could get back and get your cloth for ten cents or five cents or eight cents, something like that. Maybe she could get a pretty good wad of it. By the time he got that cloth figured, hung up, she done got it figured up. You couldn't beat her out of a penny to save your life. I've been with her. I had to go, me and her were the ones to go to town to get the groceries.

P: So, like you say, even though they didn't have much education, the Indian folks could get by.

M: That's right, and no education at all, some of them did.

P: Back long years ago, do you remember any Indian folks acting sort of like they were ashamed to be an Indian?

M: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

P: How did you know they were ashamed?

M: Just because they look that way.

P: Were they afraid of anything?

M: No, they weren't afraid. But you take some of them right now, look a little whiter than the other, he'd sort of show partiality. I know, I've been through it with them. But now all that's done away with, but back in them days, it's like you say, some of them wanted to show kind of partiality because some was a little darker than the others and some white. Well, they didn't—when they was old, back in our olden times, they just are, I ain't seen but three in my days. That is Old Aunt Mary Steadham, Old Aunt Polly Rolin, and Grandma Gibson. They was thoroughbred Indian.

P: They were thoroughbred Indians.

M: That's right, that's right, mm-hmm.

P: And they really looked it, huh?

M: That's right, that's right. That's the reason, back in our day, there's some blacker, some darker, and there's some lighter. The Bible speaks all such as that, don't it?

P: Pardon?

M: The Bible speaks to such as that. They'd run back to the fifth generation. If you got any kind of disease, well, the Bible says, your ancestors got that. It'll run back to your ancestors. Well, the same way with your dark. After a while you'd be a kind of dark one, then a whiter-looking one, and running back to the generations.

P: Yeah, that's the way it goes.

M: That's the way it goes. That's the way it goes.

P: Well, thank you.

M: Okay. Like I said, that's about as good a record as I ever heard read. But all right, if I made a mistake, the Lord knows all about it. But back in my days, growing up, that all come true just like I spoke it. If I said anything wrong, I ask the Lord to forgive me.

[End of Interview]

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