

Transcribed from conversation recorded at Garland, Texas, December 28, 1978. Participants: Charles McKinley Alexander; his wife, Grace Moton Alexander; his son, Leon Douglas Alexander; and Leon's daughter, Judy Alexander Johnson Maples.

CA:the first?

GA: The second. The second batch of kids.

CA: Now you see, that's something I didn't know.

JM: I found that out on the census.Alexander. Did you ever hear it? Nathaniel or Nathan? There are two names on here that could have been your grandpa's daddy, and I don't know which one it is. One of them is named Thomas and one of them is named Isaac. Have you ever heard either one of those names?

CA: No.

JM: I think it was Thomas.

CA: I do too.

GA: Maybe that's who Thomas is named after. (reference to Tom Alexander brother to Charlie)

JM: Might have been.

CA: I know he come from Ireland. A flannel-mouthed Irishman from Ireland. Jus: Like granny come from Germany.

JM: Where was she born?

CA: At Mahonia, Germany. (CA unable to furnish spelling of name of town but says it sounds like muh-HONE-ur. (could it possibly be Mannheim?) She was Dutch. She wasn't a German. What they call a German Dutch.

JM: Black Dutch.

CA: She was Dutch. Dutch and Irish is our two bloods. That's the reason I'm so mean to fight, is that Irish.

JM: See that? That's your daddy. That's your daddy right there.

CA: John Vanatte? (pronounced vuh-NAJ-ee -- stressed syllable rhymes with "hat")

JM: That's him. Your grandfather was a wagonmaker.

CA: He could make anything they told me.

JM: Here he was a cabinet maker. Ten years later he was making cabinets instead of wagons.

CA: If you'd seen the house Granny lived in when she died, you'd have sworn he could have made anything. Cedar, solid cedar. Wood about that wide and about that thick, and it was notched at the corners, and it showed red Some cedar fades out white. And her fence, on the west side of thirteen acres, was cedar rails. And he made that. Now old man Luke Simpson told me that.

CA: My grandmother was a Vanatte, and she had some folks when we come to Texas.

We lived on some of her -- anyhow, he was a legislator of Tennessee.

Hatefulst man I ever met. I was about nine or ten years old. I recollect her very well. She couldn't talk like we do. Hog, hog (pronounces first time as "hawg," second time rhymes with "bog, cog, jug"). She didn't talk their stuff, you know, from over yonder. Scott Vanatte was a state legislator. That was her ^{nephew} --- He was a man of about fifty, owned a nice farm. Cruellest man there ever was with stock. He had a boy and a girl and his wife, and they had a nice, fine white house and about eighty or a hundred acres of in between two mountains like that. And down here a creek went down through yonder.

JM: Where?

CA: That was Tennessee, where he's talking about.

nephew

(A: That was her - - bound to be - - that is - - It couldn't have been her brother.

They were too young.

LA: What part of the country was it in?

(A: That was Alexandria.

GA: Alexandria, Tennessee.

(A: That's about as far as I know, for I never heard - - She died in 1906. And grandpa, it's very little I'll know, although he must to - - They told me he was in a wheel chair thirteen years after he come out of the army. A horse broke his leg. He was shot in the heel in the war. But he was crippled in the - - A horse kicked him. And he set in a wheel chair, and rolled around, and worked at this business, his trade. I never did see him. It was two years before I was born. And Granny, she died in 1906. Burt was a year old. (refers to brother of (A) According to his papers he was two years old, born in 1904. But he was born in 1905, for I used to go to her house, about two miles from where we lived, southwest, around to Granny's old place. And start out fightin snakes and bulls and goats and everything. We was totin two gallon buckets of milk and about two pounds of butter. Well, I'd get there for the most with the butter but the milk was just about half gone when I got there.

GA: He was drinking it on the way.

(A: Her neighbors, if she could contact some of them - -

LA: She's got some of them.

(A: Have you got a Compton? Old man Jim Compton. But he's been dead for years. : : was a rich man.

JM: Overall? An Overall? Last name Overall? (no audible answer) There was a Quarels.

(A: I forgot one. The man that was on the farm on the west side of her. I can't think of his name.

LA: What about Quarrels?

CA: Qualls. That was Uncle Jim. Has to be, 'cause he was an old man when him and Aunt Liz married. That's Dad's sister, Lissie, and Uncle Jim Qualls. And they had three boys, God bless their little hearts, I'd like to kill them again. Uncle Jim was another one of the cruel devils. And him and Dad - - Grandpa - - was on the wrong side in the war. They couldn't meet and set down and talk like we do. They'd be killing each other. The Red Army -- no, it wasn't the Red Army. Hathaway had the Red Army. There was three bunches. The North and the South, the Grey and the Blue, and then the Reds. Hatfield run the bushwhackers. And I've seen the man that killed him. And when he come to town, after he come back out of the war, he painted one boot red so somebody'd say something about it and he'd get to kill him. That's the way he was. You say something about the Reds - - And Hathaway, he had spies out too, listening to see what you know about it, you see. But he died out. Old man Columbus Vick was marshall at Smithville. And Hathaway come to town on one of his big speers with his boot painted. And this marshall had a - - been in the war against him. I've seen old man Columbus, head was just as white as snow, 80 or 90 years old, but he went to arrest him, and when Hathaway went, he never did get his hand out of his pocket. Old Columbus Vick just filled him full. Died right there on the floor in a saloon. I've heard him and Dad talk about it, and Dad said, "That's the man right there, (Charlie, that killed Hathaway. That's him right there." Said, "He's a nice man. He's quiet, nice-spoken." They'd have two groups of fairs there. Just everybody'd come to Alexandria, gathered on the creek out yonder, and nobody wasn't allowed a gun, not even the sheriff. The sheriff couldn't carry a gun without he was going after somebody. But they would fist you and club you till - - - If you was found on the street drunk, you'd had it. And you caught a woman coming down the street riding a horse like they do now, she'd

had it. Smoking, if they smoked they smoked a pipe. And everybody brought his own eats, for you couldn't get nothing in Alexandria. And it was bigger than Rockwall. You couldn't get nothing till 12, then go over to the hotel and eat all you could eat, 35¢. Old barn bell, well I'd slap it. I was nine years old. Worked down there. I've got a picture of it in me, and that's the way it is. I've pictured it out, but Bill Alec, he's been back two or three times. And he says, "It ain't like you think it is." Well, he hadn't mowed them hills.

LA: Bill who? Which one?

CA: Uncle Mose's Bill.

LA: Oh. O.K.

CA: He stays on the road, you know, for a week, and didn't know where Granny and Grandpa was buried.

JM: Where are they buried?

CA: They're buried about two miles out, west of town. On the old - - one man owned the road from Smithville to Nashville. John Overall owned the - -

LA: You don't know the name of the cemetery, do you?

CA: Simpson. Simpson was on the west. And Luke Simpson. I don't know what he done but he'd skin your head with a stick. They was just like they are now.

SA: Did he understand what the name of the cemetery was?

LA: You don't remember the name of the cemetery, do you?

CA: No. I don't guess it was named. It was just a hill on the side of the highway. And the highway had a fence from one end to the other on both sides. But if you had a home, your fence stuck to your property. Your property was fenced. It was stock land. Every bit of it. 'Cause Overall didn't want a bunch of stuff, 'cause he had a tollgate on his road every 12 miles. And you paid on that stage. You'd get on at Nashville. ^{Lebanon}, Watertown, Alexandria, Smithville, ^{Dal. town}, on into the Smokies. I know; I've been over the thing

afoot. A hundred feet wide, a hundred feet wide and solid rock. Where it wasn't all rock, they'd beat 'em up -- marked them in and made it rock. The old 50¢ a day, and Dad wouldn't work at it. He was a stone mason, built rock fence, chimneys, flues, and hired Uncle Jim Qualls, Uncle Taylor Blye, and Uncle Jim Martin. Now he had one brother-in-law here at Royce City. One of his sisters lived over there. They owned 200 acres of land. And they're buried over there. Aunt Sarah Holland. And Charlie. Charlie got killed in Rockwall, and they had a crazy girl -- who wasn't crazy but she grewed up in size but not in mind. That's all I can figure. But I can't figure what Scott Varatte would be -- 50 years old -- would be. Her nephew? Granny's nephew?

LA: I don't know.

CA: She was about 80 when she died. Her neighbor there, Buck Vantreece, but I don't know whether he owned the farm or not.

GA: Vantreece. There's another name.

JM: I've not heard it; I've read it.

LA: Well, Lena told Judy that yet one of the boys, you know, of y'all, was born around, what? Bonham? Around Bonham. Which one was that, that was born at Bonham?

CA: One of who's boys?

LA: One of you brothers.

JM: That's Uncle Bill.

LA: Bill? Where was Bill born?

CA: Oh, Bill was born -- and all born -- up in Collin County. Melissa. And Bill was born in Hunt County. And Lena in Hunt County. They done it a year older so they could get paid quicker.

JM: Where was Uncle Tom born?

CA: Up there at Melissa, right north of there. 1910. I recollect very well. Now Bill was born -- now let's see. Now Lula was born in 1907 on the Scott Varatte place. That was the year -- she was about 6 weeks old -- when we come to Texas. You can figure back about 6 weeks. We come in the 7th of August. We landed in Melissa

the 7th day of August with another one of Daddy's -- he was married twice -- with his -- his -- brother-in-law.

LA: Aunt Lula is y'all's sister, right?

CA: Yes.

LA: The only kid was Harrison -- by the other marriage -- right?

GA: Yes.

CA: He had one but I never did know what her name was.

LA: Aunt Maud, wasn't it?

CA: She died. No, no. Oh, yeah, yeah.

LA: By the previous marriage.

CA: Yeah. What was her -- Pickett, Pickett was her name. His first wife was a Pickett. She was my half-sister, Maud. She died here two or three years ago somewhere about Nashville.

JM: Who's first wife was a Pickett?

LA: His Daddy.

CA: Talk to her about meddling and messing with this family tree. Suppose some of them's still living and not dead -- hanging up there by their tails and wondering at me.

CA: But I know when they was born, but I won't argue with them, because they got young out yonder. John -- biggest hypocrite that ever went to Mineral Wells. he
was born in '98. And Edd was born in 1900.

JM: Were they both born in Tennessee?

CA: Yep.

LA: Well, I knew Edd was, but I didn't know about Uncle John.

CA: And when that was all taking place, Tennessee didn't have but about three counties in the whole state, Smith, DeKalb and Wilson. And they all joined, pointed in toward Alexandria was the center.

JM: Did you ever go to Temperance Hall, Tennessee? It's up in the north part of DeKalb County.

CA: And we had some more kin folks, but I can't even think of their name. The Jalleys.

LA: Did you understand what she said?

CA: No, I didn't really? What?

JM: Why don't you ask him if he's ever been to Temperance Hall, Tennessee?

LA: Temperance Hall, Tennessee. Have you -- do you know where it was?

CA: Temperance Hall?

LA: Yeah.

CA: yeah. It was close to Alexandria. It wasn't too far.

LA: Yeah.

CA: And there was a railroad that come out of Nashville, the Tennessee Sentinel, come right down from Nashville, three miles north of Alexandria, and they wouldn't use it, because they had a turnpike and a stagecoach. They wouldn't even ship stuff and stop there. Brush Creek, they wouldn't stop there. There wasn't nothing to pull off or get on. They went on through to -- I don't know what town -- on into the Blue Hills.

JM: Did you ever hear of Charles and Mose Vanatte that were stage drivers?

CA: No. Have you got Mother's kinfolks, her daddy and them. That's about all I can tell you right there, honey, on that.

JM: They were her brothers.

CA: I don't recollect nary a one of her brothers -- her sisters either.

LA: She's got them listed in that paper then, Daddy.

CA: Well, it may be right as far as I know.

LA: Yeah. She wanted to know if you knew anything about them.

JM: Because this is the only thing I have her listed as is Elizabeth.

CA: I can't even tell you Grandpa Wilkerson's first name. Now he had three boys. There was Jack and John. John was the oldest, then Jack, then Ollie. Mother had a sister that got killed. And John made a big evangelist preacher. And Uncle Jack made a horse thief, I guess. I ain't seen Jack now since 1905, when Grandpa Wilkerson died. But to tell you his first name now, I can't do it. What have you got?

JM: John.

CA: John. Well, that must be right, 'cause he'd naturally name his boy John. They was men 25, 30, 40 years old when I recollect them, see? They all lived out there at a little health resort. And Grandma, let me see. She married a Wilkerson. That's those -- all those boys was Wilkersons. Don't know whether he was married before or not, but she was a Hatfield.

GA: That's where the Hatfields come in.

CA: Yeah.

CA: Uncle Albert Hatfield stayed with us and worked with Dad. And they was with that killing bunch, the Hatfields and McCoys. Now Maul (she was CA's half-sister), Maul....she was just five years older than me. And she was, of course, her and Uncle Jack and Uncle John was the leaders of the band. If they went to school I don't know where in the hell it was at. That's Greenbriar. 'Cause we lived there in that health resort, and that was as far as the railroad, the L&N, could go south towards Nashville, and it could come up from Nashville about 12, 15 miles out to this hill. And that's what they were doing when Grandpa got -- my Daddy -- got that one eye up there. Was going straight through that mountain, 960 feet from the level to the top. And the train come out there to bring the passengers. Now they had a wagon road but no stage. They had a wagon road, just like climbing Haggard's mountain exactly. Way back in 1905, 1904 and 5, I can't recollect too much about it. I was trying to take care of myself. I recollect my Daddy. He never told me to do a thing in his life he wouldn't.

do it first. But he knew that Albert Hatfield was liable to do anything. And we had a bunch of blacks that lived on the road over east of us there about a mile, that went through from Nashville to Greenbriar and on up to Bowling Green and on up in there. Well, there was these blacks, 6 or 7 kids. Their Mommy and Daddy was dead, and we couldn't go nowhere without fighting them blacks. Uncle Jack'd get into it with them. And Maud -- she'd generally fight, and I'd have to, to take care of her. Him and Daddy used dynamite and nitroglycerin in that tunnel, you see, and going through from the south side and going down in the middle and going both ways. And the work train stood right out there. We could get groceries, you see, dry goods where they had that. That was as far as the train could go. Well, it started trouble. Hatfield got tired of it, but he wouldn't let Dad know it. He stole out enough dynamite that blowed that house and blacks all into the hell and then was in the bed when Dad found it out. "Oh, I hadn't been nowhere -- just asleep." I've heard him say -- tell Uncle Jack and them -- said, "You won't be bothered with them blacks no more." They'd be grown gals, great big, that'd throw rocks at us and we'd fight them to beat hell, me a'running.

JM: Where were the Wilkersons from?

(A: Well, I don't know, can't answer that. They were there in North Tennessee. There never was none of them down at Alexandria; but Uncle Jack would come to see us. You see we moved from up there back to Alexandria, and he'd come down there and sit two or three days.

LA: You don't know, though, what part of it he was from?

(A: Never did know. In and around Greenbriar, Tennessee. Grandpa was the best natur and the best humored man I ever saw, to be as big. He wasn't a big old puss-bell. He was just a big man. Seven foot tall.

LA: Did he fight in the Civil War, Daddy?

(A: No, he wasn't in no wars, 'cause I'd have heard it if he had. He wouldn't argue politics, 'cause he didn't know which side he was talking to.

(Portion of conversation missing due to having to turn over tape in recorder.)

(A: The Ku Klux took over, and they killed them by the thousands. A band of men on horses, they took a train and went to Nashville and took six prisoners away from the sheriff in Nashville and took them out to the Cumberland River bridge and hung them and throwed them overboard. They had the -- you better be on that train when it come by. They didn't ask you. You couldn't tell who nobody was. Covered from foot to head. All you could see was two eyes. I've seen them -- that's the reason the tobacco went so high. They burned the warehouses. I know that at ^{Adairville, Kentucky}, they got one of the Ku Klux up to try him, and when they sentenced him, the Ku Klux come to their feet and killed the court, the judge, jury, and all the rest of them, and took their man with them. Dad always said they was all just a bunch of murderers to start with. They hung the judge, the county judge, and made the blacks set on his feet and whip him till he died. A dozen of them, horseback, made that black do the work -- put that rope around a peachtree limb and hung him and made that black set there till the old county judge died, because he'd been prosecuting them, you see. That was over to ^{Adairville}, and all them towns, Bowling Green, in Kentucky, that was whiskey towns. They made it. They do yet. They didn't bother you because you made whiskey, but if you bought tobacco, you was in danger. you could buy tobacco and it ready for the manufacturer at \$3.00 a hundred pounds, but you couldn't do it. People just had to do any way they could. But Dad never was in that.

JM: Did y'all live in Kentucky?

(A: No, we was in Tennessee. Greenbriar, Tennessee, was as far north as we ever lived. the last time was where we did live/when we come back. They got the railroad done so we could come through to Nashville. Dad had a aunt that worked there and a brother-in-law. So we come there in a wagon.

LA: Who were they? Do you remember?

(A: Samp Alexander. And he wasn't no kin to none of them. But Aunt Rit (?) married him, see? And she never did have to change her name.

LA: Samp Alexander. Is that the one that lived in east Texas that I knew when I was a kid?

(A: No, I don't think so.

LA: Who was that old man, Daddy, that I knew?

(A: He was another one of them fighting kind.

LA: Do you know who I'm talking about though?

GA: Uncle Hamp?

LA: Yeah, Uncle Hamp.

GA: Uncle Hamp Atrip.

LA: Who was he?

(A: He was just an old two-dollar mouth.

LA: Oh. I always liked him.

GA: Well, he liked Roy.

(A: But he'd tell you about it if it killed you.

GA: I've got a picture somewhere of Roy and him together.

(A: They had one Aunt Rit ~~and~~ and, uh, Uncle Samp, I always called him. I didn't want to, but I had to. He was a big bully. And they had one boy, named Charley, and I can't think if they had any more children or not. We come by there, and Dad had been in the hospital for six months with his eye and foot and hand. They fed us and gave us about three thousand dollars in merchandise out of the railroad.

I know the big lawyer come out from Bowling Green, Kentucky, and got off at our house, off of the train. I can't think what his name was. He said, "John," -- he knew Dad personally -- he said, "I've come down to try to help you." Well, Dad was trying to contract with the company about a month before he got "killed," you might say. A dollar more a day on his own risk, or work like he was and they'd take it, you see. And Dad said, "I can't do that." He said, "Why can't you? I'll put you in a \$50,000 brick home for half of it. I'll stop every train on the L&N from Nashville to Louisville till you get your money. Dad said, "No. If a man's word ain't worth nothing, why he ain't either." "Well," he said, "you're a fool." "Well, I know that," he said, "but you didn't have to tell me. But my word is what honor I've got." Well, I suppose it was right back to work again, and we come right back to the same place that we had left. We went in the wagon and then come back that way. 'Bout three or four years between that. But that's the way he was. Any way you look at it that's the way he was right up till he died. Old Bill Proctor was that big lawyer's name. He said, "I'll get you \$100,000 for you foot, eye and hand and I'll give you half of it. And that'll put you where you need to be." And Dad said, "Yeah, and it'll put me with the thieves, too. I'll be right back there with them -- and with you." He wouldn't do it. That's the way he was plumb on up till he died right down yonder. My Mother had just enough Hatfield and Wilkerson in her to skin your head, but Dad never was that way.

GA: Tom's like Mr. Alexander. Tom's more like him than any one of his kids.

LA: I don't think so. Tom'll hurt you in a second. Tom's more like Granny.

JM: Where was your mother born? (some speculative conversation deleted here,

CA: if I know. I wasn't there that day. I recollect Grandpa Wilkerson died in 1905. We lived at ^{Mayhew} ~~Mayhew~~, Tennessee, when he died, and we had just come from up in that part of the country. Wasn't sick. I never seen him suffer a

lick in my life. Worked every day -- just whatever he could get to do. He was making boards about a mile from home when he died. Jack had carried him his dinner, and Jack didn't know he was dead till he got ready to take the bucket and go back to the house. Grandpa eat his dinner, eat and went across a little branch and set down, leaned back against a tree and just kept setting there. Jack wanted him to wake up and tell him to go on home, but he didn't. He was setting up dead.

LA: Do you remember where it was that he died?

CA: It was at the ^{High H Springs} Health Resort. That was south of Greenbrier about 4 or 5 miles. It was all sulphur water. If you wanted any water that wasn't sulphur, you'd better carry it with you. Now you can just figure the whole country peaceable that way. You could camp side of the road and stay out there six months, and they wasn't nobody say nothing to you. Glad to have you if they had to walk three miles to a neighbor. They had peddlers that come through twice a week buying blackberries, raspberries, eggs. People'd be beside the road with their produce, and they'd buy them berries 10¢ a gallon. He went to the -- I guess back up there in Kentucky where they made the wines. But there was two a week that passed our house, and he carried candy, chewing gum, and just little old stuff, you know, that warn't worth a damn. That was all he could haul. I wish my Daddy was here now to answer them questions for you.

GA: Oh, boy, and he could answer them too. He had a good mind for a long time -- all the way. Mary Jo was a little bitty baby when he died.

JM: Ask him if there was a family Bible.

CA: You see, they got in a big to do when Grandma died, Grandma Alexander. When she died she had 13 acres of prickly pear and cedars and that house. I don't know what it was -- seven, eight, or nine dollars an acre. And they owed for her casket, and there was a place good for it. Dad done that. He said, "When she's put away, we'll settle it then." And Uncle Mose and Aunt Daisy

and her sister is the ones that's got our records now -- at Alexandria, Tennessee.

LA: Aunt Daisy's not still alive is she?

GA: No, she's dead.

LA: Well, who's her sister? Do you remember?

CA: Bert Talley is her sister at Alexandria, but now her name was Starnes, and her and Aunt Daisy was sisters. Brothers and sisters. Lucy and -- let's see.

They's four of them. Daisy, Bertha, Lucy, and John Starnes that lived at Melis. was her brother. They was Starneses and she -- her mother married a Hendricks and come to Texas. They wouldn't sign the deed. They sent to Aunt Daisy's to get our records. It was a Bible, and all the records was in it. They kept them. We never could get hold of that Bible. All the records was in it plumb back. Granny said it was just like going from Genesis to Revelations in the Bible -- what day, what hour. A man could write there to Frank Talley.

GA: He's dead perhaps.

CA: He's too old to be living. And Bert was older than Aunt Daisy. And John up here,

LA: John who?

CA: John Starnes. He was the one was going to help me get my birth certificate,

Leon Alexander over here told him, said, " I don't need nobody to help me." Well, they give him his birth certificate, 'cause

I been knowing him a hundred years. Well, that's her own brothers and sisters, you see, and she -- her mother married a Hendricks. Mary, Nell, Frank, and a whole damn mess of them. They died up around Melissa, I guess. Old Cicero did, I know.

LA: Sure there's a whole bunch of them up there.

CA: Them was step-uncles.

LA: Who do you think wound up with the Bible?

CA: Well, if they never did take it away from him (?) I guess Bert got it 'cause Aunt Daisy never did get it back. I raised hell with them 'cause ---

LA: You talking about Bert who?

CA: Bert Talley. And her husband now is Frank. But Bert Talley was the one that got the Bible.

LA: Where did they live?

CA: They lived right there in Alexandria, just above Sam's son (?). They don't move back there like we did. They never did move here.

LA: And the kids never did move. They're all right there.

CA: Well, you see after she was dead and buried and Dad stood for it, they refused to sign for their part of her little place. Aunt Daisy had the guts to tell Dad, "Me and Mose ought to have had that place. We took care of Granny until her last year." Dad said, "You're a Liar. She fed you and Mose, and Mose set there and eat. Dad's youngest -- only brother he had."

LA: Do you know I remember him?

GA: Sure you do.

CA: Said, "You could set right there and let you tell a Lie." He said, "You know she drawed a little \$36 every three months. Four times a year she got her -- grandpa's pension. \$36 for three months. It was \$12 a month. And she got that four times a year. She could get anything she wanted. She had every thing you could think of to eat. She made her clothes. I'd go there to watch her cook. Big range, cook stove. One room was her spinning room. She made her own cloth, spin her own cotton, thread, then made the cloth and made her own clothes. She didn't need the money. But she'd go down there and get some extra stuff. You'd get a toe-sack full of coffee for ^a dollar, or a -- anything, but there warn't nothing in packages.

It was bulk right out of the barrels, put on the scales and weighed. I know,

I've worked there. And they had a bank and they had a printing office, and Dad got work from these landlords around town, building ^{fence and} chimneys and flues and whatever they got. He wouldn't work for the fifty cents a day. Just wouldn't do it. He'd take a contract and do that.

(A: Dad told Aunt Daisy, "You told a lie and you're going to take it back before I leave here or I'll kill you." Well, I guess I've blown my stack.

LA: Man, you ain't through yet. Keep going. Tell her about it.

(A: Well, I could just tell you what I've been through with, and that won't do.

JM: Hey, Grandpa, did you know any Hinesleys in Alexandria?

(A: Hinesley? No.

JM: Did you know any Denneys?

(A: No. That Hinesley kind of strikes me a little bit, but I don't know where at. I guess that's Texas stuff -- John Hinesley. Her landlords around her little place there. He was a nice man and been there all his life, too. And Granny had been there ever since she was a young woman. And she give Dad an acre. Just went in and made out a -- they went and measured it, one acre square. "Now," she said, "John, if you can get the lumber, build you a house and it's free. One acre. And Uncle Mose and Aunt Daisy lived with her. Bill -- Bill was born there. They had anything that -- we got some things that they had then, in different localities. They've not got nothing around here like that. If you did you could sell it for a million dollars. I'd go there and watch Grandma cook. She was a little more black with her head bonnet on. And sometimes she'd lose her glasses and have them on. "Charley, have you seen my glasses?" and I'd say, "Have I seen you? You're under them!" "Well, I be dog-goned, I can't see nothing." Put on a big pot of beans. And a big old oven skillet. She'd bake that full of biscuits on

sweet potatoes or cobbler pie. Baked her own light bread. And there was bacon hanging up over that fireplace. She had a big old grey pet cat. I guess the cat was 25 years old. He'd set there in the warm ashes asleep.

And some old dog irons over the fire. She'd get wood anywhere she could, you know. Fall out of the tree. Nobody to cut it. Well, that'd be too long, wouldn't go in. She'd bust it over the dog iron, hit it and break it, you know, and (chuckles) that old cat -- that's the truth, she laughed for a week about that -- that old cat setting there asleep and she got a stick too long and whopped him on top of his head and "hadn't seen that cat in a month."

GA: The first refrigerator they had was that spring house.

(A: Her spring come down right through the yard. You'd go out there and take a gourd and dip you up your drinking water. Warn't no stock. Chickens, ducks, peafowls, had a road full of them. Everything got its drinking water in the yard. And it just went on towards town. And she kept her butter and milk and stuff, you know, from one meal to another one or two or three days setting up in that spring. I don't care how much it rained, it never got no bigger, never got muddy. Water setting just about that deep. She'd set a bowl of beans in that, a bowl of butter and the milk. She had a cow that fed every thing in that country. She said she give \$8 for the cow. She'd milk that old cow, take the milk and strain it and put it in the spring. That was her exercise, a little treat. She was a dope-head. Them doctors there at Alexandria -- I forget the doctor's name, but he had Granny on dope. Opium. And she'd roll that opium. She'd get her about an ounce every check and then roll it out. And when her heart was bad -- and she'd slip me one or two. And I've showed them something. And when Dad got our house done -- he built us three rooms and we moved in. Then he took a notion he didn't want it and moved.

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GA: Well, Mose and Daisy come in and he got out. He was independent. That's why your Daddy's so independent. They're all that way, the Alexanders. Independent.

LA: You don't think we got any of this stubborn stuff from you?

GA: No.

LA: No, I didn't think so.

GA: No, I'm an Indian. You didn't get nothing from me. I've got all mine.

LA: Impatience is one thing we get from Mama. Let the phone ring three times and she just hangs that thing up.

CA: Uncle Mose, he was 19 years younger than Dad. They didn't keep no records. Most people didn't keep no records.

LA: But those records there that she's got, those are authentic. (tape changed)

CA: George Washington. But it wasn't the George Washington you're thinking about. But it was his kinfolks. George Washington on the east side of the river and Joe Washington on the west side. And they owned it a mile on each side. And him and Mrs. ^{Quinn}Quinnie would go to England every year on a vacation. And they was great sportsmen. And their double surrey and their driver. He was kin to the old, original Washington. Went back there. I know I used to call his dogs down to the house to get to go home with them. Half tigers. I've seen them out with the black driver setting up yonder and him and Mrs. Quirney setting in the double buggy with their rifles. They was crack shots, and they wouldn't shoot nothing setting. It had to be running or flying. They was sports. They was raised millionaires. I don't know how many was on Joe's side, but they was about two or three families on George's side of the creek. And over on the other side, Joe's, I don't know what he had but it was valuable timber, you see, that was in there -- black walnut, chestnut -- and that was what they was after. They'd been there about -- oh, maybe all the time, I don't know. And he had a big, fine, white mansion up on the hill next to the highway that went through to Louisville, I guess, and his yard was just one acre big, 70 yards square, white fence, and a black man tended to it. And a black woman tended to this house, all the rooms, day and night, whether they was there or not. There wasn't nobody going to bother their stuff. I seen them kill hogs there once.

He was there then. He was about 45 years old. Her too. They was common around the house. It was when they went out on that sport with them guns, they was the talk of the bucket. And, of course, they had to show off with his brother, Joe. He was on the other side of the creek and doing the same thing. They killed hogs. The black man and black woman lived in a little white two-room house in the yard. We lived right down the hill from them there. And when they killed the hogs, he give them to his neighbors. Give Dad one that weighed about 350. Give the black one. But you'd do your own cutting it up.

GA: Where was that at?

CA: That was up in Kentucky. Right in the corner of Tennessee and Kentucky. I never say nothing about that, 'cause every time you mention George Washington, they say, "he has gone to lying." I was 5 or 6 years old.

LA: Towns and counties is what she's interested in. That way she can check back there and find out.

CA: The name of the creek that come down through there -- a pretty good size creek -- was Duck Creek. All the ^{big} courts and the big stuff in Kentucky got close to the river, you see, as they could get it. Plantations, they called them, two or three hundred acres. Old Judge Mims owned one there -- him the county judge. I don't even know what county it was in Kentucky.

JM: I can't even look for the Wilkersons till I've got a county to go to.

CA: Dad said you'd get more working for him for 50¢ than you would working for somebody else for \$5. It's what he give you. That's the reason Dad worked for him. He'd cut and haul them logs with two bulls. That's all you could get in the bottom with was cows. You couldn't get in there with horses. He had two horses that come from England -- snow white. They wasn't grey.

they was solid white. And they was washed and cleaned and pampered. And them dogs was spotted and striped half-tigers. They'd weigh 150 pounds apiece. Big enough to rare up here, you know, and look you right in the face. They wouldn't bite, but they'd knock you down and walk all over you. That's the reason I'd get out there and holler and whoop with them about 200 yards down the hill. I'd holler and whoop. I'd want to go up there and get up on the fence, anyhow, where I could see. Here they'd come just right over that fence and, get down there, nothing. we'd turn around, all three of us, and go back up. John, he was too little -- he was two years younger than me -- he was too little to go with me. I didn't have no buddies. It was just me. He was born in 1898. And it was 1894 when Grandpa died.

LA: I know it was two years before you were born.

CA: Well, they didn't talk about you after one was dead and buried and took care of just as good as you could. They talked about everything else but, you understand.

LA: Was any of your people ever from North Carolina, that you know of?

CA: Granny had been over there, but I don't know why. She had been there before.

LA: You talking about my Granny?

CA: No, my Granny.

LA: His Daddy's mother.

CA: She'd been over there because that was full of the Dutch. That was a Dutch community, you see, in North Carolina. She'd visit there, you see, because she had friends ^{there} that come from Germany when she did. But she was a Dutch, raised in Mahoner, Germany. I think she was 12 years old when she come to this country.

LA: Well, somebody said that she was born here. I don't know who said that.

CA: I don't know, but she come from Ireland.

LA: No, I mean Granny. We heard that she was born in Tennessee, but you're saying that she was born in Germany?

CA: Yeah, she was born in Mahoner, Germany. That was a Dutch colony over there, you see. They was as different a tribe in Germany in them days as they could be.

JM: Well, I've got her born in Tennessee and her mama born in North Carolina and her daddy born in Tennessee.

CA: I couldn't tell about that.

LA: Well, you're the one that should know. That's just according to the dumb records.

CA: Well now, it may be that they's more John Alexanders than they is Johnson grass.

LA: These are the Varattes that she's talking about now.

JM: The Varattes.

LA: She was supposed to have been born in Tennessee.

CA: Well, she ain't. She wasn't according to my records.

LA: O.K.

CA: She was born -- because she come from Mahoner, Germany, when she was twelve years old. Now I don't know whether she was born in Tennessee and went over there and then come back or not. But it'd take them too long to go and come. She couldn't have been. She was originally a Holland Dutch, raised in Germany. And had a pretty fair education. Just a good read and write. That's about all they tried to do then.

GA: Yeah, women wasn't supposed to read and write. Women wasn't supposed to know as much as men.

CA: Now his name, my Grandpa's name, is down here at Jackson, Mississippi, on the government old records, you see. At the bridge at Jackson, Mississippi. 'Cause Junior -- I mean Kenneth --

GA: Junior went down there.

CA: -- stopped and looked at it. And Edd's been down there and seen it. His war name is there on the --

LA: We're not talking about Jackson, Mississippi, though, Daddy. We're talking about where they had the battle, the big battle. We stopped there, me and June, coming back from -- and, and Junior. It's not at Jackson. It's somewhere else. I'll think of it in a minute.

GA: Yeah, it's not Jackson. It's another place.

LA: I've been there, Daddy -- when I come back from Florida -- me and Charles, we stopped there. And I've got a record of it down at the house.

CA: Well, you know Kenneth went down there in Florida, you know, and carried that big machine, and he said he saw it. And Bill Alec, they come around that way, and they saw it. They ain't many people that knowed Edd's middle name.

LA: Lee?

CA: It was Lee. And John Newman. I seen a man today. He was buried right up yonder. World War One. His name was McKinley Moss, Ray McKinley Moss. Born in 1896.

World War One. Mine is a president that got killed.

LA: McKinley?

GA: Yeah.

CA: Thomas Jefferson, that's Tom's name. He was named after a president. And Bill, William Anderson Goynes, was named after old Bill Goynes down here at Greenville.

LA: You mean Bill Alec -- our Bill?

CA: Yeah, the one that's dead. John Neuman. And John was named after some big somethin' back there. Neuman. And let me see, who else has got one. Thomas Jefferson, Bill Anderson --

LA: What's Lena's name?

CA: -- Charles McKinley --

JM: Lena May.

CA: -- I wished I could change mine, and I did. And John changed his according to -- I mean Burt. His name wasn't no more Burt than mine. His name was Bird Ray, and that was a steamboat on the Cumberland River. He went to court in Derrison and had his name changed to Burt. Named after a steamboat! Them old devils back yonder, they named every thing you could think of. Dad said when I was 'born he had an old horse that he called Charley. And the women outdone him and named me Charley. He said he had got the government out to kill the horse. I've heard him tell it -- laughed, said, "I just wonder what I killed that horse for. I couldn't have two Charleys in one house; so I just shot the horse."

LA: Then he wondered why he killed the horse.

CA: I remember the time I was about 2 or 3 years old, I guess. Dad always called me "Big-un." So they went over to Grandpa's to stay all night. They lived about two mile, and he had to carry me. He'd set me down on a little of the trail that was smooth and, damn, I'd just fall all to pieces. He'd pick me up, spank my end and say, "you little devil you. You could walk some and let me rest if you'd do it." I loved to get up on his back and get him around the neck.

We'd have a time then.

LA: I remember Grandpa.

GA: Yeah, Grandpa Alexander. Leon was just a little bitty feller, and he'd make fun of Grandpa 'cause he walked with his back --

LA: He stooped over. He was hurt.

GA: And he'd put his hands behind him. And he'd get in front of him and walk like that to make fun of him. And he'd say, "You little bag you. I ought to kill you."

GA: You know, he got where he ^{couldn't} make one step if he straightened up. He couldn't step and stand straight and make just one step.

LA: What happened to him, Daddy? Why did he walk like that?

GA: That was Bright's disease.

LA: Oh.....(Long pause).....O.K.

(End of taping session)