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Judge Clay Bishop  
Manchester, Kentucky  
Clay County  
February 19, 1982

Dr. G.: Now we'll start out with having you identify yourself. Tell me who you are and who your folks were. I'm interested in your background. This is Judge Clay Bishop of Manchester, Kentucky.

Judge B.: I'm Judge Clay M. Bishop of Manchester, Kentucky, the son of Hugh Bishop and Janie Massie Bishop. Born August 3, 1912.

Dr. G.: Where were you born, Judge?

Judge B.: At home. Dr. Jones delivered me. Dr. Preston Jones. He was a very good friend of my daddy and mother. He went to school with my mother.

Dr. G.: At the mouth of New Found?

Judge B.: That's where I lived. That's where I was borned, yes.

Dr. G.: Now you told me earlier about your mother and your father being in the Civil War.

Judge B.: Well, my grandfather on my mother's side was a Union soldier and my grandfather on my father's side was a Union soldier. Both with the Union army.

Dr. G.: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Judge B.: One brother.

Dr. G.: One brother.

Judge B.: I had a sister die at birth. That's all, just the two of us and I'm a year older than he is.

Dr. G.: Now to sort of bring this into context. The specific thing I'm kinda interested in here tonight is the fact that everybody I've talked to about the rafting speaks so highly of Hugh or Hughnog Bishop and Mrs. Bishop at the mill. How well they were treated. Granville Davidson tells me how they were very poor and when they would bring a turn of corn over your dad would always send them up to have meals and so forth. Could you tell me something about your home there, the mill and your dam and all that sort of stuff we've been talking about just for the records.

Judge B.: Well, my daddy owned a pretty good size country farm. He had one renter and he ran the mill all the time. He raised a lot of hogs and a few cattle, and of course, his renter farmed the land and the river, that was a famous place to tie up rafts and spend the night, above the dam and below the dam. And we would keep as many as 20 or 25 people there one night, daddy and mother would. Fill up all the beds and then they'd lay on the floor in front of the fires and eat apples, and eat all night long, you know. Don't sleep much. Just a place to rest and get something to eat. Of course, when there wasn't too many, they'd all sleep and get up the next morning and go on toward Beattyville with their timber, and then in my day of course, they stopped at the mill pond. The mill pond was the main big mill then, lumber mill that all the timber went to, but in my daddy's time he used to run the river all the way to Frankfort. Back in those days, they didn't have any mills at Beattyville to saw any timber, so they took it right on into Frankfort, and of course my mother was an excellent cook. People learned where to stop, you know, and all the teachers of the school boarded with us. My daddy was trustee of the schools for 44 years there. Hired teachers all the time, you know. We had people there; there was hardly a night when we didn't have somebody stay with us. Somebody from some source from some place. A lot of travelling salesmen would come through and would stop and spend the night with us. When the election was on every four years, we'd keep as many as 7 or 8 candidates in one night you know. They knew where to come to.

Dr. G.: Just for the sake of somebody that might hear this in the future, let's clarify the fact that this was a pretty rural area. When these people'd come by they didn't have much place to go when it comes dark. You were at the mouth of New Found which was pretty isolated.

Judge B.: That's right. Twenty five miles <sup>South</sup> north of Manchester on the South Fork and strictly a rural community. No trans-

portation outside of a wagon or a horseback ride. And all the goods transported in with wagon and team.

Dr. G.: Hard for anybody to understand that today.

Judge B.: That's right. And they'd haul an average of about 2,000 to 2,400 lbs. of merchandise on a wagon load to a country store, you know. That would be the average load, that a team could pull, you know.

Dr. G. Now there are two things I'd like you to tell. Where did the name New Found come from, do you have any idea?

Judge B.: No, I don't. I never did inquire into that, and it's just the name of the creek. New Found Creek.

Dr. G.: Now you mentioned a dam and so for anybody listening to this, how about explaining the dam and the mill to me for I've never seen a picture of it and I'd like to know all about it.

Judge B.: The mill was about 150 yards east of the mouth of New Found. It had a great big rock bar or what we called sand bar, rock bar there at the mouth of New Found. Heavy rains up New Found creek would shoot out pretty forcibly. It's about 6 miles long and kept that...we always had to clean that chute out a lot of times. That gravel would just shoot next to the dam. I don't remember what the two handed thing with the team was, you know, shovel, scoop that gravel out and throw it over the dam so the water could get on.

Dr. G.: The dam was below the mouth of New Found?

Judge B.: That was below the mouth of New Found. Now the dam ran at an angle starting down at the mill and it ran west/north/west at an angle about 250 yards. I'd say about 600 or 700 feet along at an angle. And the dam was made...there's a shoal or drop there. Shoal or what we call a drop water drop. It wasn't a regular waterfall, but just a good gradual slope and that's where the dam was built. It was built in low water with logs tied together, auger holes in them with pins. Put rocks in there.

Dr. G.: Did your father build the dam?

Judge B.: He built the dam, yes.

Dr. G.: And the mill was on the right hand side going down river?

Judge B.: On the right hand side going down river. About 100 yards below the mill there's this big rock and then the river just turned almost a right angle. Just about a right angle, then going down quite a distance and when these rafts come over this dam, why they'd have to pull just like everything. The people on the front end of the raft with their oar to keep it from hitting that rock and a lot of times they did hit the rock. With the experienced steersman that knew how to get over it, they stay square on the north side of the river as they could so they didn't run into that rock. Now at low tide, it was just about impossible to get over there at low tide. What we called low tide wasn't enough water.

Dr. G.: Now this dam ran a water mill and could you run all year long? Tell me something about the mill. Did you just grind corn? Did you do lumber?

Judge B.: No, it was just a grist mill, corn meal.

Dr. G.: Tell me about how it worked in those days would you?  
Did you have a big water wheel?

Judge B.: Had a wheel, bucket thing, made carved out of wood. Had several buckets in it, 14 inches thick. It had something like wagon tires around the top and bottom and they had a gate to it. You raised the gate to it from up in the millhouse. They had a big thing you pulled down and it turned the water on and that starts your belt to going. When you wanted to stop it, you just turned this gate loose and let it go down and that stopped all the water. It went over the dam instead of coming through the buckets.

Dr. G.: Now where did you get your corn and stuff you ground?

Judge B.: People brought it in. Oh for 10 miles all around every direction they'd bring corn to grind. A lot of times they would bring wagon loads and spend the night. Somebody from Bullskin drive about Oneida there 12, 15 miles would bring maybe 25 bushel of corn for their neighbors and spend the night. Drive in one day, get his corn ground and get home the next night.

Dr. G.: What would the millers take a part in that?

Judge B.: One eighth.

Dr. G.: One eighth.

Judge B.: They had a bucket thing that held, I mean a wooden thing that held one eighth.

Dr. G.: Every eight measures belongs to the miller. Was that all he did at the mill, corn grinding?

Judge B.: Yes.

Dr. G.: How long did he operate there, Judge?

Judge B.: Well, he was operating when I was born and before, several years before, when his daddy got so he couldn't then my daddy ran it.

Dr. G.: Do you have a picture of the mill?

Judge B.: No, no. It had a fireplace that I've got inside of a shed and in the wintertime I fill up the hopper with corn.

Dr. G.: Was this a large mill?



Judge B.: The rocks were four foot diameter and the top rock, the rock that did the spinning was 14 inches thick. The bed rock was about 9 inches thick. It was stationary, you know.

Dr. G.: Were they made locally or were they brought in?

Judge B.: Somewhere else. They were hard. You had to sharpen the rocks occasionally with tools. They were terribly hard. There were trenches at the bottom. They had trenches in the top one too. The corn would get caught in those and he had a thing, a little thing like you tune a banjo or fiddle, and he'd turn that just to get the rocks just right. Some people wanted the meal coarse; some wanted it fine; some wanted it real fine. He knew exactly how to do each. He'd turn it a certain way. Had to let the rock down or raise it up either way.

Dr. G.: Can you tell me anything about the Allen mill that was upstream and on the opposite side from here.

Judge B.: All I know about it is just seeing the thing. It was entirely a different type of mill. Well, it was about the same kind of rocks but different shape of building and situation altogether. And the dam was different from the dam my daddy's mill was. This was the narrows you're talking about. It was really rough. That was a really rough deal up there and that was a shoal for about a mile long and rafts that come in there, they'd come in on a tide and the men would be in water to the neck. They'd just have to hang on to an oar to stay on it was so rough.

Dr. G.: Now how did you say the dam was so different? Was it just on one side of the river?

Judge B.: Just on one side. It narrows. Our dam went from one side of the river to another.

Dr. G.: Do you know who ran that mill? Do you know anything about it? Was there a River Jim Allen?

Judge B.: There was a River Jim Allen and Frank Allen.

Dr. G.: Were they brothers?

Judge B.: I don't know about that, but I think so. I can remember River Jim. I can remember seeing him and I knew his sons.

Dr. G.: Have you ever heard of Coon Dog Allen?

Judge B.: Yeah, I remember him real well.

Dr. G.: Tell me something about that gentleman.

Judge B.: Well, the biggest story I ever heard about him was that he ate eighteen blackberry dumplings at one meal.

Dr. G.: Sounds like a record.

Judge B.: He's got some grandchildren living down there now.

Dr. G.: Robertsons?

Judge B.: No, Allens. Clay Allen is his son.

Dr. G.: Is Andy Allen by any chance one of his descendants?

Judge B.: They are all related, yeah. Now there's a Morris Allen, had a big family. He was a very prominent fellow. Raised on Upper Rocky Branch there.

Dr. G.: Does Adenarm Allen strike a....Adenarm Allen was apparently the first one in there, wasn't he, the Allen group?

Judge B.: That was one of the older ones. That was before my time. My daddy knew all those people.

Dr. G.: Now tell me...you were telling me now, let's get into your education a little bit....that you started in school... Tell me a little bit about your education that you were telling us awhile ago.

Judge B.: Well, I went to the local school here. Finished the 8th grade when I was 11 years old, but my teacher got me in Oneida Institute that winter after our school was over, so they kept me in the 8th grade that winter. So the next year at the age of 12, I started high school at Oneida, so I went two years at Oneida, and I transferred to Berea Normal School and made a teacher's certificate before I was 15 years old.

Dr. G.: You told me you got promoted pretty fast down at Oneida.

Judge B.: When I came from home, they didn't think that I had mastered the 8th grade down home at my country school, but my teachers told them I had, but they didn't think so. So they put me in the fifth grade that first day. That morning I graduated up to the eighth grade by noon that same day. Then I reviewed it the rest of the spring term, you know, then came to Manchester here and got a diploma issued to me.

Dr. G.: What was the name of your original school and who were some of your teachers down there who did such a good job? Was it New Found school?

Judge B.: Prewitt Branch was the name of my school and the school up on New Found about 4 miles up on New Found and then there's one in Bishop Bend about halfway around Bishop's Bend. There's three schools in that general area.

Dr. G.: Who were your teachers down at the Prewitt Branch school?

Judge B.: The first teachers I ever had was my first cousin, Nan King, who is the wife of the president of the bank here. She is still living across the street there. She is 82 years old. Lives right across the street from me here. She is the first teacher I ever had. Then a fellow by the name of Sam Craft was one of the best teachers. The Craft family was noted for being good teachers you know. He was the next teacher I had. Then I had Kelly Morgan who was a brother to Dr. Morgan.

Dr. G.: That the Kelly Morgan here?

Judge B.: Yeah, his daddy was a doctor and he had a brother that was a doctor and his sister Claire also taught. And Anton and Helen Hacker at Oneida taught me and Audrey Holmes who married Frank Campbell on Buffalo taught school. I went to school to her, but the local teachers, Malcolm Roberts....

Dr. G.: Mr dad knew Malcolm Roberts quite well and talked to him a lot....

Judge B.: He was the pastor at Road Run Church. He's the pastor down at Road Run right now.

Dr. G.: How old is he now?

Judge B.: He's 74, or 75. He's a wonderful man. And Gilbert Allen. He was a famous teacher back in those days. I went to school to him, but the main woman was Bertha Allen who lived there with us. Of course most all the teachers lived there, and Myrtle Bigman was another teacher that taught. Bertha Allen encouraged me to come to Oneida Institute.

Dr. G.: Now, let me back up here a little bit. Tell me how you lived. This has always intrigued me. What did you do for food? How did you prepare the food? And one thing I am always interested in is what were crop yields along this river when you were young?

Judge B.: Well, along in the river bottoms the crop yield in corn was good.

Dr. G.: How many bushel?

Judge B.: Maybe 100 bushel. They didn't put it close together in those days like they do now, you know, but we had an acre garden, we had a real rich garden and kept it manured all the time....

Dr. G.: Can, dry, what did you do? How did you keep your foods? Can it, dry it, hill it in, how did you keep it?

Judge B.: Well, we had two large apple orchards on the property and we had peach orchards and of course blackberries, and we had a large patch of strawberries. All the time, we culti-

vated those. My mother was a good cook and she knew how to handle food. My daddy always killed 15 or 16 head of hogs every year, big, fat hogs that ate corn at the mill. We had country ham, and you've heard of putting up sausage in shucks haven't you?

Dr. G.: I've heard of it, but I've never seen it.

Judge B.: Well, she did that.

Dr. G.: How did she do it?

Judge B.: Well, she seasoned it just like she did that she would cook and in cans, half gallon fruit jars, or in big crocks and seal it over with grease you know, those big 5 gallon crocks. She used those mostly for smoked fruit, and she'd cure that sausage and put it in a shuck and tie it with a string and cure it just like meat. Same as putting it in a sack.

Dr. G.: I've heard of that but I didn't know exactly how they did it.

Judge B.: Daddy was an expert on curing country hams. He knew just how to cure meat, bacon too.

Dr. G.: Did you dry a lot of fruit?

Judge B.: Oh dried fruit. We had a big old kiln, a two furnace kiln. I wouldn't say it was two furnace, but it was about 12 feet long and about 8 feet wide. And it had a furnace on either side. It was about a foot of solid rock and mud and so forth in the center. You'd get the heat from both sides so it'd be even you know, and on top you had clay mud. It was fixed with clay and slate; slate and put the clay on top of that and layers of that then was your top. Put the fruit on top and put the furnaces going and dry that fruit.

Dr. G.: What kind of fruits would you dry? Now I never heard of one made like that before.

Judge B.: Fall fruits. Didn't dry any June apples or anything like that early harvest. They wouldn't work. You couldn't can them either. Mostly we had Marlin and Ben Davis and things like that, but we'd have winter fruit that we picked and had all winter in barrels. Just pick them off trees, Black Ben, White Ben Davis, Red Pippin which was something like Red Delicious.

Dr. G.: You must have put away huge quantities of food then.

Judge B.: Dried beans, canned beans, holed up cabbage. Dig a hole in the garden and put a lot of grass in it.

Dr. G.: Really then, your busy time was in the spring before the gardens came in, wasn't it, with the rafts?

Judge B.: That's right.

Dr. G.: So that was a hard time of year?

Judge B.: In the wintertime is when after you got through with your crops, is when you started cutting your logs.

Dr. G.: Now tell me about that. How you made a raft.

Judge B.: Well, the first thing you did was get out and cut your timber and you put the short logs in front and the long logs in the rear of a raft. Sometimes those rafts would have as many as a 100 logs according to the size in diameter of the timber. And you'd have different types. You'd have oak timber, water oak, black oak which is heavy timber, and if you didn't get it seasoned to some extent you know, you have to have this light poplar to float it. It wouldn't float, it would just sink. You'd have to have part of it light wood so it'd float. Then we...on the rafts, regular log rafts... you split white oak; we'd take a piece of white oak about 6 to 8 inches in diameter and split it and then smooth it off and lay it flat down and then we'd put those logs underneath that. You'd first bore your big hole, 7 quarter auger then you'd bore a smaller hole with a 6 quarter auger and then you'd have a tough white oak pin and you kinda just drive that pin down in that log. Pretty hard to get loose. Of course, in the ties, you'd use big tie nails 10 inches long.

Dr. G.: Hew ties?

Judge B.: Yeah, hewed ties or sawn ties. Didn't have many sawed ties in those days because they didn't have mills to saw them with. Occasionally somebody would have a sawmill to saw the ties but there were hewed ones, ties were.

Dr. G.: Did you have some big timber?

Judge B.: Oh, yeah, poplar trees were 100 foot high.

Dr. G.: What diameter, 6 or 8 feet?

Judge B.: No, it didn't get that big. Taller ones didn't. Shorter ones were bigger in diameter at the bottom. I've seen pretty good sized poplar logs.

Dr. G.: This was virgin timber you were cutting out, right?

Judge B.: Yeah, I've seen some virgin timber in my time.

Dr. G.: A lot of maple?

Judge B.: Not a great deal.

Dr. G.: Did they make maple sugar in your day?

Judge B.: Yeah, oh yeah.

Dr. G.: Tell me about that. I hear that from everyone.

Judge B.: Up in the head of New Found, Uncle Jim Bishop had about 600 acre farm up there and he had a maple orchard and he made that sugar. And when I was a boy going to school at Oneida, I walked across that mountain and come by his home and he used to give me cakes of homemade sugar or syrup, maple syrup too. And they'd want me to stop and eat with them and he'd give me a mān cake of homemade sugar. He had these big long troughs. Wasn't nothing to it. It was just a big piece of log about 20 feet long. They'd take an axe and hew it out. Trim out the, you know, get it down till it'd hold several barrels of syrup, not syrup, but juice from the trees. Cut a place and put a quill in it. The juice would come right down in this trough. When the trough would get full, they would pull it out and put it in one of these big vats and boil it. He'd either make syrup or.....

Dr. G.: They made it in big quantities then, didn't they?

Judge B.: Yeah, oh Yeah.

Dr. G.: And it's not done anymore....

Judge B.: He had a whole orchard of trees, he musta had 100 trees

Dr. G.: And today, nobody thinks of doing that in this country, I guess.

Judge B.: No.

Dr. G.: What did you do for salt?

Judge B.: Salt? When I was growing up, we'd get salt at the store, this heavy salt.

Dr. G.: Were they making salt at Oneida then, or still or not?

Judge B.: No, not that I know of. Now they made salt here at Garrard before the war you know. Garrard here was the salt works. They used to run it down on salt boats they called them on the river but that was before my time that they did that.

Dr. G.: Now I got you off the raft. Once you put that raft together, what did you do?

Judge B.: You took either lind or mostly poplar and they'd take a poplar tree and they'd trim that out and they called it an oar. They built it on the front on what we called the bow of the raft. They'd put that oak, and it'd be about a foot or 14 inches above the logs where it pivoted you know. You could have a hole down there and have a kingpin in it. That way it'd move good, back and forth. And two or three men would be in the front of that and they'd push that water.....

Dr. G.: How long were these oars?

Judge B.: Oh, 40 feet some of them, 35 or 40 feet.

Dr. G.: Did you have one at the stern, too?

Judge B.: Oh, yeah, The stern man used two men on the stern and three or four on the bow. The size raft and how much weight you had, how much soggy timber. The heavier a raft was, the harder it was to move around. If it's all poplar and lind, you didn't have much problem with it because it floated high and you'd just go right on through. But if you had those oak logs and water right up around your feet and everything else, it was pretty rough.

Dr. G.: Now what if this raft was made above the narrows?

Judge B.: Well, that was pretty tough to get through that narrows all together in one piece but a pretty tough job.

Dr. G.: Now, tell me about that. That had to be an adventure.

Judge B.:

Well, of course, I never did see one go through, all I know is to hear them talk about it. I've seen the water at later times since then, and how wild it gets and I've heard people talk about it that's gone through there and they say they have to hold on to the tip of the oar to keep from being washed off the raft especially in high tides. And a lot of people...nobody ever got drowned or anything like that. Some of them would get washed off, but they'd get out.

Dr. G.: They didn't stay overnight on the raft. They went ashore every night?

Judge B.: Yeah, they was what was called shanties. They'd have a little shanty on there and do a little cooking, rough cooking occasionally, but not many of them had those.

Dr. G.: You were telling me earlier and it's always interested me, when you use an oxen versus a mule, which is the best worker; which could move the biggest load, mules or oxen?

Judge B.: The oxen, a good heavy team of oxen could move much more than mules. They was much safer because they would travel slow and obey your orders. Mules were fast and jittery.

Dr. G.: You know, it always seemed to me that oxen were pretty awkward. I'm surprised they could pull that well.

Judge B.: Well, it surprised me. They are easy trained. Just as easy trained as a mule team and once they were trained you had no problem with them at all. And they'd just ease up against a load, ease off with it. Not jump like a team of mules, you know, just jump and try to move all at one time.

Dr. G.: Were these logs felled by axes mostly or by saw?

Judge B.: Well, you chop a gap on one side, the lower side and then saw it from the other side.

Dr. G.: No chain saw? So some of these big trees must have been pure hell.

Judge B.: They were. They'd saw and then put a wedge in you know to try to keep the thing from falling on the saw. They'd wedge it some more and saw some more, and cutting some more on the side. It was rough work.

Dr. G.: By the time you got a raft you'd earned your money. What did you get, \$2.00 a day?

Judge B.: No, it wouldn't average that. Sometimes maybe that the good timberer, a man would average a dollar a day work. I know the last two rafts my daddy, R. G. Bishop and his boys, the last two rafts of timber off my daddy's farm, and I went down the river on one of those rafts, and I think



Judge B.: (Cont'd) They's about a 100 logs in each one of those rafts. One raft brought \$135.00 and one brought \$129.00. Just a little more than a \$1.00 a log.

Dr. G.: And you'd had to pay to get them in the water and get downstream too.

Judge B.: You had to cut it, get it down the hill, raft it, and get it to market.

Dr. G.: That seems unbelievable, doesn't it?

Judge B.: You made mighty little money, but a dollar then was a lot of money. You could take a big meal sack, half bushel meal sack, and three dozen eggs and a \$5.00 bill and go to the grocery store and carry back all you could carry.

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Dr. G.: You told me earlier that you had made two raft trips when you were young. How old were you when you were rafting?

Judge B.: 8 and 8, 16 years old. Last trip I made I was 16 years old.

Dr. G.: Where did you go, Bellpoint?

Judge B.: Yeah to Bellpoint. Just below Beattyville.

Dr. G.: You made two of those trips?

Judge B.: I made three of those trips.

Dr. G.: Three?

Judge B.: The last one I made was during the 1928 Hazard flood.

Dr. G.: Tell me about that.

Judge B.: That's rough, I know. We walked back and the creeks were up and when we got to Booneville, the North Fork had the South Fork backed up to Booneville. That's when we had to take our clothes off and put them on top of our head and shoulders and swim out; put our clothes back on and found a place to spend the night. And then after we got down there we got off. We didn't spend another night. We had an early lunch and walked all the way from Beattyville back to my home which was about 23 miles.

Dr. G.: And no paved roads.

Judge B.: Well, we waded. The water was up everywhere and we crossed the creek whenever we could. Just waded it, you know. Of course, it wasn't cold. It was the 28th day of May. Of course, the water was cold all right. Fresh water is colder than if the sun had been shining on it a few days.

Dr. G.: There must have thousands or tens of thousands of rafts maybe go out of here with the huge stand of timber that was here in the early days.

Judge B.: Oh, I can remember when I was a boy watching rafts run all day long just one right after the other within 100 feet of each other all day long and into the night. They just kept coming.

Dr. G.: Never thought it would end, did they?

Judge B.: Never thought it would end. It came to an end all of a sudden, within 4 or 5 years, it stopped.

Dr. G.: Why? Just logged out?

Judge B.: The depression. Yeah, when that depression came in 1929, when the stock market crashed in '29, then things really began to slow down. You couldn't sell anything.

Dr. G.: It wasn't railroad or trucks at that time that knocked it out?

Judge B.: But really the people in our area didn't suffer like they did everywhere else because they had their own seed potatoes, their own seed corn. They had good orchards as long as they kept them clean, and everybody raised something to eat. You could raise enough corn, and make their own meal, grit corn.

Dr. G.: Now how did you celebrate Christmas in New Found when you were young?

Judge B.: Well, there wasn't nothing to do.

Dr. G.: Did you have Christmas trees and things like we do today? It was certainly different.

Judge B.: Oh, no.

Dr. G.: Was it really a religious holiday or just sort of a feast day or what?

Judge B.: Just have a good dinner, just church someway. Go to church like that. A lot of neighbors got together. Invite one another to their homes you know. But if a child got a nickel stick of candy or an apple or an orange that was a great treat in those days.

Dr. G.: That was Christmas was it? When I was a little boy at Booneville even that was Christmas. Yeah. People pretty superstitious up in that part of the country?

Judge B.: No, I would say not.

Dr. G.: Lots of ghost stories?

Judge B.: No, people were very.....

Dr. G.: No people carry firearms?

Judge B.: Oh, they carried firearms. Well, not everybody.

Dr. G. Well, almost.

Judge B.: Well, almost everybody. They all had a gun of some sort you know.

Dr. G.: People of Clay County were never known to be reluctant to carry their weapons were they? And Owsley too was bad.

Judge B.: Both of them were bad. When I first came to Manchester I was elected office on my 21st birthday and when I came to Manchester, there was four feuds going on in here, in Clay County. That was the Baker and Howard White feud, and the feud out in the western part between the Boones and Philpotts, greers and Martins, and so forth. Up on the river here was Lipps and the Smiths, Sizemores, and Wagers, and back down this other was was the Bakers and McCollums and so forth.

Dr. G.: And the Garrards.

Judge B.: They were also into it. They'd take sides you know.

Dr. G.: Then over near you on Buffalo, there was something going on every minute.

Judge B.: All the time. My daddy's first cousin was killed when was 17 years old over there in a fight with the Gabbards. Monroe Bishop was just a kid, got drunk and wanted to be bad and got killed and his brother was in the crew and he got out. Lee Gabbard, you've heard of Lee Gabbard, he floated around in the water. He was a small man, and they thought he was dead and they just let him float, didn't shoot him.

Judge B.: (Cont'd.) He got by and years later, they got over it. One of the boys, the only brother of the boy that got killed, Ike, he left this country and stayed away for 40 years before he ever came back. He was a first cousin of my daddy's. My daddy stayed clear of that fighting. He didn't get mixed up in that. It was just drunken brawls, you know.

Dr. G.: I was talking to one of the old fellows the other day and I said, "What do you do? Did you have a Christmas tree?" "Lord, did we have a Christmas tree," he said. I meant a real tree, you know. "We all go, and WE'D CARRY A GUN AND A QUART OF WHISKEY AND SHOOT AT THINGS." Pretty soon somebody began shooting at somebody else.

Judge B.: Yeah, that's another thing they did at Thanksgiving holidays and Christmas holidays was have shooting matches. Shoot at chickens, turkeys, you know. Somebody would take chicken, a big fat hen, a fat turkey, and shoot at them. Pay so much a shot you know. That was a very common event around Thanksgiving and Christmas time, shooting matches.

Dr. G.: Did much of this local feuding head up as a result of the Civil War?

Judge B.: I wouldn't say so here in Clay County. Now in some areas like Breathitt County maybe and in some of these other places, yes, but not in Clay County. I don't think Clay County feuds had anything to do with the war.

Dr. G.: What were they, just interpersonal?

Judge B.: Just people. The people here in Clay County... alot of prominent families of people came in here in early days from Virginia, and now you take the Garrard family came in here from down in the Blue Grass area. Old Governor Garrard was the second Governor of Kentucky. Well, his son settled here and started the salt works. They owned all the land around. They were a prominent family. A family of people. And then old Colonel Little, who was in the war, married one of the daughters and local people here married into the family. A lot of connections here. Then the Whites came from Virginia into here. That's a very prominent family of people. Congressman John D. White was from this county, you know. In Congress for a long time. And people came in here from North Carolina of prominent families. A lot of very prominent families of peoples in this county to begin with; to start with and they were big landowners and they had what few black slaves there were. Their families had them. We have a fine bunch of black people here. We don't have but about 500, but most of them are well educated. Got two strong churches here. We got a lady that's worked for us for 42 years. She is a high school

Judge B.: (Cont'd.) graduate and her mother went to Berea College. She's still living up here. We took her down to Berea Boone Tavern 5 or 6 years ago on Sunday. She's ninety six years old now. She was 89 or 90 when we took her down. She wanted to go back to see Berea. We took her down there.

Dr. G.: You were telling me about a fish. You told me you trapped fish down at your dam, in the millwheel. Fishing in the streams were clean in those days and you must have really caught a lot.

Judge B.: Oh yeah, you could catch fish any time of the year.

Dr. G.: You say there were sturgeon in here at that time in the streams?

Judge B.: Well, I don't know. A lot of people called them jacks. I presume they were sturgeon. They were great big fellows, great big mouths. But they weren't plentiful. That type of fish wasn't.

Dr. G.: But others were?

Judge B.: Others were, oh lord, game fish. Redhorse, suckers, bass, carp, yellow cat and blue cat, and speckled trout. Those were the best eating fish. Redhorse, suckers. Bass, of course. You never catch bass like you did. Catch them on trotlines, sometimes. If you seine, you could hardly catch them. They'd jump over the top of it all the time.

Dr. G.: Were there Indians in this country when your folks were here?

Judge B.: No, no Indians. But now most of these mountain people have got Indian blood in them. I have myself.

Dr. G.: You have? Cherokee probably? Was that the most common one here?....We were talking about were there a lot of deer or a lot of game left when you were young or in your dad's time?

Judge B.: No deer, but there's plenty of racoons, possums...

Dr. G.: Turkeys?

Judge B.: Red foxes and things of that nature. Very few wild turkey. People hunted back in those days. They needed the food. They'd eat those coons, possums, rabbits. I never could eat coon. I didn't care for wild meat. Fish. I liked fish.

Dr. G.: Where did you go to law school?

Judge B.: At the University of Kentucky.

Dr. G.: At the University of Kentucky. When were you there, Judge?

Judge B.: I graduated in 1948.

Dr. G.: And then you came back here?

Judge B.: I came back here in the spring of '48 and started practice in September. I took the bar and started practicing in the September term, And got in the coal business of all things. Before I started practicing, I got in the coal business and I've been practicing ever since. I served as County Attorner 4 years, and I've been Judge starting on my 13th year, and I served 10 years as a member of the Kentucky Railroad Commission I'm on my 31st year in public office.

Dr. G.: Now you have a son finishing law school this year?

Judge B.: Just finished in December. He's taking the bar next Tuesday and Wednesday.

Dr. G.: He's coming back with you?

Judge B.: Yes, he's going to come back here and practice. Of course, he can't practice....

Dr. G.: No, but ah....

Judge B.: Of course, I've got another year after this year before my term ends. I don't know if I will ever run for office again.

Dr. G.: How many counties are you covering?

Judge B.: Three, Leslie, Clay and Jackson. My District is 100 miles long.

Dr. G.: Jackson is a pretty law abiding county compared to those others, isn't it?

Judge B.: One of the best counties in the state. Good people. quiet and reserved.

Dr. G.: It's just funny isn't it. We've got Breathitt County...

Judge B.: They've got nice little farms. Everyone works. They keep nice homes. All farms are clean and well-kept.

Dr. G.: But then we got Breathitt County and Clay's record has not been great and then Leslie County was pretty sad at one time. Is Leslie bad now? I think Owsley may be worse than when we were young.

Judge B.: I doubt that. They don't have as many people now as they did in Owsley and these old timers cause and create a lot of trouble. And you have more outside influence than you ever had.

Dr. G.: We don't have as many killings as we used to have. Gosh, when I was young there were a lot of them.

Judge B.: Oh, all the time. I can remember going down there to hear these famous trials. They'd get the best lawyers in the country. A fellow by the name of Clarence Bonle from Breathitt. He later moved to Hazard. And Calaway Napier and the Shumate Brothers over to Irvine and famous lawyers all around, you know.

Dr. G.: You mentioned knowing Judge Hurst. He was going once across Cow Creek Hill from Beattyville to Irvine to hold court. They held him up on Cow Creek Hill and tried to make him buy some liquor and he said, "I'm Judge Hurst on the way to Irvine to hold court," and they told him, "WE don't give a damn, your money is as good as anybody's", and they wouldn't let him go till he bought a quart of whiskey. Had you ever heard that?

Judge B.: Ha, Ha. I've heard so many on him. He was pretty ill-tempered. I was there, I don't remember what year, but I believe it was 1927. I was teaching school. It was the first year I taught school. I believe it was '27 and there was a Democrat down in Irvine by the name of Jay Mott McDaniel, big tall fellow, wore a derby hat. I can just see him now. And I was down there the first day of court and Sam had a spittoon. He'd chew that tobacco in 'em big jaws, and his hair cut short, and he look just like a grizzly bear, big fellow. And Mott made a speech against him. He was running against him in the final election back here and the courthouse was full of people, you know. Mott was just giving Sam Hell on every corner about everything. Finally he got through and Sam got up and started out. He'd roll them big rough fists up, and got all over J. Mott, you know and J. Mott jumped up and said, "That's not true". He said, "I sat here and listened to your damn lies for an hour and never opened my mouth. I said if you open your mouth again, I'll put you over in that jail", and went right on you know, hollering and screaming, but after he died Charlie Seale was elected and of course Charlie was a very poor lawyer, I guess.

Dr. G.: Yes, Charlie was not a great lawyer.

Judge B.: Not a great lawyer and never went to law school I understand but I knew him and he was a nice old gentleman.

Dr. G.: He was sort of a barracks lawyer.

Judge B.: He was just elected one term and then after that Hobart Rice was elected.

Dr. G.: Hobart is still in Irvine Now.

Judge B.: Yeah, he's eighty, he must be eighty five.

Dr. G.: Eighty four or five or six, somewhere along there now.

Judge B.: I always had a great deal of respect for that fellow. He had a lot of ability.

Dr. G.: He still does.

Judge B.: I knew his brother. I was a witness in the George Barrett case in Indianapolis when they hung him. I was a witness in that case and his brother defended him as public defender.

Dr. G.: Which brother was that? What was his name?

Judge B.: Ed, lived in Hamilton. He was a great compensation lawyer, Ed was. Got wealthy practicing compensation law in the city of Hamilton. All those mills there. But someone or another of George's folks got ahold of him and he defended George. It took 19 days to try that. I was up there as a witness and I got to come home just the week before Christmas And he was the first man that was convicted under that FBI law. The Congress passed a law making it a death penalty killing an FBI officer. He killed an FBI officer up there and he got shot himself and he was paralyzed. And they'd come, four big policemen, every morning wheeling him down the hall. They hung old George right there in the court yard.

Dr. G.: Did you ever have a hanging here?

Judge B.: Oh, yeah.

Dr. G.: Wasn't one of Boston Baker's sons hanged and he told him not to say, just to keep it in you. Isn't that what his comment was? Not to tell that he didn't do the murder, huh?



Judge B.: Yeah, oh Yeah, he did. They tell another story ~~about that~~. That Boston put him in a canoe. Of course, they had to furnish the coffin, the county did. Put him in a coffin and put him in a canoe and Boston took him down the river to go home and late in the afternoon they was having a dance somewhere down the river 7 or 8 miles. He had the rope they hung him with and he just tied the canoe up AND DANCED ALL NIGHT. Got up the next morning and took him on home and buried him.

Dr. G.: Witnessed his own son's hanging. That would be....

Judge B.: I'm confident that every word of it was the truth. Now Aunt Vicey Bishop married Uncle Ferris. He was a half brother to my grand-daddy. I can remember both of them. I can remember the day they buried Uncle Perry. I was just 9 years old. Old man Lige Ross brought me, my brother and I, a puppy, a little shepherd dog. And Aunt Vicey, she just cussed all the time. We had a Baptist preacher there by the name of Marion Bailey, very big, strong fellow, had beautiful curly hair. Had curls just hanging around his shoulders and he'd get up. He was one of these fellows that talked terrible. You know how these country fellows preach, and so she joined the church and she didn't stop cursing, so they set a meeting. They were going to have a trial, you know, and knock her out of the church. And I'se a great big boy. I was 8 or 9 years old. I went with mother to church and they's standing around waiting. Finally looked down the road and there come Aunt Vicey with that little walking stick just digging away and s moking with that pipe. And she walked right up to Brother Bailey. She said, "Brother Bailey, you can't church me. I'm the best God damned member you got. Never was a God dam whore or a rogue." That old man turned as white as a sheet. I'll never forget what he said. He looked around to see who all was ahearing and what was going on, and he said, "Ah, Lawdy folks, might as well let Aunt Vicey have her way. Just adjourn the meeting."

Dr. G.: Well, Judge, we could talk here till daylight. I know doggone well you've got other things to do. I don't know when I've enjoyed talking to anybody as much as this. But I really suggest if I can get UK to do something on rafting and on the South Fork River some day, would you object to using some of this stuff I got tonight from you? And if we do anything there will be no mention of anything we might have different and apparently I'm the only person that's done this whole stream anywhere that anyone knows about so I'm doing this in rafting and how they lived. I want to go down now and hopefully one of these next spring or fall. Maybe sometime we can go together and make a run down through this part of the country. I would love to have you show me.

Judge B.: Give me a ring sometime. I'm....I don't have any court in April except the first week....

Dr. G.: That would be a beautiful month to go.

Judge B.: The latter part of April would be a fine time.

Dr. G.: I'm going to put late April on here so I'll be calling you and see if maybe we can go down and cruise through that country and get a look at it.

Judge B.: Bring your camera.

Dr. G.: I never go anywhere without it.

Judge B.: We can get directions for some of these stops. You know Cliff Branch goes...they killed Prewitt. Some people killed Prewitt. He was peddling and they killed him.

Dr. G.: This is not Boston Baker now?

Judge B.: And that's where Prewitt Branch got it's name.

Dr. G.: Oh, is that where they carried the body in on a steer. Yeah, I'll tell you there are some great stories down here.

Judge B.: And that actually happened. No foolishness about that. That actually happened. They robbed him, and killed him., and carried him out on a steer . My daddy knew all about it. He was just young. He was maybe 10 or 12 years old.

Dr. G.: That Redbird country was real bad for a time too, wasn't it? Were the Davidsons involved in much of that or ARE THEY a pretty law abiding group?

Judge B.: No, some of them are pretty tough. Some of this bunch.... this Harrison Davidson is another. His brother went to the penitentiary for murder back in the late '30's. Not this Harrison. And there's fine families of Davidsons too, Roland and William. There's four brothers, Marion taught school at Oneida for 40 years. He was one of the sons of William, fine family of people. And then they's some bad ones too.

Dr. G.: I'm going to send you a copy of this famous ghost story from Ambrose Bierce and I want to know what you think about that too.

(TAPE ENDS HERE)