

(Tape 1 of 2)

An Oral History Tape Transcription

Of

Interviewer: Pam Kieve

Interviewee: Virgie Rivere

1980~

PK: ... interview for American History for Mr. William McNeil. He interview is with Mrs. Vergie Rivere.

PK: Ok, Vergie, if you don't mind me asking, uh, when were you born?

VR: I was born in 1898 in Liberty, Texas. Right where the Vandeventer, on the lot where the Vandeventer Real Estate is.

PK: Was that your home at that time?

VR: Well, it was my aunt's home. And we – my family – lived in Raywood. My daddy was a rice farmer. And they lived in Raywood, and – but my aunt lived there, and my mother come here to have, when I was born. And, uh, the old doctor that delivered me was Dr. C.C. Nash. And, um...

PK: Well, uh ... whenever ... at that time, was the town square – the town square has just recently like in the last few years, you know ren-, ben renovated. Like all the merchants have been ...

VR: Yes.

PK: Renovating their storefronts.

VR: Well ...

PK: Was that just, like a residential area then?

VR: No.

PK: Or ...

VR: That was a hotel. She ran a hotel.

PK: Oh. It was.

VR: And, uh, she – well, a boarding house we called 'em then. And, uh, of course, she didn't have very many rooms to rent out, because there was always family coming to visit.

PK: (Laughs)

VR: But she served meals. And, uh, it was near the courthouse, and the people who would be at the court here would go there for their meals a lot of times.

PK: Well, how nice.

VR: And, um – and of course in those days this, uh, there were no, uh, paved streets or anything. It was just sand up to your ankles almost. And, um ...

PK: Did they get – like, did you get around on horseback? Is that how everyone ...

VR: Uh-huh, buggies and horseback and wagons. And, um, and course there were trains in those days. Just in – and we'd come from Raywood to Liberty on the train.

PK: Oh, would you?

VR: Yes.

PK: And, um... What – like, getting back to your aunt serving the meals there in the boarding house, can you remember what a meal cost then?

VR: Oh, I think about 50 cents, and you, uh, just ate all you wanted. And, um ...

PK: That's a little bit different now.

VR: Yes.

PK: I guess if you would go out, it's – I know my husband and I go out to dinner, and it's nothing to spend \$50 for two people to have dinner.

VR: [Inaudible]

PK: That's quite a bit of, of contrast there, isn't it? (Laughs)

VR: Yeah. Well, then later, of course when I was about, two and-a-half years old, we moved to Liberty.

PK: Oh, did you?

VR: Yes. And, um ... and then, uh, we lived in an, uh – well, it was called Old Rivere Home. But it was a great big ol' two story place right where the rogue is now.

PK: Oh.

VR: On the – in that ...

PK: Area?

VR: In that area.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: It was right on that – of course the Rivere's on that whole block there. And, uh, my, uh, husband's people lived on, in that block. And, uh, there was a big family of them, and they had this great big ol' two story house. And then my, then my mother and daddy had a hotel there.

PK: Oh, ok.

VR: And they served meals and all. And then they bought the older Batten Hotel across the railroad track from, right along where the – well, across from the depot.

PK: Uh-huh. Kind of where Commerce Street now?

VR: On, uh, on Commerce. Um-hmm.

PK: I see.

VR: And it was a great big ol' one story building. But it was – it had about, I guess about 11 rooms. Uh, and then, um, my mother, they – course in those days you could get help all, and we never did really do anything. We had help, and ... and I'm still lazy. Don't do anything yet. (Laughs)

PK: (Laughs) Well, I bet that's not true. Well, has the Liberty – I know the town square, of course the courthouse, is in the middle of the town square, and all the merchants have built around it.

VR: Yeah.

PK: Has the courthouse always been in that area, or close to that area?

VR: Yes, it's all, it – cause that was designated by the Spanish government, you know ...

PK: Um-hmm.

VR: ... as a square for the... And then the, the way the city park is, that was a designated, uh ...

PK: Oh, it was? Now, I didn't realize that.

VR: Yeah.

PK: Where the park is.

VR: Uh-huh. And, um, and the jail square, too. And then the Catholic cemetery.

PK: Well, I sure didn't realize that.

VR: Um-hmm.

PK: I know Liberty is a very, very historical town. They – is it, like the second oldest town in the state of Texas, isn't it?

VR: Well, third, I think.

PK: The third.

VR: The third I believe. Uh-huh.

PK: Yeah, I knew that it was real old. And I know that, uh ...

VR: Yeah.

PK: There's – are you a member of the historical society? I know everybody just ...

VR: Yeah, well, I don't belong to them.

PK: ... you know, has so much ...

VR: I'm telling you.

PK: ... information.

VR: I'm not much on joining things because I tell – I go too much, and I don't go to meetings.

PK: Yes, I know you go! (Laughs)

VR: I don't go to meetings, and then they don't like it.

PK: Yeah.

VR: And, uh – so I don't, I just don't join 'em.

PK: Yeah.

VR: I belong to ...

PK: Well, I don't blame you.

VR: I belong to the Green Zone Garden Club, and the – a little, a sewing club that just six ladies belong to, and ... and, uh ... the altar society.

PK: Well, that's good. Right.

VR: And that's the extent of my ...

PK: Your club.

VR: My club.

PK: Yeah. Well that's good.

VR: And, uh ...

PK: It's, it's great to stay active.

VR: Yeah.

PK: As you have. I, I admire you for that.

VR: But of course, when, uh – then when the Batson Oil Boom come on – oh, the streets were just nothing but mud and, uh, sand. And ...

PK: Well, I've seen pictures of people looked like – like you said while ago – walking up to their knees in mud.

VR: Oh...

PK: I – well, did it present a problem trying to get ...

VR: Well, uh – yes, because then they – there was so much, uh, you know so many mules, and the teams that would come into the railroad to bring pipe from the, from the railroad here all the way to Batson. And they'd have to have as many as six mules – or a team, you know – to, to carry those pipes all the way to Batson. And they'd fall down and everything, and they just had the streets all cut up with ...

PK: Oh, I bet so.

VR: ... with that kind of mess. But, um ... oh, but when we were kids, of course, we, uh, we had – there were eight in our family.

PK: Were they?

VR: And, course everybody was friends. We used to laugh because when my mother had the boarding house, and – and, um, at noon, maybe, we'd all come home with one – to eat lunch with us.

PK: Oh, my goodness. Talk about a houseful. Was she prepared?

VR: And we had to have a little private dining room (laughs) at, that was – you know, between the kitchen and the rest of the house they used have a, a little open porch. Well that, my mother and them, they closed that in and put a table in there. And then when the kids would come home at noon, well, we'd all go to that table. Cause she'd have everything sit there for the, for the children to eat. Because sometimes we had – and we had relatives that lived in the country that come to town.

PK: Oh, did you?

VR: And, uh, they'd bring their lunch. And, uh ... and I remember we used to – oh, we just thought that was great to have your lunch at school. And we'd trade with them.

PK: Uh-huh. Yeah.

VR: We'd, at – we'd tell them to go home and eat and we'd eat their lunch at school.

(Laughter)

PK: That's cute. That was a real trade, huh?

VR: That was the Dubois over here. They lived out in the country, you know, and they'd, they'd bring their lunch and let – they'd bring it in a, a syrup bucket. And they'd have sweet potatoes and syrup and biscuits and all that, and we just loved it.

PK: Oh, I guess so.

VR: And they'd come with a little bottle of syrup in their ... in their lunch.

PK: [Inaudible].

VR: And, uh ... and they'd pour it in the top of the – the, the can. And, oh, I just would love to do that. So we'd trade with some of 'em. Get them to go home with the rest of 'em, and we'd stay and eat their lunch.

PK: Isn't that something? Well, the schools, I know the – this year was a big year for Liberty cause they got the, a new school; the high school's just a lovely place.

VR: Yeah.

PK: Have you seen it?

VR: I have not.

PK: Have you been in?

VR: I did not go to open house; I forgot all about it.

PK: Well, the ...

VR: Isn't that terrible?

PK: Well, (laughs) we didn't get to the open house two weeks in.

(Phone ringing)

VR: I'm sorry.

PK: That's ok.

VR: That just happens every morning.

(Phone ringing)

PK: Ok, I was gonna a-, we were talking about the schools.

VR: Yeah.

PK: And I know that just since the short six years that we've been here, there been a lot of changes in the school system. What were the schools like? Were there several schools or one big school house?

VR: Oh, now we had one big school.

PK: Where was that located?

VR: It was over right where the, uh ...

PK: Sam Houston School?

VR: ... Sam Houston School is.

PK: Was that the first one?

VR: And that's where I graduated.

PK: I'll be. How many were in your graduating class?

VR: About, uh – oh, there were about, um, I guess about 20.

PK: How about that?

VR: I, well I don't think there were that many. Let's see ... I tell you, I don't remember. But I know there's not but about five or six living.

PK: Isn't that something? Really?

VR: That graduated together.

PK: Yeah.

VR: Millie Colson down here [8:54], you know her. She was in my graduating class.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And, uh, and, uh, Holly Norman, that doesn't live here now.

PK: Yeah.

VR: Well, of course, I don't remember who all, uh, I – most of 'em are dead.

PK: Yeah.

VR: And, uh, I guess I, (laughs) I'm the old, oldest one left. But ...

PK: What was the next school that was built? Do you remember where?

VR: Well, they built, um, I think the next one was down near the cemetery. You know, down there, uh – well, by that, you know the gym is. The gymnasium.

PK: Yes.

VR: And they built a – well, I saw a picture of it the other day in the paper, I believe. This old school. And, uh, and of course, uh – then, we didn't have water on the school grounds or anything. We'd have to go across the street to get water. And carry it in a bucket. And everybody drank out of that one dipper. They'd put the dipper in the bucket, and – and, um ...

PK: (Laughs)

VR: Go over across to Miss, over at this, uh, place that had a pump out in the yard.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And a kid would go over and get the, they'd be designated whose day it was to go get the water.

PK: Oh, I see.

VR: And, um, and then they'd bring the bucket of water back, and everybody'd drink out of that same. And, of course in those days, one teacher just taught four or five grades. And the day ...[Inaudible].

PK: Right.

VR: And, um ...

PK: And now, you're ...

VR: And my first teacher was Mrs. Edna Raven, and I – of course, I always loved her. And, um, she, uh, she'd tell – she'd have different ones to go get it, and then there was a little table bench thing there that the bucket sat on that, and the dipper hanging on the side, and everybody'd go drink out of it, and some put the water back, and (laughs).

PK: How about that?

VR: Haven't, we hadn't all died, but ...

PK: Isn't that something?

VR: People didn't have all these diseases.

PK: Different diseases.

VR: Yes.

PK: I know it. I tell you, I know the kids are always coming home with something horrible that's contagious from school.

VR: I, I know it.

PK: I guess maybe it's because there's so many of them. Like you were talking about that one teacher taught several grades.

VR: Um-hmm.

PK: And now, I've got a daughter in the third grade, and I think there are something like six or eight teachers

VR: Yes.

PK: just to accommodate

VR: Isn't that a ...

PK: a third grade children.

VR: Well, they don't get used to the teachers much, I think.

PK: No.

VR: Of course, I, um ... And, and every Sun-, Friday evening, you know, you had a spelling bee, or something, you know. We'd, uh, prepare for those spelling bees. (Laughs)

PK: I bet that was fun.

VR: Well, it was, but we'd um, and, uh – oh, goodness I don't know what all you want to talk about.

PK: Well, I know the school system has certainly ...

VR: Oh, mercy, yes.

PK: ... changed. I couldn't begin to compare.

VR: And in those, well of course in those days, they'd, um – they'd have, uh, plays at the end of school. And every kid nearly was in the play. And, um, and that took an awful lot of time out of your school work.

PK: Preparation. I bet so.

VR: Because, oh, everybody wanted to be the head of the play.

PK: (Laughs) Yeah.

(Phone ringing)

VR: And, uh ...

PK: I guess so.

VR: And there was the other old courthouse I worked in.

PK: The orig-, was that the original courthouse

VR: No, uh-huh.

PK: that was in Liberty?

VR: There was two, there was an old, wooden courthouse first.

PK: First.

VR: That burned.

PK: Oh, was there?

VR: And, um, and then there was, um, uh ... another ... they built another one. And that's the one I worked in. It was an old, red courthouse with the ...

PK: Red bricks?

VR: Red brick.

PK: One of the first brick building.

VR: Yeah. I guess so.

PK: I bet that was something.

VR: I think that was the first brick building in Liberty. And, um, and it had three floors to it. And my first job here, uh – I went off, went to Houston and took a business course. And then, um, I come back home and worked for Mr. E. Busch's, you know, the abstract office.

PK: Yes.

VR: And we used to carry those big books up to the third floor. Until

PK: My.

VR: They weighed about 25 pounds. No wonder I never did grow.

PK: Talk about muscle.

VR: I was stunned.

(Laughter)

VR: And then I went to Houston and worked when the, after the First World War

PK: Did you?

VR: And, uh, worked in the government office there for about a year. And, um, and then of course I got married, and then I, um – and then when we moved back to Liberty, well, I um, I worked for Mr. E.B. Pickett. For old man Ed Pickett.

PK: And is that Mr. ...

VR: The grandfather of Brad and ...

PK: Oh, his grandfather.

VR: Yes.

PK: Oh, I see. Brad's grandfather.

VR: No, his grandfather was county clerk, and his, and his uncle was the district clerk. And they had offices together.

PK: I see.

VR: And so I worked for both of 'em. And then, in those days you, you would, uh – you did all the recording by hand, you know, with pen and ink.

PK: Oh, I know.

VR: And you had to have a pretty good handwriting to, to work, so ... I had, uh – course Mrs. Edna Raven just wrote a beautiful hand. And she taught writing, and we all knew how to write.

PK: Oh, did she? Oh, how neat.

VR: Yes. And so, uh, I worked for him – oh, I guess about 10 or 12 years. And then, uh ... then he died, and, um ... then I worked for Charles Vadstratch, where Rita works now.

PK: How about that?

VR: Yes.

PK: And that's your daughter?

VR: Yeah.

PK: That's your daughter.

VR: [Inaudible].

PK: How long has she been there?

VR: Oh, my goodness.

PK: A long time, huh?

VR: Yeah, she's been there a long time. Let's see, after-, well when, uh – and of course, uh, Patsy's father owned it, uh, when I worked for 'em.

PK: Oh, I see.

VR: And then her, his uncle was a surveyor, and they had offices up in the same building. And, uh ...

PK: Well, I know at one time there was a big...

VR: Over the...

PK: ... a real big fire in the courthouse. Was that the courthouse that you worked in? Or had they since built ...

VR: No, I was at ...

PK: They built another courthouse.

VR: That was another one, uh-huh. They tore this to ...

PK: Did they completely tear down the courthouse?

VR: Yes, they tore that one down. It was brick.

PK: And they built the one they have now?

VR: Yeah. Um-hmm.

PK: Um-hmm. I see.

VR: And, uh ...

PK: How long has that been here? Do you remember the year?

VR: I believe '30 ... '34, I believe.

PK: 1934.

VR: I think it's '34.

PK: I, I ...

VR: I know it's up on the building. I believe it's '34, but ...

PK: Yeah. Did they have, uh, a problem getting – well, I guess a lot of the records were just totally destroyed. They didn't have any way of ...

VR: Oh, the first courthouse, they were all destroyed.

PK: They didn't have any way of ... getting any?

VR: Um-hmm. There was one book that, that they had in the abstract office that, that they would – they hadn't returned. You know, used to you could take 'em across the street.

PK: Right.

VR: The records across the street to the abstract office.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And, uh, then they finally decided that wasn't the thing to do.

PK: The thing to do. Yeah.

VR: So they, uh, they made it so that they couldn't take 'em out of the building.

PK: Um-hmm.

VR: And, uh, but ...

PK: That must have been a tragic time to lose all those records.

VR: Well, not quite. Course the town burned, too, you know one time.

PK: No, I didn't realize.

VR: The whole town.

PK: The whole town of Liberty? My! What on earth caused the ...?

VR: Oh, mercy yes. The whole Main Street in front of ...

PK: What caused the fire? Did they have any idea?

VR: They never did, I don't think – well, it was at a café, I think, or it, it started at...

PK: Oh, that it began, and then it just ...

VR: And then it just took the whole town. And that was a horrible time.

PK: And everything being built out of wood it just went ...

VR: Yeah. And, uh, I – it burned, uh – well, just everything on Main Street there.

PK: What, what were some of the buildings on Main Street. Like, there was the grocery store, and café?

VR: Well, yes.

PK: And of course some hotels?

VR: Well, there was a – yeah, café, and uh, and then a feed store, uh ... and then right on the corner where the, where, uh ... oh, uh, the hardware store down on that corner.

PK: Flosfields?

VR: Jackson's.

PK: Oh, Jackson's Hardware. Yes.

VR: Jackson's. And there was a big saloon there.

PK: I'll be.

VR: And, course that was, that was burned and everything down that way. And then two dry goods stores. Where the fair store is.

PK: Um-hmm.

VR: And, um, the – I never will forget those people: Ilipschitz. (Laughs)

PK: Isn't that a different name?

VR: Yeah, it is. And then, uh, Goldstein's store.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And, uh, oh – and then, uh, what other buildings were there? And then there was a drugstore.

PK: Um-hmm.

VR: And, um ...

PK: Who ran the drugstore? Do you remember?

VR: Well, I – I think it was the Stusoffs. Stusoffs had the truck stop. And, um, and then the grocery store was on the corner where the, where the Liberty County Federal is.

PK: Oh, I'll be.

VR: On that corner right there.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: Old brick, old red brick building. And the telephone office is up over that building.

PK: Oh, in that ...

VR: Just one ...

PK: Just a small ...

VR: Just one room.

PK: Above the ...

VR: Then they had the local telephone office in one side, and a long distance telephone and – one lady would run it. And my sister, uh, Nona Ruth, that died, well she, um, she always loved the telephone. And in those days, too many people didn't have 'em.

PK: I bet so.

VR: And, uh ... And, uh, my husband's brother was a telephone operator.

PK: (Laughs)

VR: And he was a sight. And he'd let everybody in town come and listen to the conversations.

PK: (Laughs)

VR: So nobody knew – they knew better than to say anything they didn't want ...

PK: To get caught?

VR: Cause if you had everybody listening ... (laughs)

PK: Oh, that's funny! (Laughs)

VR: And she'd go out there and spend a whole day nearly listening to everybody talk. (Laughs)

PK: How about that? I guess, well that's kind of like entertainment for them.

VR: Yes.

PK: That was a novelty not everybody had.

VR: Well, it was because there wasn't very many phones.

PK: Did y'all have a phone?

VR: Yeah, we ...

PK: Well, I guess you did have a ...

VR: Yeah.

PK: in your hotel or something?

VR: Uh-huh. We had a phone, and then some of the people, the neighbors around that didn't have 'em, well, they'd come use our phone all the time. And, uh ...

PK: How far could you call? Can you remember how ... the distance?

VR: Well, of course they had a long distance phone, too. They had ...

PK: Oh, that's right. You said in the same ...

VR: And it was Mrs. Elba Duval who, who was the telephone operator for the long distance, uh, telephone. And, um ...

PK: How about that? There's sure been a lot ...

VR: She was the aunt to Eddie and Emma and them. And, uh ...

PK: There certainly has been a lot of changes made in that area, hadn't it?

VR: Oh, my goodness.

PK: You know I had a nephew that had a birthday this last week, and they called through the operator. And his grandmother in Orange, and his aunt in Bridge City, and then he was in Houston, they all combined their calls and talked at the same time.

VR: Yes.

PK: Somehow.

VR: Isn't that – I know it.

PK: But isn't that amazing?

VR: They do that, but I don't know how they do it.

PK: The things they can do. Oh, I don't know how, either.

VR: Yeah.

PK: Do you remember after – we were talking about the roads how terrible condition the roads were in especially after the boom, uh, the oil boom and everything?

VR: Oh, that was awful.

PK: Do you remember whenever the first paved road or, like – I don't guess it was a cement road. Or what sort of a road was it to get ready for like the automobiles?

VR: Hmm. Yeah, I remember. Well, I know ...

PK: Or for ...

VR: I worked for the highway department when they put the highway through.

PK: Oh, did you?

VR: Yeah.

PK: Which we call Highway 90, now?

VR: Uh-huh. Out when they were, when they were putting the 90 through. Course the main highway to Beaumont used to be right down this street. You know, that was ...

PK: Oh, right where you are? Right where ...

VR: That's why they called it Beaumont Avenue.

PK: Isn't that something?

VR: Yeah. And used to go all the way to Aimes, and then you'd turn, uh, then you'd go turn off and go in another, on the other way.

PK: Little stretch of road.

VR: And of course you'd better not go when it rained. Because it ...

PK: Because it was still in that ...

VR: Well, it was called Willis Lane, and everybody – if it looked cloudy, you didn't leave to go to Beaumont. Because you'd get stuck.

PK: You might not get home (laughs).

VR: And, um, so, uh ... then – now, what year was that? That must have been about soon as that highway was built. I can't – you know, dates to me are just something else. I can't remember date.

PK: It's difficult. What street – can you remember what street that we had? Now, was Main Street one of the main ones that they?

VR: Yes, it was always the main one because we used to go barefooted and go in that sandy town and have to sit down and cool our feet off.

(Laughter)

PK: Oh, how about that?

VR: The sand was that deep; you just never saw such a thing. And, uh ...

PK: Isn't that something?

VR: And, of course, we didn't want to, uh, go on this, uh, side where the – and walk on the saloon, uh, porches. But sometime we'd go sit down and let our feet cool off on those, um ...

PK: Do you remember when your family got their first automobile?

VR: Let's see.

PK: Were you still a young girl, or were you already ...

VR: Yeah. I – no, I was still at home cause my daddy got a Model-T. And, um ...

PK: How about that?

VR: But I don't remember what year. My goodness, I, I can't remember when.

PK: Well, were – did they, were you allow to court? Were you – or, what we call dating, now? Or ... how did they?

VR: Well, not – not until you were about 16 or 17 years old. Everybody went in a crowd. And we used to have more fun than anything, because everybody'd go together.

PK: Well, that is a lot of fun.

VR: And we didn't know anything about all this sex business they have, now.

PK: Oh, I know. It's really a bad thing.

VR: Oh, mercy.

PK: It really is.

VR: But, uh ...

PK: Well, did you – just like, go places to where you could walk like to the park, or ...

VR: Oh, yeah.

PK: To church?

VR: And on Sunday afternoon,

PK: Fairs?

VR: everybody walked to the river. (Laughs) Went to the river and walked the rail down the railroad track.

PK: Ok.

VR: I'll never forget that.

PK: Well, is that where the, the Trinity River is, now at that?

VR: Yep. Um-hmm. They had a ...

PK: Walk down under the ...

VR: They had a ferry boat, you know.

PK: Oh, they did?

VR: They could take you across.

PK: Wha-, oh, oh – to the other side?

VR: Um-hmm.

PK: Is that the only way that at that time you could get across?

VR: Yeah, there was no bridges then, you know. Except the river – uh, the railroad bridge.

PK: Oh, I, I ...

VR: And people used to walk that sometime, because they'd know what time the trains were coming.

PK: And it'd be safe. (Laughs)

VR: And it'd be safe. So they'd walk across the railroad bridge. But we used to love to get on the ferry and go across. And, um ...

PK: I bet that was a treat.

VR: There'd be a whole crowd and, you know, and going. And maybe we'd, um, take picnic lunch and all that kind out there.

PK: Did you go swimming?

VR: But it was always with a crowd.

PK: Did you, or did – were you just kind of wading?

VR: Go swimming? No.

PK: Just kind of wading, or ...

VR: Yeah. But we used to go in the river. But, um, we'd take the ferry boat and go across. And of course, horses and all on the ferry.

PK: Right.

VR: And wagons and everything else. It was just big enough to carry about one or two buggies across.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: But, um ...

PK: What were they, just mainly picnic?

VR: Um-hmm.

PK: And then ... spend the day kind of ...

VR: And then a lot, we used to walk to Dayton.

PK: Oh, my dear! Well, I bet that was a ...

VR: Yes. Every sixth – well, you could go through, and stop, you know. And, and have your lunch and then walk on. Just ...

PK: Relax. Yeah.

VR: I remember when Mr. E.B. Pickett and Mrs. Sydney – Mrs. Sydney's still loving, you know. Bernie's mother and daddy.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And, uh, and then there – uh, he had a – well, of course they called 'em stenographers then; they didn't call 'em secretaries.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And he had this stenographer to come from somewhere else to work for him cause there wasn't anybody in Liberty that could take dictation or anything. They didn't know anything about that. And, uh, he and his wife moved here to work for Mr. E.B., and they stayed at their house. At the boarding house. And, uh, and she was the prettiest thing. And Mrs. Sydney was just beautiful. She was a dove. And, um, but – they'd, uh, two or three couples of 'em would walk to Dayton on Sunday afternoons. And then ride back on the train.

PK: Oh, well I never thought about that.

VR: Yes.

PK: And it stopped – it would stop here at the depot and then go on to wherever?

VR: Oh, well, it'd stop everywhere. And had five trains each way a day.

PK: Isn't that nice?

VR: Five passenger trains a day. And, uh ...

PK: Well, I've been reading to where they're going – like, a lot of the trains that have had routes for years and years and years, they're – they claim that it's getting too costly to run them, so they're going to quit having the train transportation.

VR: Yeah. Well, some of them [Inaudible]. There's just one, now. And, course I have a pass from when my husband was a railroad man.

PK: Oh, he was?

VR: And I have a pass, and I can go all the way to San Francisco on that train without paying anything except for my ... [Inaudible].

PK: Oh, isn't that great, Vergie?

VR: I have to stay on the, on the Pullman. And ...

PK: I didn't know that.

VR: Yes.

PK: That's marvelous.

VR: But I said nobody want to go with me. Well, they said, "No, you'd go free, and I'd have to pay."

(Laughter)

VR: I said, well that's ...

PK: Well, you earned that. You, you get to do it cause you earned that. That's great. Well, I hope that my children – I, before a train does get totally just like ...

VR: Well, you need to take 'em on one.

PK: An obsolete thing, I would love.

VR: You can, uh, go to Beaumont and catch the train, and then go to Houston. You know, and get on back.

PK: It might – have someone pick us up.

VR: Cause you won't stop here. Yeah.

PK: Right. That would be good. I think I'm gonna do that before long. I've thought about doing it, but I – I'm pretty sure I'm going to because I think that's an experience if we don't do it, they will never have.

VR: Yeah. When Norma was little, I took her to San Antonio. She was about, I guess, 10 years old. And, uh, and we – well, she wasn't 10, I think about eight she was about – and we, uh, went to Houston and caught the train, and stayed all night on the train. I hope all this is not going on there. If not, all that's going on that.

PK: It's ok. Go ahead and talk.

VR: (Laughs)

PK: Go ahead, tell me about your train ride. (Laughs)

VR: Well, we – oh, she was so excited. And, uh, her mother and daddy took us to Houston to catch the train. And, uh, we got on the Pullman and then we got there, she wanted to go to bed. (Laughs) And she, she said, "I want to go see what that bed's like."

PK: And ...

VR: Cause she'd never been on a train before. And, um, we went to San Antonio, and was gonna stay a couple of days, and went to Saint Anthony's estate, uh, a few days, and she took real sick. Took a high fever.

PK: Oh. That's too ...

VR: The next day. And we had to catch the train and come back home.

PK: Oh.

VR: But that was her first train ride.

PK: When she was about eight years old?

VR: Um-hmm.

PK: Well, I – Mother and Daddy, my mother and daddy lived in Texas, but his folks were from Mississippi. And when I was an infant they went on the train to, uh, Mississippi. But I don't ever remember riding, you know, as a young child at all.

VR: Yes. Well, uh, I bet a lot of children right now grown that's never been on a train.

PK: Well, I – I like a train.

VR: Cause they don't stop you know. And when Oleda was little, well, uh – course I wasn't working then, and I had this pass. And you would catch a train to Houston any time of day. And we'd go to Houston and just – if we didn't have anything to do. And, so they still laugh about it. They said Oleda used to get up in the morning and say, "Vergie, where are we going today?"

(Laughter)

(Phone ringing)

PK: I love it.

PK: Oh, well that's good.

VR: I would give you some coffee if you want some. I can go make it in back.

PK: Oh ... well, ok. Alrighty.

VR: Let me go put on some water.

PK: Ok.

VR: Take anything in yours?

PK: A little bit of sugar. I'll have some sugar.

PK: Uh, I know we've been talking, just, a little bit about everything about Liberty.

VR: Yeah, we sure did.

PK: Uh, I want to ask your opinion on the changes that you have seen. Do you think that just about all of them have been for the better? Are you glad that Liberty has grown and changed the way that it has?

VR: Well, yes, I do – I want it to... But I don't want it to get too big.

PK: You know, that's what a lot of people ...

VR: Oh!

PK: ... say that have lived here.

VR: Well, you know, uh, it's ...

PK: I don't – I know. I don't like ...

VR: If this old – uh, I've lived here so long. And then when it gets too big, well then you get out of touch with everybody.

PK: Touch with people. Yes, you really can.

VR: Cause, I used to – of course we used to know everybody in Liberty, and knew all the business and everything. But now we don't know all the business. We have to go find it out. (Laughs)

PK: Right. Well, I know that there has been – I'm sure the changes to you have just been immense because we've ...

VR: Oh, mercy. Yes.

PK: ... lived here only six years.

VR: Um-hmm.

PK: And the six short years we've been here, we have seen quite a bit of change and growth.

VR: Oh, well yes.

PK: I guess a lot of that, you have to attribute it – you know, we had two big companies move in like National Pipe and Tube, and the Pittsburg/Des Moines Steel Plant.

VR: Yes.

PK: And several thousands of people have come just for those two things.

VR: Um-hmm. Yeah.

PK: Well the main, um, means of making a living – was it through farming and through the oilfield?

VR: Well, yeah. [Inaudible].

PK: Years ago when you were growing up?

VR: Just the oilfield and the farms. Of course, my daddy was a rice farmer. And then, um, he – we had a place out about, well Oth and Bubba own it now, you know. The two grandsons. Uh, where my daddy used to have just a highland farm, you know.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And, um, and then they, they couldn't stand to see that land go out of the family. So ...

PK: So they ...

VR: Yeah, they bought the place. But, um, and then he ...

PK: About where is that located? Out Wallisville Road?

VR: Yeah. Out on the wa-, well, it's also that. And you go to regular old Moss Bluff.

PK: I see.

VR: And, um, it's down near the river.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And, um ...

(Phone ringing)

PK: No, I'm not in a big hurry.

VR: In a ruckus.

PK: If you're not cause I don't want to keep you if you're going to be going anywhere.

VR: Maybe when you get to, we'll just sit down and drink our coffee.

PK: Ok.

VR: I wished I had something to serve with it.

PK: Well, I do know that you're fixing to have a birthday, aren't you?

VR: Yeah.

PK: In about three weeks.

VR: November. Yeah, twenty-first.

PK: You mind me asking how old you're gonna be?

VR: Well, I'll be 81 years old.

PK: Eighty-one. Well, that's marvelous. You certainly look the picture of health. You must have been very fortunate to have had been a healthy person.

VR: Well, I have been – when I, I, um ... I guess I've been real fortunate. And I thank God every day for my ...

(End of tape)

(Tape 2 of 2)

VR: I don't know why

PK: That's the city.

VR: People drove for me and everything else sometimes.

PK: (Laughs) You're just as busy as a bee.

(Laughter)

VR: But anyway, uh, Nieda have, you know, she has so much trouble. And, um, I think she's two years younger than I am, you know. And people never think that. They think that cause I'm always taking care of Nieda. (Laughs)

PK: Isn't that something?

VR: But, she just – course she's had children, she's worked so hard when she was younger with raising 'em up and all.

PK: Sure.

VR: And, uh, so that makes a difference.

PK: Do you attribute anything to your good fortune and your good health? Other than just staying on the go? I know that's for sure. I know you do that. (Laughs)

VR: The Parblos, you know, they – they laugh. They said, “Well, uh, you’ve been with every generation of us now.”

VR: And so when they had a – Sam’s niece moved downstairs.

PK: Uh-huh.

VR: And course she was real young – Sophie Young. And, um, so we – I was so excited. I said, “Well, Sophie will tag. We’ll go to Beaumont and have (a way).

VR: He said, “Well, now you’re starting with the young generation again,” said, “you should – one gets too old, she starts with the next one.” (Laughs)

PK: How about that? Well, that’s great.

VR: I ...

PK: Well thank you so much for your time, and I want to wish you a happy birthday.

VR: Well, thank you.

(End of tape)

Transcribed by: Amanda Smoke 4/9/18