

**John Hoover – May 11, 2012 at his business in Burnet****Tape 1 (38:03 on i-Phone)**

Ken: OK, so you were saying, there, yeah, back in the 1945 to 1960

John: Yeah, that, cedar cutting was, uh, a big part of the – cutting and marketing of the cedar was, uh, a big part of the economy here.

Ken: Yes

John: Because there wasn't much economy

Ken: Yes

John: The, we still, we still had not gotten out of the 1932 Depression in this country here. We were very, very slow in coming back. Plus the war took a lot of stuff out. But cedar was the cash crop. Kind of like in cotton country, you say, cotton was king, "king cotton" People raised cotton just because it was – get two dollars cash

Ken: Yes

John: And cash was - you didn't go to the bank and borrow cash, if you was – if you had the money, but if you didn't have money you couldn't borrow cash. So people would cut cedar and market that cedar \_\_\_\_, I mean, just, in the Burnet and the Marble Falls area they was probably five or six what we call "cedar yards."

Ken: Um-hum

John: That's where they bought cedar, graded cedar, and resold cedar. And those guys would buy cedar posts from the individuals that cut cedar and hauled it to 'em and would resell it to people that was gonna long haul it to Minnesota or Arizona or wherever they wanted to haul posts to, and they was probably, I bet there was five or six yards in Burnet and five or six in Marble Falls. And they were pretty good sized operations and, uh, and uh, of course the, the, another reason it wasn't much done during the war – we didn't have any way of transportation of cedar wood. Nobody had gasoline. Nobody had tires on the trucks.

Ken: Right

John: and you couldn't transport it to the point of sale. So, after the war it got where you could get of that, get some tires, and stuff, and, uh, and people could make, uh, in the beginning, in the beginning, like in the forties there, you know, a pretty good load of cedar - load would mean a pickup load or something like that – was four or five dollars and then by up in the fifties as it grew and grew maybe a good load of cedar would bring twenty-three or twenty-four dollars.

Ken: How many posts would fit on a load?

John: Oh, fifty or sixty. And, uh, you had everything from stays to two inch posts, we called them duces

Ken: two inch posts

John: And, uh,

Ken: That was a stay?

John: Huh?

Ken: That was a stay, a two inch post?

John: No. A stay was that (hand gesture). A two inch post was a post. A lot of times used for a stay, but, if you had so less than that – that was a stay.

Ken: Uh-huh

John: A two inch post was called a duce.

Ken: A duce.

John: Yeah. Posts were always measured by the diameter of the top of it.

Ken: Um-hum

John: And, uh, I say, uh, diameter. If it was three inch, the top of the post was three inches, that was called a three inch post.

Ken: Uh-huh

John: And, uh, four inch, five inch, six inch, something like that. And, um, uh, most people that cut cedar would want to get into a pasture somewhere, what we called virgin cedar, that had not been cut before

Ken: Um-hum

John: Because the limbs on the trees would be longer and more beneficial for guys to get usable posts out.

Ken: The posts were the limbs, mostly, and the trunk – would they be using the trunk for the big ol' corner posts or something?

John: Oh, yeah, yeah. They sure would be.

Ken: Um-hum

John: But, but you had an old tree that was sprangled out every which-way you could get, you could get better cedar.

Ken: Yes

John: Plus, older cedar, older cedar, the older a tree got the better the wood was in it, that the heart, called heart cedar, the red, red cedar is cedar that's, that's been there that no longer growing the red part, does. As a tree grows it has a white line around the edge of it called, that's called the sap cedar.

Ken: Um-hum

John: That's the sap, that's the new growth that hasn't yet seasoned enough to turn it into a red, to the red heart cedar. Heart cedar, pure heart cedar, red cedar, that's peeled off – all the reds off, last for a long time. You can still see cabins and stuff around this country built out of heart cedar where they hewed it and made it square and then shaped it up, they shaped it up with something, is, hundred years old.

Ken: Um-hum

John: Hard cedar just, just lasts almost, a long time, I don't know how long it lasts. It'll last, it'll last a hundred years without any preservative on it.

Ken: Um-hum

John: And, uh, uh, the

Ken: Who was coming and buying – you said they were selling it and taking it up to Minnesota. Were these just truckers that were taking it up there?

John: Yeah, yeah. Truckers would come. A truck would come to Burnet from, let's say Minnesota or somewhere in that land

Ken: Um-hum

John: And he didn't want to go back empty. So he would, uh, come down here and a lot of times, I called "laying around" He would wait a, maybe a week, waiting to get a load of cedar to haul back to, I'll say Minnesota, might have been Arizona, might have been so long – It's a long haul to them.

Ken: Um-hum

John: And, uh, that's the way most of it was transported. And, of course, a lot of cedar post was used here. Here, and within a few hundred miles of here.

Ken: Um-hum

John: You know, uh, cedar is not prevalent all over Texas.

Ken: No

John: Hell, a lot of it around here, but you get over to East Texas it's not there. It's not in North Texas. And it's not in West Texas.

Ken: No

John: A lot of it was used here. And, uh, the, of course cedar is damnation to us now because the value of cedar posts is not very good, and, uh, and the cedar is, is transplanted by a bird, we call the cedar robin. That bird eats that cedar berry and after that bird, and after that seed passes through the bird, that bird does something to the cedar berry that makes it, you know, gets it ready to where it will come up again. And after the bird roosts in the tree, next year there'd be a little old cedar coming up about that big and next year that big

Ken: Um-hum, right.

John: And before you know it, before you know it, it will just encompass the whole landscape out there

Ken: Yeah

John: And, uh, the, so most people try to, try to get rid of cedars. And, they, they get rid of 'em by two ways: by cutting 'em, bulldozing them, and, uh, but none of that is very lasting.

Ken: Yeah

John: Unless you can get all the cedars in the country out the, they keep returning. And I, I say that, you know, if you've got a little ranch out here that, if you're gonna figure out what its gonna cost you to keep that ranch up, you've got two things you've got to do out there. Now you've got to maintain, prickly pears, you've got to maintain mesquites, and you've got to maintain the cedars.

Ken: Um-hum

John: And I'll bet you that it costs at least ten dollars an acre a year to keep, to keep that under control.

Ken: Sure

John: And, uh, that's a

Ken: I've cut 'em every ...

John: And you've got to, you've got to get them prickly pear, and you've got to get them mesquites. And, uh, if you don't

Ken: Yeah

John: then it, you know, you can take a guy, I've got a guy that is a yardman, he's got a, got a weed-eater, a gasoline weed-eater. It's a big one. And it has a little blade on it about so big

Ken: Um-hum

John: It's kind of a smooth like blade that's got a little bit of teeth on it. But it will cut the, the cedar there at the ground. Here comes that cedar up there, it will cut that cedar right at the top of the ground just as fast as you can walk – rocks and all.

Ken: Um-hum

John: Of course, the blade won't last too long with the rocks, but it'll, it's, uh, it will last a while. But a guy with a, with a weed-eater, as long as the blades on it can cut fifty times as much cedar in a day's time than you can if you let it get up like that

Ken: Um-hum.

John: And the main thing about the little blade is that it cuts it off at the ground, not, if you go in there and cut it off with a chainsaw or somethin' there at the ground there comes a cedar up there, it's gonna get cut off right there. The first time you drive across that with your pickup or your tire out there you're gonna, whaamm

Ken: Yup

John: Got a little old thing that big is gonna stick right through that tire, and it's, it ain't gonna rot and go away.

Ken: Um-hum

John: That little cedar thing is gonna stay there a long time

Ken: Yep

John: So it's important to get that cedar off at, and another thing – if you leave him any—if he's got as much as two inch sticking up a lot of times it'll come out from that like that.

Ken: Well I - if you have a little bit of green

John: Yeah, yeah

Ken: It'll come on out

John: Yeah. And, uh, alright

Ken: So tell me, there was a cedar eradication program in the 1930s. Do you remember that? When the government paid people to, to

John: That was 1940s

Ken: 1940s? OK

John: I think that's under Dwight Eisenhower

Ken: OK

John: regime. And, we done, uh, we went in there, and uh, took two bulldozers, there's a D7 and there's a D7. They got a big ole chain. A chain was - links in it this big, the links weighed a hundred pounds or so. And those two bulldozers go out through there dragging this chain and when they come to a tree or somethin' it just, it pulled it up and piled it up and pretty soon, pretty soon that tractor would have a

huge pile of cedar trees and stuff in there like that and whatever was in the way. And, he'd have to, when he got real full he'd pull the chains up, you know, automatic. But he would not get the little bitty cedars.

Ken: Um-hum

John: It, it dragged the little bitty cedars over and leave it there

Ken: Um-hum

John: And you'd have to go back and hand cut that to get it done. Uh, but, that had some success. – pretty fast to do it that way. And it got the, it got some other bad trees with it, you know

Ken: Yeah

John: Because it might have got some good trees with it too. And, uh, good trees were what we called Live Oaks. And, uh, but that was, I believe it was under Dwight Eisenhower in 1946 I think

Ken: OK

John: '47. And, uh, that uh, but if nobody kept it up, nobody kept up what they done, here it comes right back, you know, and uh, this, you could just, you could just see - from here to Lampasas – it's kind-of prairie like up there, and they, they drugged all that down and burned it and everything like that. But then here it comes back, you know, and you just count the years

Ken: Yeah

John: It'll start out, in ten years them cedars would be that tall, you know?

Ken: Yeah

John: And uh

Ken: Yeah, they're growing fast this year. So, the hey-day of it, it sounds like, was in, right after World War II, 'cause you could get gasoline to get their trucks in there, and it and on until – you ran the hardware store here, when did steel posts, when did you start selling steel posts, T-posts?

John: Probably in '60. Uh, you know, the Japanese, we didn't have a lot of steel. You know, we needed all the steel we had here in the United States to build trucks, cars, and automotive stuff, railroad tracks, stuff like that. So the Japanese started importing uh, steel posts in here, I'd say about '59 or '60

Ken: Uh-huh

John: And, uh, that's when they first come in. They were a quality steel post. They, not like the U.S. manufacturer would make, it wasn't that good, but, but it was, a lot of 'em were used, yeah. And, uh

Ken: Did that knock the cedar cutters out of business?

John: Oh, no, uh, that's probably the beginning of it, but, uh, the, of course one of the things that knocked them out is so many people do it there from 1945 to 1960 that they cut all the good cedar out

Ken: They ran out of cedar. They ran out of good cedar?

John: Yeah, and, uh, and there was a few, there was a few ranchers that didn't want to get rid of the cedar 'cause they didn't want to get rid of their posts, you know.

Ken: Um-hum

John: and, uh, so, uh, but then the chainsaw come out in about, about that time also. And, uh, you know, primarily the cedar was all done by, up until I want to say, I don't know when the chainsaw first come out but it was about that time before it got popular around here. Uh, and, the cedar was all done with an axe.

Ken: Um-hum

John: you know. And, uh, what we called a double bladed axe. And, uh,

Ken: I've seen one

John: This, uh, it's good for arthritis. You know, if you cut cedar all day long it keeps you loosened up.

Ken: Yes it does.

John: It's, uh, you ever cut cedar?

Ken: not with an axe.

John: It's, uh, you know you've got to, it's an art to an axe

Ken: Yes there is.

John: You know, I, I'm an old man now. I picked up one of these \_\_\_\_ on a construction job we had to cut something and I said "give me that damn axe." And that guy said – kinda like riding a bicycle. He said "how in hell do you know how to do that?" I said "well, when I was a young man I cut cedar."  
(laugh)

Ken: Uh-huh

John: It's, knowing how to,

Ken: How many – so you're talking a six inch post. How many cuts would it take you to, good cedar cutter, to cut a six inch post?

John: Oh, it'd take several through it, but, it, uh, but a good, a good axe man would, when he got through cuttin' it, it would look like he's kind of shaped it's kind of hacked off, you know, and, uh, it, you know, it'd be kind of formed, you know

Ken: uh-huh

John: It wouldn't look like a, backbone, backbone in the dishwasher done it.

Ken: Uh-huh

John: But, but cedar was, uh, axe was a real skilled thing. In, uh, I've heard some stories that, uh, you wouldn't want to fool with a man with a shotgun, you might not want to fool with a man with a good axe. (laugh)

Ken: (laugh) Yeah

John: Uh, but today, today's still some cedar cuttin' going on. Not near as much as it was back then – just about everybody was cuttin' cedar because you could go out a cut a little bit of cedar and get three or four dollars. Three or four dollars in the late '40s and early '50s, three or four dollars was, uh, a meaningful thing if you lived out on a place and you didn't have any money. You know, you could go get you some, something to eat, you know

Ken: Um-hum

John: And, uh, but – after things got to going a little bit – where the economy had picked up some – the, then it wouldn't so – you had other ways of getting money.

Ken: It's a hard way of gettin' money, isn't it?

John: It is. It was a hard way of getting' money, and, uh, and another thing, after the chainsaw come along guys could get more cedar cut too. They could, uh

Ken: Yeah

John: of course it cost some money to run a chainsaw too. Um,

Ken: Well, you said everybody cut cedar, and

John: Well, I mean everybody that, you know, like here in Burnet, there probably was very few jobs

Ken: Yeah

John: I mean, you got most of the people lived out here had a little place, you know, they had a little farm or ranch or something on the edge of town, whatever. But, the income was just, like to nothing, you know, in them days. And, uh, so they had to have some money. And the people that lived here – there was a lot of people lived here by then that had worked on the Buchanan Dam project. The Buchanan Dam was completed in 1939.

Ken: Uh-hum

John: And, a lot of people lost their jobs from that and didn't have any other income. And, there was a lot of people worked on that project, and, so



Ken: They were local people that actually worked on the dam, weren't they? I mean they were

John: Oh, yeah, a lot of them, yeah

Ken: 'Cause that was the Depression when that started.

John: Oh, yeah, it started in, it started in '30, uh, I guess '33 and '34. And, uh, yeah, a lot of people, uh, worked on that dam, uh, were local people.

Ken: They lost their jobs ...

John: Of course you don't - it's hard to imagine - we didn't have machinery back then, you know, to do things, you know, you know for instance

Ken: Um-hum

John: my wife's daddy lived out here north of town, ten miles out. And when they built the highways through here he had a little ole Fresno he pulled behind two horses - just a little, little shovel hooked to two horses, \_\_\_ shovel, and you could - it had two handles on it - and you'd get the horse a going and it'd scoop up about wheelbarrow full of dirt and take it over there and dump it on the, on the, bed where the highway is going to be. Well, you'd be surprised, just about every rancher, farmer out through that country got close to where that was, he'd take his horses over there and his Fresno, and, and he would work on the highway there for a little while \_\_\_ while he was walking back and forth. And that's the way things was done back then. They didn't, uh, wasn't no damn trucks, there wasn't no big bulldozers and maintainer, maintainer was pulled by a bunch of horses.

Ken: Um-hum

John: You know, and, uh, so it took a lot of, took a lot of, horse power.

Ken: Um-hum

John: See, all you smart ass people today wanting to know where all the jobs went. All you college people, you'all went to school to figure things out and put everybody out of work, see. You got, you got Paul Farmer back there a computer man. How many computers we got in this office?

Unknown female: One per person, I guess.

John: Twenty or thirty, you know. Cell phones -

Ken: Uh-huh

John: That took more jobs than you know, right there. So, you know all about - (calls to another person in the room) come in here

Unknown female: What? If you're looking for Rowe

John: Come here and tell me what you're doing. Tell this man what your name is.

Unknown female: I'm Kim

Ken: Hi, Kim, I'm Ken Roberts

Kim: Nice to meet you.

Ken: Nice to meet you.

John: Tell him what you do. He, he's trying to find out from me about cedar cutting.

Kim: About what (laughs)

Ken: Cedar cutting

Kim: Oh (laugh) What do I do. Well, I work for \_\_\_\_\_. I'm in the development part

Ken: Uh-huh

John: She's in the tax credit business.

Kim: Yep. I, I deal with the government

Ken: OK

Kim: (laugh)

John: I was trying to eat on him a little bit about, you know, trying to collect information, and I'm just telling the reason that there wasn't no jobs no more, we was talking about cedar in the Depression, and, and, we come along with the chainsaw

Kim: Uh-huh

John: then we come along with, uh, steel posts instead of the cedar posts

Ken: Yup. Put 'em out of business

John: And, we come along with the cell phone that – I, we've got some construction business going on. One superintendent with this damn cell phone can run three or four jobs

Ken: Uh-huh

Kim: Yeah, that's true

John: These girls right here – there must be twenty computers in this office. Twenty!

Kim: Or more

John: Word processors, email machines

Ken: Uh-huh

John: Why, good God almighty, if we, if we didn't have that, instead of having twenty five girls in it we'd have a hundred and fifty

Ken: Uh-huh

John: It's people, it's people like you that's done away with the jobs.

Ken: (laugh)

Kim: (laugh)

Ken: (laugh) I don't know about me.

John: It was

Ken: Well I'll tell you, I remember those days. I remember them well 'cause I, I grew up in Austin and if there, and I went to Austin High, and if there was a job anywhere in Austin the whole school knew about it the next day

John: Yeah

Ken: And we were all there, trying to get it. I worked at Holiday House, I worked at whatever it was. If there was a job we knew about it.

John: I'm just saying the reason that we don't have jobs is we're all about doing something that don't need nobody to hire.

Ken: Uh-huh

John: What were you gonna ask me?

Kim: I was looking for Rowe

Ken: (laugh)

Kim: I was gonna ask – he, he went to Austin High School?

Ken: I did

Kim: Did you, you didn't take auto mechanics, did ya, there?

Ken: I might have

Kim: My uncle taught down there for years and years and years

Ken: Back in the old, back in the one on

Kim: Yeah,

Ken: Uh-huh, that's the one I went to

Kim: Yes

Ken: Yeah

Kim: Uh, Ross Buckner was his

Ken: That sounds familiar, I did, I took auto mechanics, yeah

Kim: He was there a long long time

Ken: Uh-huh

Kim, He's ninety two now, so

Ken: wow!

Kim: He is definitely retired now

Ken: Great

Kim: Alright, I'm gonna excuse myself

Ken: So, uh, you know, I've talked to some folks in Mason, there over, I'm German heritage myself and, you know, German and Scots-Irish, but, and I, I was talking to some folks there and they were saying, you know, we all, all the sons, we all cut our own cedar for ranches. You know, the ranches there. They're Germans and they're, you know, I'm, my mother wouldn't hire anybody to do anything if she could do it herself 'cause that's just the way the Germans did it, you know. Uh, but, uh, there were, in Austin, in West Austin, and I, and I think probably up here, there were, there were people who's, we called them cedar choppers. That's what they did for a living. That's all they did for a living. Now, did ya'll, did ... is that the way it was here or was everybody just cutting their own cedar?

John: Oh, we cut the cedar to sell.

Ken: Uh-huh

John: It, of course, it's do, the ranchers certainly cut their own cedar

Ken: Uh-huh

John: They wouldn't buy one, they'd cut their own stuff, you know. And like I told you a while ago, some of them thought that they were running out and they would not cut their cedar. They preserved it for their

Ken: Right

John: some of the big ranches. And, uh, but, uh, yeah, there was cedar choppers, I mean, uh, I, I think the cedar choppers we had here were more farmers and ranchers that had went, uh broke, whatever you want to call it – they had to have some money so they started chopping cedar. But they wasn't, after, when they got to where they could do something else they progressed on, see. Uh, did something a little more easier, or – not everybody had a truck – pickup to haul cedar with. And not everybody had a place to go cut cedar.

Ken: Yeah

John: A lot of 'em got, a lot of ranchers wouldn't let you on their place unless they kind of knew you, you know. Some of that going on though. And, uh,

Ken: So a lot of it was these, farmers or ranchers supplementing their, their, gettin' cash

John: Yeah

Ken: Yeah

John: And, and, and of course in this program also along with the, I told you about the bulldozer, they had, you could cut this cedar when, when you flat cut the cedar

Ken: Right

John: Flat cut it. Meant you cut everything down

Ken: Right

John: All the cedar. But you didn't, you would leave, uh, there's a cedar tree comin' out of there, out of that limb – you couldn't cut the cedar down to the ground. You'd have to leave part of it stuck out 'cause all you had was an axe.

Ken: Right

John: Is that me?

Unknown female: It's probably \_\_\_\_

John: Oh,

Unknown female: \_\_

John: OK, all right. And we would get, uh, paid by the acre on that, you know

Ken: Yeah

John: They'd go out there and survey your land, and if you had a certain amount of coverage, thickness of cedar, that would be anywhere from three dollars to seven dollars an acre

Ken: Um-hum

John: If it was solid coverage and you'd got to all cut it, it'd be, you'd get seven dollars an acre. And if it was, say fifty percent covered, sixty, you might get five dollars an acre. And if it was only like twenty five percent covered you'd get three dollars an acre. That was the eradication you done by cedar. A lot of that was done too,

Ken: Uh-huh

John: It sure was. And, uh, but there again, that didn't, uh, \_\_ pretty ineffective again, you cut the cedar and you let the limbs lie there, and they lie there, the cows couldn't get in there to eat the grass. It was just a made , made in heaven place for the new cedar to come through there you know

Ken: Yeah

John: You know?

Ken: Yeah. It's, cedar, cedar limbs make great erosion control. I use it around my place

John: Yep

Ken: You know, 'cause it, uh, cows won't bother it. Well, so, I've also heard that – that some of the ranchers, well they'd have cedar as a way to get money. And so a cedar man would come in there, a man would come in and bid on his cedar. And say "well, I'll give you ten percent of the, the value of the posts we cut off of here."

John: Yeah, and, and, if a, if a person, a rancher had some old growth virgin cedar – that's absolutely right

Ken: Yeah

John: they would pay him a percentage of the income to cut that cedar

Ken: Right. And those folks cuttin' that cedar were dedicated cedar choppers, weren't they? That's all they did for a living.

John: Yes, that's absolutely right

Ken: Right. In Liberty Hill we've have, you know I live in Liberty Hill, uh, we, uh, have some cedar chopper families, uh, I live up on what's called Shinoak Ridge which is gettin' up in the cedar country. You leave Liberty Hill and, you, you cross the Gabriel and, and, and it's just all, it's actually the watershed between the Brazos and the Colorado.

John: Um-hum

Ken: No good land. It's not, it's bad land. And we have some families, Cantrell, uh, Cantwell, Floyds, Johns', uh, that are, were dedicated, they were cedar chopper families. Did ya'll have people like that around Burnet?

John: Oh yeah, yeah. Uh

Ken: Marble Falls

Curt Hoover : You just named a whole bunch of people I know (chuckle).

Ken: I did?

Curt : I know the Cantwells

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt : Johns' and all them

Ken: Yeah, yeah. Are you from around Liberty Hill?

Curt: I'm from here. I just lived up there and know em. Some of 'em worked for me when I was (building?)

Ken: Uh-huh, Uh-huh

John: He lived off there on Cow Creek Mountain, south

Ken: Oh, you lived on Cow Creek. That's beautiful country down there.

Curt: That's cedar cuttin' country, there

Ken: Um-hum

John: That's, that cedar's pretty well gone down there, ain't they?

Curt: There's still, still mining it out of there.

Ken: Yeah?

Curt: Um, off and on they, there is a Palacios family, a Mexican family

Ken: I know them. Jose Palacios the fence builder?

Curt: Yeah

Ken: Yeah, those are good families

Curt: They said the Palacios' are the third generation cutting on the same ranch.

Ken: Is that right! I didn't know that!

John: But this

Curt: On that Turner place down there

John: Yeah, but you know, that cedar, when it gets high enough up on that mountain

Curt: It's hard to get

John: It's, its' hard to get a road up there, hard, it, you can't just...

Curt: \_\_\_\_\_

John: If you can't get transportation to that cedar you can't hardly pull /haul it out on your back

Curt: Um-hum

Ken: Yeah

Curt: Dick Turner's the one that had all this cedar posts around here for a long time.

John: Yeah, he did.

Curt: Two or three yards, didn't he?

Ken: Dick Turner?

John: Yeah

Ken: That's the same place that you're talking about?

Curt: same ranch. He's one of, one of the boys. He's passed on now

John: yeah, um, let's see, um

Curt: But two of the brothers are still alive down there

Ken: Really?

Curt: Uh, Punk Turner

Ken: I've heard of him. Punk Turner

Curt: He's, he's on 1174. It's the last house on 1174 before you turn on Cow Creek Road.

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: And then Son Turner, that's all I know about 'em is these names, they've got real names but, Son Turner lives about, oh, three miles down Cow Creek Road.

Ken: OK. Yeah, I'm, uh, is this, are ya'll related?



John: Nephew

Ken: Nephew

Curt: Did I mention, I'm Curt Hoover.

Ken: Sir?

Curt: Curt Hoover.

Ken: Curt. Nice to meet you Curt. I'm Ken Roberts, and, uh, yeah, I grew up in Austin and grew up, and went to school with cedar chopper kids from West Austin and, uh, so, I'm kind of late career and, uh, I've come to find that the story of the cedar industry in central Texas has just never been told. It was a big deal here.

John: Right

Ken: Back in the '40s

Curt: They tell me that, that cedar yard that was in Cedar Park

Ken: Yeah

Curt: That it was named after ...

Ken: I remember that, I used to drive past there

Curt: It's right there where Winkley's was

Ken: It's huge, huge, yeah

Curt: They said that thing was acres

Ken: It was acres. I remember

Curt: There was millions of posts there - sit at one time.

Ken: Yeah, yeah

Curt; Um, no, no, those Cantrells and Johns' and, what, uh, some of the Johns' live over here kind of in the Bertram area now.

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: Um, but the Cantwells worked for me, when, when I was working down there. Uh, Kri-- \_\_\_\_ Uh, what was the old man's name? 'Cause he was a real cedar chopper deluxe.

Ken: Is he still alive?

Curt: I don't know if he still is, um

Ken: I'd love to talk to some of these old men that are, that, that, and I'm about to, you know, they are all passing away too. I, this is

Curt: Yeah, uh, I don't really know if he's walking around. It's been fifteen years since

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: since we've seen Kris. Kris is one of his boys

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: Now Penny's, I don't know if you knew the Penny's too. I think they were

John: \_\_\_\_\_ Where do the cedar posts go to now?

Curt: Along the coast because they won't rust.

John: Oh, the T-posts, they won't use T-posts, so they use cedar posts?

Curt: They use cedar posts, they want cedar posts now.

Ken: I'll be darned. That's so cool. I'd never new that.

Curt: They send 'em down the valley, along the coast, uh, uh, that's where I hear they mostly go to.

John: But, you know, back what I told you a while ago, old growth and new growth. Old growth tree It was probably out here – a hundred years old

Ken: Yeah

John: The limbs are prime really, red like this here. That won't rot. New growth cedar

Ken: Thank you (to another person in room)

John: New growth cedar, when you, when you look at the cedar post, you cut it, say a three inch post – right in the middle it will have a little bit of red

Ken: Um-hum

John: But around here it's mostly white. That, that with all that white will rot off.

Ken: Um-hum

John: And the, and, in what, two years, three?

Curt: Oh, it's longer than that, but it, it will sure go faster than it used to.

Ken: Um-hum

John: And, uh, so,

Ken: Let me give you a card. What's your name again?

Curt: Curt

Ken: Curt. I don't think I gave you a card, did I, Mr. Hoover?

John: No

Ken: This is just –so I teach at Southwestern University

Curt: Oh, do you?

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: That's a good walk over there. I did some work on the President's house over there.

Ken: Oh my gosh! Well, Schrum or Shilling, or?

Curt: This was about ten years ago

Ken: Yeah, it could have been Shilling. That's a pretty house, isn't it.

Curt: Yeah, they did the add-on?

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: And all that mess

Ken: Uh-huh. I've only been in there twice in thirty years (laugh)

Curt: This was quite the deal.

John: Kerry if you can handle this, if you want this, you can go back the check re\_\_\_\_

Curt: The crawl space is about that tall

Ken: (laugh)

Curt: Had to hire a skinny guy to get in there

Ken: You know, I've got to ask ya'll, 'cause, I mean, ya'll have been in the lumber business

Unknown female: is this still working?

Ken: I mean, how, how long has Hoovers been here in Burnet – your, your hardware store?

John: Since 1959.

Ken: Uh-huh. So, you know, they talk about barbed wire being the wire that fenced the west. I mean, wasn't most of that barbed wire hung on cedar posts?

John: Well ...

Ken: Back in the old days?

John: But I've to tell you then, when you get to Arizona and New Mexico, Colorado and, there ain't no cedar posts up there

Ken: There aren't? Oh, they don't grow 'em there, but, didn't those, weren't they shipping those posts?

John: Well, I, I doubt they shipped them when bob wire first come out in the 1800s.

Curt: Yeah, they used whatever

John: Hell, they used, uh, tree limb of any kind, you know

Ken: Uh-huh

John: and, but you didn't have, you didn't have bob wire, I mean you didn't have like, in the 1800s (cell phone rings: background conversation eliminated)

Unknown female: Do you want to keep recording?

Ken: I'd love to, if you don't mind

**JohnHoover 2 (17 minutes)**

Curt: There is still a cedar yard up in, uh, Lampasas

Ken: I know

Curt: Meyers?

Ken: Yeah. I've been, I've actually

Curt: There are two different Meyers ones

Ken: Really?

Curt: The second Meyers weren't really into a cedar yard but they did a lot of stuff with cedar.

Ken: Um-hum

Curt: They, they're pretty well in where that eastern red cedar in

Ken: Oh, uh-huh, yeah

Ken: The other side of this story is, is because they, the ones in west Austin, yeah, yeah, yeah, Bull Creek, Shoal Creek, the whole

Curt: I had an aunt who lived out there at Barton Creek. You know, the road to nowhere

Ken: That, uh, Eanes, Bee Cave Road?

Curt: No, not Bee Cave. It's that Southwest Parkway

Ken: Oh, yeah, yeah

Curt: When they put that thing in they bought her place

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: And she lived in a shack. I had an aunt on my mom's side. Remember, remember my uncle Dee Bird? Remember him?

John: Oh, yeah

Curt: His wife, they parted company, she lived down there back on the back side of what's now, uh, Barton Creek subdivision, that real nice subdivision. When they put that Southwest Parkway in there they just put cedar choppers down in there. When you drive that road back on the back side you'll still see a few of 'em living down in there

Ken: I'll be darned. I don't know that road at all.

Curt: But anyway, they bought her place to put that road in. And she, she lived in the shack of all shacks. And they bought that place to put that road in, she lived in a brand new home the rest of her days.

Ken: Oh (laugh)

Curt: (laugh) She took that money and bought a new house in a subdivision and lived out pretty good, you know, she, there was cold in the winter and hot in the summer in her house before.

John: One of the, one of the things I remember when the cedar choppers before World War II, you know, or during World War II, some of them was, they was at least, uh, some \_\_\_\_ during World War II. Gut not a great amount of \_\_\_\_\_. But I remember one or two of them coming down there to our place, where his dad now still lives, they come down and lived in a tent.

Ken: Um-hum

John: A tent stayed there for, oh I'm gonna say six or eight months, you know. They got what cedar they wanted and then picked up and moved somewhere else.

Ken: they whole family, right?

John: Yeah,

Curt: they, they just come and cut on shares, wouldn't they?

John: Yeah

Curt: They'd leave you some and you'd

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: They'd take some, and I think it's still happening now when people do cut cedar.

John: But, How many, how many cedar cutters, how many cedar cutters you think there are now?

Curt: I see, well around here, six or eight different ones.

John: But like, only, only, one percent of what there was fifty years ago

Curt: Oh, way, way different than then. And, and the ones you see now, the cedar market kind of goes up and down, like right now nobody's buying any. For whatever reason.

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: And, so, those guys made a pretty respectable \_\_\_\_\_ the Palacios family (business talk over discussion)

Curt: \_\_\_\_\_ it's related, but they're doing that for a while

Ken: Right

Curt: You'll see 'em busy doing, chopping cedar when it gets busy in that again,.

Ken: Right

Curt: Um, I know some of them are scrap metal guys

Ken: Yeah

Curt: It kind of fits

Ken: Well, Cantwell had that ...

Curt: Wrecking Yard

Ken: Down on

Curt: The Cantwell I knew, that was his brother

Ken: Oh, OK

Curt: It's still there

Ken: Yeah! It's still

Curt: They out in that highway 183A right by it

(people talking over each other)

Curt: \_\_\_ kind of a transient bunch

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: for the most part. We know some families around that do, but they were still kind of moving amongst what they didn't, they may chop fire wood too

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: you know, and that, that has it's time in the winter, \_\_\_ a bit

Ken: Yeah

Curt: Yeah, nobody, nobody has enough sense to buy any when they can get it cheap in the summer.

Ken: Do you have any sense, of uh, I mean, where they came from in the sense of, you know, were they farmers who didn't make it, I mean, cotton sure went down in the '30s, you know

Curt: Well, not everybody \_\_\_\_\_ the sharecroppers, it might not have worked out for them (business talk over discussion)

Curt: I guess that would be more of the origins to that

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: I think a lot of the, the people who do, who do that had some kind of background like that, um, now the Hispanic bunch, they came over here and that, that, that just seems like what they fell into probably 'cause they did ranch work

Ken: Uh-huh, right

Curt: And, and it might be these guys are just old ranch hands that had to do something else

Ken: Um-hum

John: \_\_\_ It's true. When you said "I wonder how come Old Man Hoover never does anything except dig ditches?" \_\_\_ And then, a certain person \_\_\_ "where'd they come from?" There's a certain person will get started doing something when they're young, and they'd stay will it the rest of their life because they have some fear of changing that they might not be as good as what they done.

Ken: Uh-huh

John: And I used to think I'd be something, somebody said that. But that's not. I see people, I see people right now, in this country, right here, do things as a carpenter or construction worker, they did it the same way they'd done it thirty forty years ago because they don't want to change. They, they don't, the scared to change. They, you ask them they wouldn't say that, but they are. They will stay there and stay there until they die doing the same 'ole thing. It's not bad, but it's not progressive.

Ken: Um-hum

John: So some people stay, do that cedar post cuttin' because they know how, or can, you know. They're not scared to change.

Ken: Do you think this is still picking up?

Unknown female: Yeah, its' still picking up

Curt: I know that's the case with the Palacios family because their young kids are doing it now.

Ken: Yeah, they're good. They're fast, they're good, they're

Curt: They're driving down our road, with a load of cedar posts talking on their cell phone

Ken: Right (laugh)

John: What's the, the man that had the cedar yard up here, the north side of town, out on County Road 200, the last one up here, red-headed guy, big guy?

Ken: Wasn't there a King's cedar yard? Does that ring a bell?

John: A lot of 'em would come in here and not stay very long, like maybe six months or a year. Then, but they was a lot of different ones

Ken: Um-hum

John: And, uh, um, that gal that was calling me back, her Daddy knew all of 'em. But

Ken: What's her name again?

John: Her name is, uh

Ken: Patricia

John: MacDuff

Ken: MacDuff?

John: And her Daddy's name is Ratliff

Ken: OK



John: Ratliff. He is, he is one of these guys that cut cedar all his life.

Ken: Um-hum

John: We're gonna find it here in a minute.

Curt: I know there is a cedar yard in Johnson City still.

Ken: Um. I didn't know that.

Curt: He's got a mill and cuts a lot of stuff out of it

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: Like furniture and cabinetry and

Ken: Uh-huh

Ken: In Liberty Hill, um, I was talking to a guy named, uh, Kerry Russell, and he grew up in Liberty Hill, but he wasn't, he would come there, he grew up there and then he'd come back in the summers 'cause his father was in the Air Force and he was down in San Diego, or something like that, living, but he'd come back and live with his grand folks and he ran around with, what he called, the cedar choppers in Liberty Hill. And he said "these kids were really rough" and he said "in Liberty Hill there were, there were" um, I'm asking him about Burnet, 'cause I don't know, maybe Liberty Hill was different from Burnet or Bertram. But he said they were really, there were the farmers and ranchers, there were the towns folks who ran the stores and stuff like that, and there were the cedar choppers. And he said that the farmer and rancher kids and the town folks kids didn't run around with the cedar chopper kids 'cause they were too rough.

John: In Liberty Hill – we were a little further up the chain of ...

Ken: You were?

John: Yeah

Curt: (laugh)

Ken: Of respectability

John: Yeah. Here in Burnet we only had about thirty or forty percent of cedar choppers. Liberty Hill had sixty or seventy percent cedar choppers.

Ken: Yeah, uh-huh

(All laugh together)

John: They ruled that, ruled the country.

Curt: I'm pretty sure my mom's side of the family is related to most of the cedar choppers over there  
(laugh)

Ken: Uh-huh, uh-huh (laugh together)

John: But, cedar choppers, you know, like I say they lived in, in tents, they lived hard lives, some of them would go up there and if they was cutting way up a mountain they'd go up there and sleep on the ground instead of coming home because they didn't have no way of getting home off that mountain, you know, they'd lose too much time. They'd a little bit like gold miners, Colorado

Ken: Um-hum

John: They'd go up there and dig on the side of the mountain and stay up there

Curt: Well, you know, that's not all unlike some of these ole' gypsy paving companies around. They come in, set up shop, and they do a few people's driveways

Ken: Um-hum

Curt: Wear out their welcome, or, kind of hit all the market, saturate it and kind of move on and, and I think there's people in society that are similar to that now,

Ken: Um-hum, um-hum

Curt: Maybe different type of business, but it's a similar lifestyle

Ken: Right

Curt: You know, I was talking to a James Halbrook. He grew up in Smithwick

Ken: Yep

Curt: And he said, you know, they would just go camp on a ranch doing stuff like that.

John: Oh yeah

Ken: Doing that kind of, doing uh, cutting cedar?

Curt: Well, some.

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: Some of it was, you know, fixin fences, building fences

Ken: Uh-huh, right

Curt: working cattle, just

Ken: Uh-huh

Curt: just whatever was needing to be done

Ken: Right, right

Curt: Uh, you said, you know, Smithwick is three miles from where I lived, and yet they would just camp out

Ken: right

Curt: (laugh) you know, they're not, they're not driving back. It's too hard to get back. The roads were tough

John: You know, they didn't have no transportation.

Curt: No.

John: You know, my wife's daddy and mother in 1948 or '49, when I first started trying to date my wife, they lived out here ten miles out of town. And I noticed when he would go to a Lodge meeting on Saturday night – he belonged to the Southern Lodge – he walked down there and get on the railroad track and walk up there three miles to the Lodge. He had a car, but he didn't want to spend that money for the gasoline.

Ken: Um-hum

John: They lived on five dollars a week cash money. Five dollars a week. Twenty dollars a month. Two hundred forty dollars a year cash \_\_\_\_.

Ken: Wow, that's great.

Curt: Wasn't in his budget?

John: Well, then hold on then, where he going to get the money at?

Curt: That's what I'm saying now. We've, we've ..

John: You'd learn how to live

Ken: Everybody, alright, so let me see, so everybody was living poor. I mean, that's what I've heard.

John or Curt: yes

Ken: I mean all over the Hill Country it was just dirt poor. But, did, would it have been OK for, you know, your daughter to marry a cedar chopper. I mean, was that, was that kind of mixing going on? That's what I'm – you see what I'm getting at?

John: Some, somewhat restricted, you know. Uh, not, not all of 'em, but, some. let's say, let's say I had a daughter (this' my daughter) and she's got her eye on this cedar chopper boy that's been out there chopping cedar and never went to school, he's got no education. I probably, uh, gona grit my teeth on

that one. And, uh, a lot of time, you know, cedar choppers were involved with somebody they knew was making a little home brew out there, you know.

Ken: Uh-huh

John: And they developed it, like you said, there in Liberty Hill, they, a little bit, when they come to town they were a little bit like the cattle drive guys, all gun smoke, you know, they want to raise a little hell. But, yes, they would, they were not exactly welcome as, uh, mates.

Curt: So they were kind of living on the fringe of society, so to speak?

John: Oh, they were.

Ken: That's...

John: Like them gypsies you're talking about

Ken: Yeah

Curt: I would say the ones I knew, the Cantwells, for instance

Ken: Yeah

Curt: I think they pretty much still are

Ken: Uh-huh. And I think, I get the impression, this is why I think that... This is why, I, that they choose, they chose that. This wasn't, this wasn't just discrimination. They, they

John: No, back up, I told you a while ago. They got in that years and years and years and afraid to change

Ken: Uh-huh

John: Afraid of the change. You're afraid of change. You don't realize it but you, some things you might be offered and you wouldn't, you'd be \_\_\_\_

Ken: Um-hum, um-hum, um-hum

John: Afraid of change

Ken: I think they had, uh, didn't they have something, that independent streak, that they just didn't want to take, or ... Let me ask you this question, Mr. Hoover. Would, did the cedar chopper boys come in and work for wages, work at your store, work at the gas stations?

John: A lot of them did but it took a while to get off \_\_\_\_

Ken: uh-huh

John: A lot of them done that, you know, of course they all them they could find all went to the war.

Ken: uh-huh

John: most of them got integrated into society during that time

Ken: Uh-huh

John: but, uh, when they got to where they, school system got a little tougher, got to bring them into school, that, that helped some. But them that just stayed out there hidden, hid inside of the hills. They didn't come so fast. And, uh, course they're nearly all gone now, but, the, but a lot of that went on, like you were talking about it. It, it was, uh, they were, uh, that's what they're raised up to be, that's

Curt: Independent

John: like the wild wild west, you know. That was, that was the way of life back then, see.

Ken: Yeah. Well, I've taken a lot of your time.

John: Well I, I didn't learn you nothing I don't guess

Ken: I'm, well, you know, I think Burnet is different than Liberty Hill, isn't it?

John: Yeah, we're grade up totem, not anymore, but back then we were

Ken: Yes

John: But when I first come to here in the lumber business, lumber yard, you know, they wasn't a house built the first five years I was in the lumber yard, I, nobody built a house in Burnet. So, it's not no damn thriving metropolis.

Ken: right. Well, how 'bout compared to Marble Falls and Bertram, how, how did

John: Marble Falls was no better than Burnet until 19--, in the sixties

Ken: Yeah. Horseshoe

John: Horseshoe Bay came.

Ken: Yeah

John: And then four or five other, then they built the dam there, Wirtz Dam, Lake, called LBJ now, made constant level big, beautiful lake there, then the Marble Falls dam made constant level, all of that, all that water available, is what made Marble Falls. Other than, other than that Marble made Falls wasn't no better town than we are, wasn't as good a town

Ken: Um-hum

John: as far as the economy

Ken: Yeah

John: It ain't that way now

Curt: (laugh)

Ken: (laugh) It's pretty fancy now. Well, I, I won't take anymore of your time. I know you've got a lot to do.

John: I ain't got nothing to do.

Ken: (laugh)

John: You want to ride around a little bit? I'll show you, the town

Yes, that would be great.

END